



**MOUNT CALVARY**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Safe Haven Policy

Updated December 2017

## Definitions

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- A. **Staff** are paid personnel of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church.
- B. **Volunteer Leaders** are individuals aged 18 and older who work on a regular basis with ministries designated as high-risk. All volunteer leaders are screened.
- C. **Program coordinator** is the staff or volunteer leader who is the primary contact for a specific area of ministry.
- D. **High-Risk Ministries** are those which involved: contact with minors or other vulnerable people; one-on-one contact (i.e. counseling and Stephen ministry); offsite activities; overnight stays; transportation in church and/or personal vehicles.
- E. **Vulnerable People**
  - a. **Children** are those persons from infancy through 5<sup>th</sup> grade
  - b. **Youth** are those persons in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (and up to age 18, whichever is later).
  - c. **Vulnerable adults** are seniors and persons who have developmental, psychological, or physical disabilities.
- F. **Screening** is defined as the two-fold process of:
  - a. nomination for a leadership position in a high-risk ministry (by the committee that oversees the high-risk ministry), and
  - b. submission of the *Background Investigation Authorization* form (see appendix A).

## Screening

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All regular volunteer leaders who work with high-risk ministries must be approved by the committee in charge of the ministry (example: youth ministry volunteers must be approved by the first third of life committee) and will submit a *Background Investigation Authorization* form (see appendix A). Their position as a volunteer leader is subject to a clear background investigation returned. All staff, as a part of the hire process, are also subject to background checks.

Background checks are considered confidential and access to them will be limited to:

- ❖ Staff person who is also:
  - Serving as the ministry's Program Coordinator, or
  - Assigned by council to run background checks
- ❖ Pastor
- ❖ Executive Council

Those authorized to access background checks can evaluate risk with background checks that come back flagged. Staff serving as program coordinator may make the determination of a volunteer's capability to lead high-risk ministries, and should consult with the Pastor. The Pastor may make the determination for Staff, and should consult with Executive Council. For cases which involve deliberation or have complicated circumstances, Executive Council will have the final determination. Volunteer Leaders – including those serving as Program Coordinator – do not have access to background checks and may not evaluate risk of other volunteers. See Appendix A for a guide in evaluating risk.

The Staff serving as Program Coordinator is responsible for ensuring Volunteer Leaders have up-to-date background checks. New background checks are required every three years. The Staff will check these

twice per year (September and January) and report to the Ministry Leadership Team verifying that Volunteer Leaders are current in their screening. When the Program Coordinator role is filled by a member of the congregation rather than Staff, the responsibility of ensuring background checks are secured and up-to-date will go to the Pastor.

## Supervision of child and youth programs

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*Recognizing the diverse types of programs involving children and youth, and their supervisory needs, the following REQUIREMENTS and BEST PRACTICES are set to maintain a safe environment. REQUIREMENTS are policies which must be met. If these requirements cannot be met, the program or event will be cancelled. BEST PRACTICES are the ideal we strive for, and exceed REQUIREMENTS.*

*Programs or events which do not meet best practices but do meet requirements may be permitted to continue at the discretion of the program coordinator, and the program coordinator will be responsible for action steps to help leaders achieve the best practices in the future.*

**Adult supervision.** It is REQUIRED that two adults must be present during all church activities involving children and youth, one of whom must be screened. It is a BEST PRACTICE that both adults present be a screened.

**Ratios.** It is REQUIRED that the ratio of children/youth to adults must not exceed the requirements set by the state of Colorado. It is a BEST PRACTICE to maintain a 5:1 ratio wherever possible. (See Appendix B for Colorado state guidelines).

**Youth mentoring.** It is REQUIRED that a mentor for a child or youth be screened. It is REQUIRED that mentors follow behavioral expectations in this policy and meet with youth in public places, such as church or another public location agreed upon with parental consent.

**Classrooms.** It is REQUIRED that classrooms have unimpeded visibility through windows or doors which are left open when occupied.

### **Offsite and overnight programs.**

The following are REQUIRED for children or youth programs that are offsite, including overnight stays:

- ❖ Ratios above will be maintained while offsite or on overnight trips.
- ❖ For overnight stays, ratios will be maintained *for each gender*. For example, if there are 3 male and 5 female participants, one leader will be male and one female.
- ❖ All adult leaders will be screened.

## Parental Permission to participate in child and youth programs

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For children and youth to participate in programs sponsored by Mount Calvary without a parent or guardian present, they need to have a current *Health and Medical Release and Permission Form* (see Appendix B) on file and signed by a parent or guardian. Participation in cross-generational activities in which a parent or guardian is present does not require a permission form.

*Health and Medical Release and Permission Forms* with medical and insurance information are considered confidential. They will be kept in a locked cabinet unless an event is offsite, in which case the health forms should be on the person of the Program Coordinator or volunteer leader *at all times*. The

Program Coordinator will be responsible for securing permission forms for all child and youth participants.

For the rare occasions when there is a legitimate reason to depart from the two-adult rule stated in the above section, the Program Coordinator must be notified, and s/he must first obtain the permission of a child or youth's parent or guardian.

## Behaviors

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**Use of Language.** Mount Calvary should be a place of welcome for all people, regardless of age, gender, race, orientation, ability, or socio-economic status. As such, we seek to use language which is inclusive and affirming of each person's individuality and identity. Language that seeks to shame, harm, or make fun of others is not acceptable. Language that supports a person's spiritual and emotional development is kind, encouraging, and supportive.

**Inclusive community.** As a community, we are made of many gifts, fears, ideas, and experiences. We will seek to foster community that allows each member to participate fully and be authentic to who they are. Young people should never feel as though they have been shamed into participating or not participating in any activity.

**Touch.** Because each person experiences love and affection differently, including how touch is offered and received, volunteer leaders should use care and exercise caution when showing care through touch.

Appropriate touch is:

- ❖ Gentle and conscious
- ❖ Appropriately placed (shoulders, hands, head, upper back)
- ❖ In public or group settings
- ❖ Shared equally, not showing favoritism
- ❖ Initiated by the other, not forced on them

Inappropriate behavior is:

- ❖ Dominant or aggressive (grabbing, hitting, kicking, forceful)
- ❖ Inappropriately placed (near genitalia, lower back, breast or chest area)
- ❖ Sexual in nature (Contact with penis/testicles, vagina/labia, buttocks, breast or chest area, kissing, fondling. Additionally, showing sexually explicit material - videos, pictures, explicit texts or online messages – is never allowed. Neither is discussion of the leaders own sexual experience, sexual jokes or innuendos.)

**Response to inappropriate behaviors.** It is the responsibility of the Staff or Volunteer Leader to stop behavior that is inappropriate or abusive, whether verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually. The help of another responsible adult should be requested if a young person is behaving (touching or speaking) in a way that the Staff or Volunteer Leader is unsure how to handle the situation. If behavior is observed of a Staff or Volunteer Leader mistreating a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, the behavior should be immediately reported to the Program Coordinator or Pastor. Likewise, if a child is exhibiting harmful behavior, a report should be made to the Program Coordinator.

**Discipline of minors.** Staff and Volunteer Leaders will seek resolution for conflict in youth or children's ministry by utilizing positive reinforcement and redirection, approaching challenges with young people from a place of respect and kindness. Recognizing the challenges that arise in managing conflicts within a classroom or programmatic setting, Staff and Volunteer Leaders are encouraged reach out to other Staff or Volunteer Leaders for support when needed. If behavior does not improve, the child or youth may be asked to leave the class and returned to their parent/guardian. Time-outs, shaming, rough handling, striking, withholding food or restroom privileges, verbal or emotional abuse are not acceptable disciplinary methods.

## Reporting of Abuse

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Staff, Program Coordinators, and Volunteer Leaders are required to report any known, disclosed, or reasonably suspected abuse of vulnerable people. Additionally, any person suspecting abuse of a vulnerable person can make a report and is encouraged to do so. Regular review of *Signs and Symptoms of Abuse* (see Appendix C) is expected of Staff, Program Coordinators, and Volunteer Leaders. Congregation members are encouraged to review these signs as well. Abuse may be witnessed directly, suspected through review of *Signs and Symptoms of Abuse* or disclosed by the child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

There are three possible types of reports to be made if abuse of vulnerable person is witnessed, suspected, or disclosed.

**1. To state authorities.** Report here when:

- A vulnerable person discloses abuse to you
- For external incidents (not directly related to Mount Calvary programs)
- When there is a reasonable belief, based on *Signs and Symptoms of Abuse*, that abuse is occurring.

Any person can file a report with state authorities. The person who witnesses, suspects, or has had abuse disclosed to them will be able to provide the most helpful information to state authorities. Staff, Program Coordinators, and Volunteer Leaders are considered mandatory reporters and are **REQUIRED** to report any incident in which abuse is witnessed, suspected, or disclosed. See *Report of Suspected Abuse* (appendix C) for a guide to making the call. Any report made should be followed up with adherence to any instructions given to the reporter by state authorities.

- ❖ Abuse of children and youth should be reported to the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: **1-844-CO-4-KIDS** (844-264-5437)
- ❖ Abuse of vulnerable adults should be reported to the Boulder Police Department: **303-411-3333**

**2. To congregational leaders.** Report here when:

- Abusive behavior occurs during Mount Calvary's programs or events.
- A suspected perpetrator of abuse is staff or a volunteer leader.

A report must be made to the pastor or council president by filing out the *Report of Suspected Abuse* form. These reports are considered confidential and will be kept in a locked cabinet and access restricted to the pastor and executive council, except for cases which lead to criminal charges, in

which the report may need to be shared with authorities.

3. **To the Office of the Bishop.** Report here when:

- The suspected perpetrator of abuse is a staff member or pastor.

When congregational leaders receive a report of suspected abuse, they will determine the need to further report the incidence or disclosure of abuse to the Office of the Bishop. In cases that involve the Pastor or Staff, a report to the Office of the Bishop is required.

- ❖ Rocky Mountain Synod Office of the Bishop  
303-777-6700  
7375 Samuel Drive, Denver, Colorado 80221

**Responses to allegations of Abuse.** In the case of allegation of abuse, the priority is the care and safety of the victim. The program coordinator, staff, or pastor will notify the victim's family where appropriate and as directed by state authorities, and work to ensure the child, youth, or vulnerable adult is in a safe environment. They will also work with the reporting person when follow-up is needed.

A designated spokesperson will be determined by Council when necessary to speak to the media and congregation in a discrete, informed, and diplomatic manner. They should be given the *Media Guidelines* in the appendix for help navigating these conversations.

In the case a volunteer or staff is alleged as a perpetrator of abuse, they will immediately be relieved of all their duties until an investigation is finished. Reinstatement of the accused will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of Executive Council, or in the court system. Congregational leaders will commit to treating the accused with dignity.

## Transportation during Church-Sponsored Events

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Drivers must be 25 years of age or older and have a valid driver's license that has not been suspended or revoked for any reason. Drivers of private vehicles have limited liability coverage under Mount Calvary's umbrella policy, but are expected to have liability insurance on their private vehicle as required by Colorado state law.

Drivers are expected to follow all state laws while driving others during church-sponsored events, and should never be on their phone – calling, texting, or operating smartphone apps. Another member in the car can assist the driver if communication is necessary.

Seat belts are to be worn at all times by all persons traveling in the church van or private vehicles used for church-sponsored events.

Emergency kits are required to travel with a group in at least one vehicle. Each vehicle should also have a copy of *Guidelines for Travel* (see Appendix D) to review before departure. Drivers should verify insurance and emergency contact information is in the vehicle before departure. Emergency kits and contact information will be regularly reviewed and updated by the property committee.

## Drugs and Alcohol

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All church-sponsored events held at Mount Calvary or on its property will be free of drug and alcohol use unless approved by church council. All approved events will be expected to follow state laws regarding drug or alcohol use in public settings.

No drug or alcohol use is permitted during church-sponsored events in which children or youth are supervised by Staff or Volunteer Leaders (youth gatherings, lock-ins, service projects, mission trips, etc.). Staff and Volunteer Leaders will not be permitted to use drugs or alcohol at any time during these events. Events in which children and youth are supervised by their parent or guardian, it is up to the parent or guardian to regulate their own use of drugs or alcohol. If anyone suspects danger to a child or youth due to the drug or alcohol use of their parent or guardian, a report should be made immediately to the Program Coordinator, Pastor, or in extreme circumstances – police.

## Building Security

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**Maintaining a secure facility.** All doors should remain locked when not in direct use. This includes doors not in use during worship (offices, classrooms, Rainbow Child Care, choir room). All persons holding keys to the Mount Calvary facility are responsible for its security. Should an incident occur on the Mount Calvary facility in which security is compromised, the contact information of key holders may be shared with Boulder Police. Keys are issued as follows:

Master Keys – Provides full access to all doors in the MCLC facility.

- ❖ All MCLC Staff (one per position)
- ❖ Executive Council (one per position)
- ❖ Property Committee (three keys)
- ❖ Rainbow Child Care (three keys)
- ❖ Finance Committee (two keys)
- ❖ Building Owners - Boulder Housing Partners
- ❖ Head of Call Committee (limited to the timespan of call process)

Limited Access Keys – Provides access to all external doors, and upstairs conference room.

- ❖ Lock box
- ❖ Coordinators of events (provided for short term use as needed)
- ❖ Heads of committees not listed above (one key per committee, must be requested)

**Key Use.** Limited access and master keys will be checked out from MCLC's office professional. The office professional has the discretion to administer keys to individuals not listed above when deemed necessary, and will report to the property committee when additional keys are administered. Name, address, phone number, date checked out, expected return, and signature corresponding to the acknowledgement of *Key Requisition* and *Lockup Procedures* (see Appendix E) will be required from every person who receives a key. When a person ends service as a committee chair or other role entitling them to a key, they must return their key immediately.

## Emergency Procedures

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**Fire.** In the event of fire or other emergency that requires the evacuation of the church building, Staff or Volunteer Leaders will leave with their entire group and gather in the lower parking lot for further instruction.

**Weather.** In the event of severe weather, staff or volunteer leaders will move with their entire group to a secure location in the building. Secure locations include:

- ❖ Bathrooms in Rainbow Childcare Center
- ❖ Interior hall with no windows

**Health.** In the event of a health emergency during a Mount Calvary sponsored child or youth event, one staff or volunteer leader will attend to the person experiencing the emergency while another continues supervision of the children or youth. This may include removing children or youth from the room. A staff member should be sought to help manage the health emergency. While addressing any emergency, leaders should exercise calm and reassure young people of their safety.

An AED is available in the breezeway next to the sanctuary doors. A first aid kit is available in the office copy room.

## Policy Review

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This policy will be reviewed annually in the spring by the Ministry Leadership Team with input from ministry committees, Staff, Volunteer Leaders, and Program Coordinators.

Policies in need of revision will be addressed during Ministry Leadership Team meetings, and revisions will be proposed to council. Council has the final determination of policy revision.

Policies in need of enforcement can be brought to the Ministry Leadership Team at any time. The Ministry Leadership Team will seek to address the issue by asking questions to understand why the policy is not being followed, and will form an action plan to ensure it will be corrected. They should consult with Council for circumstances requiring more support.