

LivingFAITH Child Protection Policy

Updated July 2025 (amended portions highlighted)

This ministry is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in our ministry activities. We also seek to minimize any vulnerability to unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our organization, volunteers, and employees may experience as they fulfill their ministerial duties. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, our leadership team has adopted the following procedures to be used, without exception, when selecting ministry volunteers and new employees and supervising children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

DEFINITIONS

Minor—Any person between the ages of 0 and 18. A minor may include any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

Child or children—Any minor from birth through fifth grade.

Youth—Any minor from sixth through 12th grade. A youth may include any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

Vulnerable adult—Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend the nature of certain actions, or susceptible to coercion or abuse. This may include individuals who are mentally or physically disabled and the elderly.

Volunteer—A person performing services or donating time or effort without compensation who is authorized to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Employee— A paid staff member of the ministry.

Worker—A volunteer or employee authorized to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return an initial ministry application.
2. The ministry leader, or designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The ministry leader also will store all application materials—the application form, background checks, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.
3. If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the ministry leader, or designee, will check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application. The ministry leader also will conduct a criminal background check through a reputable security company for applicants 18 and over.
4. After the ministry leader, or designee, contacts references and performs a background check, he or she will conduct an interview with the candidate.

5. When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. The same procedures required for volunteers also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered.

2. When indicated by our screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.

WAITING PERIOD

All volunteer candidates must be regularly involved in our organization for six months or more before they will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

SUPERVISION

1. **TWO WORKER RULE:** At least two screened workers must be present at every function or program involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. This includes each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area. One or more of these workers must be 18 years of age or older. For large groups, the number of adult supervisors must be increased in accordance with state/teacher ratio requirements. To assist in keeping two adults in each enclosed space on a Sunday morning, workers and volunteers should use Walkie-talkie to contact the Sunday morning coordinator if they require assistance or to come be present in the room if one of them needs to leave.

2. **RULE OF THREE:** In limited circumstances, when the Two Worker Rule cannot be implemented for a brief period of time and the classroom or other enclosed area is not under video surveillance, at least three individuals must be present, with at least one being a screened adult employee or volunteer. The Two Adult Rule should be followed at all times for activities or events involving children under the age of three.

3. While adult workers should avoid being alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, some limited exceptions may be permitted for spiritual counsel/mentoring of a youth. Any one-on-one interaction must take place in a location where the adult worker and the youth are both visible to others. Any planned one-on-one meetings must be approved by a ministry leader, and the adult worker must obtain prior written approval from parents/guardians. If it is determined that counsel is needed beyond the scope of mentoring, i.e. emotional problems, substance abuse problems, etc., a professional counselor should be recommended with assistance from the ministry leader.

4. Adult employees and volunteers should avoid traveling in a vehicle one-on-one with a minor. If it is necessary, develop a communication strategy to notify parents/guardians or supervisors when leaving for and arriving at an event.

5. To reduce or eliminate areas that are difficult to properly supervise, unused rooms, closets, and outdoor structures are to be kept locked with limited key access.

6. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, rubbing the back, initiating an embrace, tickling, etc.

BATHROOM PROCEDURES

1. For children age 6 or older, at least one adult should take children to the restroom. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom for the children. If a child needs assistance inside the restroom, the presence of a second adult is required.

2. Children age 5 or younger (boys and girls) can be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female. Workers should leave the bathroom door ajar with a second screened worker nearby for additional accountability.

3. Workers should never touch the private areas of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

1. Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children or youth should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.

2. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child. For Sunday morning services, workers should not release a child to anyone who does not have the correlating security tag for that child. If the parent/guardian has lost their security tag, workers should direct them to the coordinator on duty to get them another security tag.

DISCIPLINE

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual. If such an event occurs, workers should immediately report it to the ministry coordinator or pastor on call and should fill out a Behavior Incident report.

2. For most behavior issues, verbal correction that is firm, yet kind, can be used to redirect to the needed behavior. Workers should never yell or raise their voice, unless they are giving instructions in case of a physical emergency. Workers should correct behavior gently and with care, using word choices that are consistent with the values of Living Faith. If the behavior does not improve with verbal correction after 3 instances, the ministry leader should be notified, who should then notify the individual's parent or guardian to assist the situation by removing the individual for the remainder of that day's activities.

3. If an individual causes harm to anyone else in the classroom or enclosed space, whether emotional or physical, the ministry coordinator or pastor on call, as well as the individual's parent/guardian should immediately be notified, and that individual should be asked to leave the area. If removal from the classroom for disciplinary reasons occurs, a *Notice of Behavior Report* should be filled out by the classroom teacher and/or the ministry coordinator/pastor involved. If there has been an injury sustained by anyone involved in the behavior situation, a separate *Notice of Injury Report* should be filled out and the appropriate notifications made.

4. The ministry leader can use their discretion, according to the seriousness of the event and with counsel from their pastoral oversight, as to the individual's ability to return to a classroom environment. This may require a parent meeting and/or the development of a clear safety plan before the individual is allowed to return to any further group activities.

5. All significant disciplinary problems encountered by workers, even if removal from the ministry area has not occurred, should be reported to the ministry leader either verbally or by the filling out of a *Notice of Behavior* report. The ministry leader should then make certain a *Notice of Behavior* report is filled out and that direct communication with the individual's parent or guardian occurs in a timely manner.

INJURIES OR ILLNESS

1. Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.

2. A suitable worker—one who has been previously approved through our ministry screening process—must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.

3. Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be transitioned to a safe place in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.

4. Workers should take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.

5. Ministry coordinators and supervisors who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.

6. Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The individual's parents or guardians should be given a copy of the *Notice of Injury Report* when they pick up the injured person.

7. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's coordinator or supervisor. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called. Documentation of the incident through the *Notice of Injury Report* should be completed in a timely manner.

ADDITIONAL RECORDKEEPING

1. All ministry functions involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults should maintain an attendance list for every function. Ministry leaders should sustain an accurate system for the recording of the date of the function, along with the names of all participants, ministry coordinators, and supervisors.

2. Ministry workers should prepare a written *Notice of Injury Report* whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function. Promptly forward the incident report to the ministry coordinator or supervisor.

SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT AND MANDATORY REPORTING

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers are subject to mandatory reporting guidelines and are expected to fully comply and report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or signs of neglect to local authorities. (Please remember that Indiana IS a mandatory reporting state for all adults, regardless of whether they are employed by a church, school, or institution. The Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline number is **1-800-800-5556**.)

2. Additionally, volunteers and employees who become aware of or have reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected must immediately inform their supervisor or ministry leader, unless the activity coordinator, supervisor, or ministry leader is the suspected perpetrator, in which case they should inform that person's supervising oversight. The volunteer or employee will be required to complete a *Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report*.

3. Supervisors who become aware of or have reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected must immediately inform the ministry leader unless the ministry leader is the suspected perpetrator. If the volunteer or employee did not complete a *Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report*, the supervisor should then complete the form.

4. Additionally, ministry leaders who become aware of possible abuse or sexual misconduct involving a participant must ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or sexual misconduct has occurred. This communication should be in person and should include the ministry leader's supervisor, if at all possible. This communication can occur by a phone call if a meeting cannot be arranged. If someone in the home is the suspected perpetrator, the ministry leader can defer to local authorities on notifying the parent or guardian. The ministry leader should include notes of all relevant communication with the parent/guardian in the *Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report* they fill out.

5. If there is a question as to whether suspected abuse should be reported (i.e. not sure if suspicion is correct, etc.), our default position is to report anyway. If there is any specific question as to whether or not a report should be made to the authorities and ministry leaders are considering not making a report, the ministry leader will ensure that an attorney is immediately contacted to provide a written opinion as to whether the organization should report the suspected abuse or neglect to authorities. The written opinion should be obtained within 24 hours after the ministry leader first becomes aware of the situation. The attorney's advice should be acted upon immediately, including reporting the incident to the authorities. An attorney should be contacted immediately if the ministry leader or activity monitor becomes aware of possible abuse or neglect of a participant by a parent or guardian and is unsure whether to make a report to the authorities. (Note: Attorneys are available through the church's insurance provider.) This in essence means a ministry leader does not have sole prerogative to choose not to report. Our position as a church is to report all suspected abuse.

6. Ministry leaders must promptly notify our ministry's insurance carrier (general or professional liability insurance) upon notice of abuse or sexual misconduct. They must also notify the Living Faith Elder Board in a timely manner, to whom we also report such allegations.

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify their ministry coordinator or supervisor if they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.

2. Ministry coordinators, supervisors, and ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

1. This ministry organization considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated first through civil authorities, then by ministry leaders with the assistance of legal counsel. The ministry will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation.

2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be put on leave from their position pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.

3. This ministry will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, we also will consult with legal counsel.

DEALING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT / NEWS MEDIA

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers of this organization will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation.

2. The leadership of this ministry will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.

3. One individual—a member of the leadership team, an employee, or our attorney will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

ANNUAL REVIEW

1. Each year, we will conduct a policy review. At that time, the procedures mandated by this policy will be re-presented to all volunteers, employees, ministry coordinators and supervisors, as well as the the leadership of the organization.

2. All employees and volunteers will re-affirm their application annually.

3. Background checks will be re-run every 3-5 years. Should the re-affirmation of the application or a new background check indicate that any employees or volunteers have become unsuitable for working

with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, they will be removed immediately from their current position. They will not be considered for positions involving work with other similar groups.

REVISION OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The leadership of this ministry, with the assistance of legal counsel, will regularly review this policy and the procedures established within it. When changes are made, ministry leaders will communicate them to all employees and volunteers affected by the policy changes.

MORALS CLAUSE

The purpose of this portion of our child safety policy is to state the lifestyle expectations for employees, workers, and volunteers at Living Faith.

MINISTRY PURPOSE

Living Faith is a non-profit religious organization. More importantly, our organization is a community of believers who have joined together to meet the spiritual and ministry needs of the greater community. Our organization promotes behavior consistent with the Bible. Consequently, when joining the Living Faith team as an employee, worker, or volunteer, you freely and willingly agree to the standards of behavior outlined in this policy.

The standards included in this policy are not exhaustive; rather, they provide a guideline of conduct we believe is in accordance with biblical standards. As representatives of Living Faith, it is imperative that our actions are above reproach in all things. Consequently, the following standards of conduct shall apply to all staff, workers, and volunteers. Violations of these standards are regarded as a serious breach of integrity and could result in the removal of workers from ministry at Living Faith, and up to and including termination for employees.

PERSONAL CONDUCT

- God's Word teaches us that certain attributes are desired, including: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-24). I will strive to seek, encourage, and demonstrate these attributes in my relationships and in working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- Scripture further teaches us that every believer has a duty to protect the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of those most vulnerable among us. (Ps 127:3, Prov 22:6, Mark 9:42, James 1:27).

COMMUNICATION POLICIES

Electronic communication can be a vital part of ministry work, but improper use can produce serious consequences. Living Faith desires to promote safety and to create a healthy environment for communication between its workers and students who participate in ministry activities.

As a result, all information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communications channels are not considered confidential. Furthermore, Living Faith has developed the following guidelines for any employee or workers who want to communicate with minors using text

messaging, e-mail, social networking websites, or other forms of electronic media and for general policies concerning technology usage during ministry activities for youth and children's ministry.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:

1. All digital communication from children's workers should be directed only to a child's parents. Workers should never attempt to message a child directly, even if the child is in possession of a digital device.

2. Children should not be in possession of personal electronic devices while participating in children's ministry activities. If they bring such items, they should be asked to leave them to in the care of their parent/guardian upon check-in. If such devices are found to be in their possession after check-in, workers should provide a place of safe-keeping for the device until it can be returned to the parent/guardian.

3. Children's workers who become aware of possible child abuse through electronic media must immediately notify their supervisor and the same procedures for how to report suspected physical abuse, which is detailed in previous section of this policy, should be followed.

4. Children's workers on ministry business may never use a cell phone while driving, even hands-free, unless it's an emergency.

5. All children's workers are to adhere to The 3 H's Guidelines in order to ensure the safety of our children and leaders by providing ways to show appropriate affection to our children without compromising our integrity.

- **HUGS:** We ask that you not initiate any hugs. However, hugging is a natural response when children seek affection. When children initiate hugs, follow these guidelines:
 - Quick side hugs are most appropriate. Use the "Catch and Release" with a quick hug and then a gentle release.
 - Do not rub backs.
- **HANDS:** A high-five, special handshake or gentle fist bump is a great way to greet kids.
 - Holding hands should be politely discouraged. However, with kid's pre-k and younger, briefly holding hands may be necessary to guide them safely from one area to another.
- **HOLDING:** Some very young children seek to be held as a form of security or affection and that is okay.
 - A child over the age of 2-years-old should not be held unless for transport during an emergency.
 - Holding an infant is appropriate if it is necessary for their comfort or safety.
 - Pick-up children by their armpits to get them to a safe place. Do not pick them up by their arms, as this is unsafe.

** Wrestling, rough housing, piggyback rides or tickling are NOT appropriate
in the children's ministry environment. **

[NOTE: The 3 H's were previously in our Children's Ministry Handbook, but are now included in our Child Protection Policy as well for both children/youth ministries.]

YOUTH MINISTRY:

1. Youth workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors involved in ministry activities.
2. Except in an emergency, youth workers should not transmit any personal information pertaining to a minor without the ministry participant and his/her parents/guardians signing consent forms. This applies to group texting, group e-mail, or any other public method of electronic communication. Personal information may include such things as a minor's name, phone number, email address, or photograph.
3. Youth workers will discourage youth students from using cell phones during ministry programs except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by a leader. If a student is found to be using their electronic devices in a harmful manner, either to themselves or anyone else, this should immediately be reported to the ministry leader and appropriate measures taken to ensure safety of all youth members.
4. Youth workers who become aware of possible child abuse through electronic media must immediately notify their supervisor and the same procedures for how to report suspected physical abuse, which is detailed in previous section of this policy, should be followed.
5. Youth workers on ministry business may never use a cell phone while driving, even hands-free, unless it's an emergency.
6. Any texts or emails sent by youth workers to students should not be directed to sole individuals. If the communication is not meant to be received by multiple students, this can be accomplished by adding the parent/guardian, another youth worker, volunteer, or ministry leader to the message thread.
7. All youth workers are to adhere to The 3 H's Guidelines in order to ensure the safety of our children and leaders by providing ways to show appropriate affection to our children without compromising our integrity.
 - HUGS: We ask that you not initiate any hugs. However, hugging is a natural response when students seek affection. When students initiate hugs, follow these guideline:.
 - Quick side hugs are most appropriate. Use the "Catch and Release" with a quick hug and then a gentle release.
 - Do not rub backs.
 - HANDS: A high-five, special handshake or gentle fist bump is a great way to greet students.
 - Do not hold hands.
 - Use discretion when praying together. The shoulders, upper back, or top of the head is an appropriate place to put your hand on someone during prayer. It is best to ask the student if it is okay if you lay your hand on them to pray.
 - HOLDING: It is not appropriate to hold a student in your arms or on your lap. This should be avoided at all times, even during the playing of games or sport activities.

** Wrestling, rough housing, piggyback rides or tickling are NOT appropriate
in the youth ministry environment. **

8. It is our goal to create a safe and nurturing environment for all students as they mature in their journey of faith. In the event of legal or disciplinary incidents, the following steps will be taken to provide a path for re-engagement with our youth ministry.

When a youth has been involved in a serious legal matter, the following steps will be taken.

1. We require a formal risk assessment by a licensed therapist, probation officer, or other qualified social worker confirming the youth is safe to participate in group settings.
2. A personal safety plan will be developed which provides measure for supervised arrival and departure, pocket checks by parents, dress and bag policy, and designated supervision during church events.
3. Legally, juvenile records are protected, so details of an arrest will not be shared publicly unless there is a direct and immediate threat. Parents with children involved in our youth ministry will be notified of updates to our child protection policy and safety protocols as deemed necessary by our ministry leaders.
4. In the event that details regarding a juvenile student's legal past are learned about through informal channels, the following communication steps will be taken:
 - a. Leaders and Volunteers will respond with empathy and discretion.
 - b. Leaders and Volunteers will avoid confirming or denying any specific details and will redirect concerns to a designated point person, such as the youth pastor or pastor.
 - c. Leaders and Volunteers can reassure parents that safety protocols are in place and that the church works closely with families and professionals to ensure a secure ministry environment for all.
 - d. If the situation becomes widely known, church leaders may host a general parent meeting to discuss safety updates and ministry values. Such a meeting will provide a structured space for questions and the opportunity to reinforce our commitment to both safety and redemption. For parents with ongoing concerns, one-on-one conversations will be available to listen and provide reassurance. (In such meetings, no further information about a student will be discussed that is not already public.)
 - e. If the ministry leaders determine that a prospective or current student poses a threat of harm to others, they will not be allowed to participate in ministry. We reserve the right for our ministry to deny permission for a student to attend if that student is deemed a threat to others for any reason.