

Establish a Safe Haven Team



It is most effective to form and commission a Taskforce of 5-7 people. Their task is to draft a document that explores and considers all areas in the Safe Haven checklist included in this document. By having a representative from various ministries and vocations serve on the team, more perspectives will be included as well as an opportunity to gain broader support and understanding of the need for Safe Haven guidelines for your school and congregation.

Individuals from your school, learning center or congregation whom you might consider inviting to serve on the Taskforce are:

- School Board or governing body leader
- Church Council representative, if different than above
- A social worker
- Someone who understands family law
- An insurance broker who understands risk management
- Someone who serves as a leader in the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts or another such child/youth related organization
- A teacher(s)
- Your congregation's pastor or designated staff liaison

Theological Framework

Read the Affirmation of Baptism, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 236.

Becoming a Safe Haven for children, youth, and the vulnerable among us affirms our Baptism into the priesthood of all believers. As the church, we bear witness to God's grace and love that comes through Holy Baptism. As we work together for the wellbeing of our children, youth and the vulnerable among us, we live out the Sacrament of our Holy Baptism.



Safe Haven Bible Study

(Adapted from ELCA Safe Haven Bible Studies)

Foundation

Recognize that Jesus called children to him and blessed them, and that in his action we are also called to be a place where children are blessed and safe. • Recognize that for the frail and vulnerable, there are stormy seas all around and that, like Jesus, we are called to calm them.

Understand that we, as the Church, are called to be a Safe Haven for all of God's people.

Opening Prayer

God of safety and comfort you have blessed children, defended the weak and broken, stilled storms and calmed seas. Still our hearts and minds today and help us open ourselves to the ways that you are calling us to be places of refuge for your people. Be with us and strengthen us for this task. Amen.

Bible Reading - Mark 10:13-16 (The Message)

Ask someone to read the following passage.

The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: “Don’t push these children away. Don’t ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God’s kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you’ll never get in.” Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them.

Take a few quiet moments to reflect on the passage. Ask another person to read the following passage.

Bible Reading - Mark 9:33-37 (The Message)

They came to Capernaum. When he was safe at home, he asked them, “What were you discussing on the road?” The silence was deafening—they had been arguing with one another over who among them was greatest. He sat down and summoned the Twelve. “So you want first place? Then take the last place. Be the servant of all.” He put a child in the middle of the room. Then, cradling the little one in his arms, he said, “Whoever embraces one of these children as I do embraces me, and far more than me—God who sent me.”

Again, take some time for reflection. Invite conversation about the following questions. Consider having people share in pairs or triads for a more intimate, personal conversation.

Discussion Questions

1. Imagine that you were a child again and that Jesus took you up in his arms and blessed you. How would that make you feel?
2. Why would people bring their young children to Jesus?
3. What do these two passages tell us about how Jesus feels about children?
4. To whom does Jesus “speak sternly”? With whom does Jesus become angry? Who is Jesus teaching and what does he hope they learn?
5. If we take these passages seriously, how will our attitudes and actions toward children change?

As a large group discuss:

- Will these changes come easily?
- What might Jesus say to us if he were in this room?
- How might Jesus take us up in his arms and bless us?

When conversation has wrapped up, ask someone to read the following passage.

Bible Reading - Mark 4:35-41 (The Message)

Late that day he said to them, "Let's go across to the other side." They took him in the boat as he was. Other boats came along. A huge storm came up. Waves poured into the boat, threatening to sink it. And Jesus was in the stern, head on a pillow, sleeping! They roused him, saying, "Teacher, is it nothing to you that we're going down?" Awake now, he told the wind to pipe down and said to the sea, "Quiet! Settle down!" The wind ran out of breath; the sea became smooth as glass. Jesus reprimanded the disciples: "Why are you such cowards? Don't you have any faith at all?" They were in absolute awe, staggered. "Who is this, anyway?" they asked. "Wind and sea at his beck and call!"

Take a quiet moment to reflect on the passage. Then invite the group into conversation.

Discussion questions

1. There are children, youth and vulnerable adults in your community for whom every day is a stormy sea. What are the stormy seas for the households enrolled in our school? Our congregation? Our community?
2. Our children, the youngest and most vulnerable members of our world are in great danger when their lives are swamped by the waves. What are the dangers that are swamping our children and threatening their lives?
3. Jesus said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" What might we do to be like Jesus and rebuke the wind and seas that threaten to swamp the boats of the vulnerable and those most at risk in our communities?
4. Martin Luther invited people to become "little Christ's." How can we create a place that welcomes and comforts ALL in our congregation and community?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we ask that be with us as we seek to create safe places for your people in this congregation and community. Help us to make wise choices and calm any fears and doubts that we may face along the way. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Survey – “Where Are We Now? What Is Our Plan?”

Listed below are areas to consider in creating your schools and congregation’s Safe Haven guidelines. Use the checklist as a guide to establish the parameters and focus of your Taskforce. In determining whether to include a particular topic or area of ministry, read the accompanying descriptions listed on page 13-16, plus results of your own research.

- ✓ If an area of ministry is **Not Applicable** to one’s setting, then check that column.
- ✓ If an area is applicable and you already have guidelines in place, check **Yes**. If it needs to be **Reviewed**, and updated, then write an **“R”** in the “Yes” column.
- ✓ If you determine an area of your ministry has no established guidelines, then check **No** and proceed using this document as a resource.

Area of Consideration	Yes/R	No	Not Applicable
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A. Acceptable Behaviors & Actions *(Description for Staff & Volunteers)*

1. Definition of Staff and Volunteers	—	—	—
2. Training & Expectations	—	—	—
3. Description of Populations Served	—	—	—
4. Appropriate Relationships	—	—	—
5. Abuse Prevention/Reporting	—	—	—
6. Covenants	—	—	—
7. Mentoring	—	—	—
8. Bullying	—	—	—
9. Drugs and Alcohol	—	—	—

B. Programs *(Descriptions and Requirements to Establish Safety and Consistent Quality)*

1. School & Learning Center	—	—	—
2. Sunday School/VBS/After School	—	—	—
3. Nurseries/Child care	—	—	—
4. Youth, Adult & Older Adult Ministry	—	—	—
5. Worship	—	—	—
6. Transportation	—	—	—

C. Facility Use & Care for life

1. Crisis Management <i>(Weather related, violence, intruders etc.)</i>	—	—	—
2. Emergency procedures	—	—	—
3. First-Aide	—	—	—
4. Property Use	—	—	—

D. Administration

1. Supervision	—	—	—
2. Medical release and consent	—	—	—
3. Confidentiality	—	—	—
4. Electronic, Digital, Social Media	—	—	—
5. Reporting and Documentation	—	—	—
6. Screening, Background Checks	—	—	—
7. Finances	—	—	—
Other	—	—	—

Behavior, Programs, Facilities and Administration

The areas listed below are not comprehensive - you may decide to address additional areas and concerns. For each topic do your research. Explore examples from other schools and institutions. Become knowledgeable about a particular area to help determine whether this is an area to include in your school and/or congregation's guidelines.

For each area, ask:

- What resources, documents and tools do we already possess to guide us?
- What other information and resources do we need?
- Where will we look? What guidelines do other schools have in place?
- Who will do the research? Someone on our team? Other?
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A. Acceptable Behavior & Actions

It is important to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all who offer themselves for church and ministry related service.

1. Define Staff. Define Volunteer.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of all who offer themselves for church and ministry related service.

2. Training & Expectations

What is the expected behavior of all staff and volunteers? What training is offered for staff and volunteers in the various areas of ministry? Ex: Do they know emergency protocols?

3. Description of Populations One Serves

Do you serve vulnerable populations including but not limited to children, elderly, the frail, those with forms of disabilities, individuals in recovery? How do you create a Safe Haven for particular populations on your campus?

4. Appropriate Relationships Between Adults and At-risk Populations

Intentional boundaries are essential for appropriate relationships between adults and those for whom we care, interact with and take responsibility.

5. Abuse

The at-risk populations are vulnerable to many types of abuse. It is important that we take all the steps necessary to help protect those we care for from being abused.

6. Covenants

Covenants within and between groups of people help develop circles of trust, develop accountability and open lines of communication.

7. Mentoring

Mentoring is the process of matching someone with an individual who is caring, responsible and offers a particular skill or experience. Ex: Confirmation Mentors.

8. Bullying

By preventing bullying, we are teaching others how to value and treat people with respect.

9. Drugs and Alcohol

Guidelines set for prescription drug and alcohol use are beneficial for church members, staff, and all guests of the church. On campus? Mission trips? At camps? Conferences and retreats?

B. Areas to Consider for Safe & Quality Programming: On-Site and Off-Site

The faith community is responsible for the safety and nurturing of the people served whether the activities are at one's church campus or in another location.

1. School and/or Learning Center

Schools and Learning Centers already have to meet stringent city, county and state codes. How do these laws and expectations contribute to creating a Safe Haven?

2. Sunday School/VBS/After School

Setting procedures and policies for the on-going programs will help ensure students are learning and growing in the safest environment one can offer.

3. Nurseries/Child Care Implementing childcare policies for the nursery ministry help to ensure child safety and proper child development. Ex: Bathroom procedures... Two person rule...CPR?

4. Youth, Adult and Older Adult Ministry

What guidelines are needed to provide trusted relationships and safe space for people in all of life's stages? How do you create safe, cross+generational relationships?

5. Worship

How are intruders, medical emergencies, weather alerts and warnings during worship addressed? How do you care for registered sex offenders who might ask to worship with you?

6. Transportation

Transporting individuals to activities adds risks that are beyond one's control. There are many ways to help minimize these risks by setting guidelines for the person driving, passengers, and the vehicles used.

C. Care for Facilities and Care for Life

One way to express hospitality and insure that everyone who uses the school and church buildings is welcomed is to provide clear guidelines for the use of facilities, on-site and off-site.

1. Crisis Management

What are procedures for weather related crisis, natural disasters, intruders, and threats of violence? Who needs to know these? Where are they posted?

2. Emergency Procedures

Being prepared for an emergency helps reduce the impact that the situation will have on the school staff and that of the congregation.

3. First-Aide

Where are first-aide kits located? Defibrillators? People trained in CPR? Wheel-chair accessibility?

4. Use of Property and Facility by Others

Forms and guidelines created for use of property by all groups not directly associated with your church, and use by members for special events. What is your insurance coverage and liability?

D. Administration

1. Supervision

Define clear lines of supervision, authority and relationship between school principal/director, school staff, senior pastor, council president, council members, and staff (paid or volunteer) and all who lead ministries. Team collaboration is essential to success in safe haven practices.

2. Medical release, Indemnity and Consent Forms

Provide forms that give your church lawful consent to provide medical treatment for a participant in specific ministries. Also, forms for the lawful protection of the church.

3. Confidentiality

This area covers “the process” of reporting abuse, the gathering and storing of information for background checks, drivers license on file, and other screening and reporting details.

4. Electronic, Digital and Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, texting, and blogs are used by millions of people - adult and youth. What are your congregation’s guidelines for your website? Community platforms? Use of social media by staff, youth ministers, and volunteers? How do you address permission to take or post photos?

5. Reporting and Documentation

Is everyone clear on who is a required mandated reporter of abuse? Do you know your local and state laws? To whom do you report intended self harm or harm of others? Is there a process in place for documentation when someone is injured? All these steps are important to create and maintain a safe school and church.

6. Screening and Background checks

For the safety for our children and families, background checks, annual screening and training is encouraged.

7. Finances

- *Background Checks:* Background checks for all persons who handle or disburse church funds.
- *Bonding:* Bonding all persons who handle or disburse church funds.
- *Receipts:* Require two-deep confirmation of all offering receipts and deposits.
- *Payables:* Separate payables requests from check writing authority and have financial secretary confirm both.
- *Monthly Financials:* Monthly financials presented to the council and made available for inspection and review by the congregation.

Nancy Bond offers Risk Management Workshops for Treasurers, Directors and Officers, “What You Need to Know!” <http://www.nancybondinsurance.com/coverage/church/>

Additional Resources and References

- ELCA Legal Resources <https://elca.org/Resources/Risk-Management>
- Nancy Bond Insurance. Nancy is a friend of our ELCA schools. She provides Safe Guarding God's Children training. <http://www.nancybondinsurance.com/coverage/church/>
- Safe Haven for Children, ELCA
http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Safe_Haven_ChildrenSPR99.pdf

Serving by Safeguarding Your Church. Churches ought to be the safest place on earth. Includes developing a security structure and team, to assessing interior and exterior building security, training ushers and greeters to be sensitive to security, forming an emergency reaction team, establishing financial accountability, and much more.
<https://www.cokesbury.com/forms/ProductDetail.aspx?pid=403834>
- Sunday School Matters
http://enews.cph.org/q/kAZhqjB3k8pD_MMIRfB7A5IN9WAB86YfmCFILHQCLf-liQJ81yQY6vA

ABUSE PREVENTAION TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Darkness to Light: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training
http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkgcISE/b.6243681/k.86C/Child_Sexual_Abuse_Prevention_Training.htm
- Safe Guarding God's Children (Faith-based)
<https://www.cpg.org/administrators/insurance/preventing-sexual-misconduct/purchasing/>
<http://www.safeguardingonline.org>
<https://www.churchpublishing.org/products/index.cfm?fuseaction=add&productID=6338>
- Faith Trust Institute – Resources for Preventing Child Abuse of All Forms
<http://www.faitrustinstitute.org/store/child-abuse/all-materials>
- Stop It Now
<http://www.stopitnow.org>

MODEL and SAMPLE GUIDELINES

- Big Brothers and Big Sisters

http://www.bebigforkids.org/site/c.6fIMIZMzFIJ0H/b.7968051/k.679A/What_Bigs_Need_to_Know.htm

- Boy Scouts of America

<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/GSS/gss01.aspx>

- Episcopal Church: View a Model Policy:

<https://www.cpg.org/administrators/insurance/preventing-sexual-misconduct/overview/>

- Girl Scouts of America

<http://www.girlscouts.org/en/adults/volunteer/safety.html>

- The Safe Haven Guidelines, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the ELCA:

<http://gulfcoastsynod.org/gulf-coast-resources/safe-haven-guidelines/>

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- **Cherish All Children** Sharing Christ's love for children so that they will be cherished, not exploited...

<http://www.cherishallchildren.org>

www.facebook.com/cherishallchildren

Safe Guarding God's Children Training

There are a variety of respected child sexual abuse prevention training resources available to choose from. One we recommend is “Safeguarding God’s Children” which had its origins in the Episcopal Church. It is faith based.

Training provides participants with the information they need to protect children they know and care for both in their personal lives and in the ministries in which they serve. The training includes instruction about recognizing signs of sexual abuse, learning what are acceptable gestures of care, watching for inappropriate behavior and knowing steps to take if the volunteer suspects abuse has occurred. School staff, parents, church leaders and volunteers can all help protect the children they work with as well as protect themselves. We can all be trained eyes and ears in this effort to protect children.

This program is based on the philosophy that if every adult can protect just one child, they will forever change one life and if we can all change one life; together we can make a difference in this generation of children and the next. While this goal will require time and attention, it is a vital step toward the goal of making children and the adults who care for them safe in our communities.

Safeguarding God's Children is an in-depth educational and training program for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse in everyday life and in ministry. The boxed kit includes two professionally produced DVDs (the first is for parents and congregations, the second is for clergy, employees and volunteers of our churches and related institutions involved with children and youth), AND an extensive training manual provided both in DVD and notebook formats.

This program was created by the Church Pension Group in association with Presidium, Inc. in response to the Episcopal General Convention Resolution B008, Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, which mandates training in sexual abuse prevention.

Each kit contains:

- For Parents and Congregations (DVD, 29 minutes)
- For Ministries (DVD, 22 minutes)
- Participant Workbooks and Manual for Training (both print & CD-ROM Formats)

To place an order, call Cokesbury 800-672-1789 or 800-242-1918. Bulk pricing available. Also available in Spanish.

<https://www.churchpublishing.org/products/index.cfm?fuseaction=add&productID=6338>

Celebrate!

Your congregation and/or school's commitment to being a Safe Haven is worthy of a celebration!
Use the following Litany in a worship service or school/congregational meeting as an act of affirmation of your covenant to be a Safe Haven.

Covenant to be a SAFE HAVEN

We, (Name of School) living out our faith at (street address, city, state, zip) in the (Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), affirm our commitment to be a Safe Haven for children, our youth, the frail, and the vulnerable among us; knowing that living into this covenant is a lifelong process of learning and caring; and knowing that we work along side others in the ELEA, CENetwork, our immediate community, our synod, the wider church and the world to develop ministry, programs and places where all God's children may flourish; we ask God to guide us and help us.



Litany of Commitment

LEADER: We long for all God's children, the young, the elderly, frail and vulnerable, to be free from fear and free to live in faith.

PEOPLE: May we develop trusted relationships with ALL God's children in our Lutheran schools, learning centers, households, congregation and community.

LEADER: Thank you, God, for entrusting to us the care of your children and youth as well as the opportunity, responsibility and the joy.

PEOPLE: Lord, deepen our commitment to the children and youth who are central to the life of this school and congregation. Help us provide safe spaces and relationships to encourage and celebrate their many gifts and nurture their faith as your disciples.

LEADER: May all our actions, relationships and ministries reflect the love and care of Jesus.

PEOPLE: Help us be a Safe Haven for all God's Children. In your Most Holy Name. **Amen.**