

Safeguarding God's Children Policy
Esperanza Lutheran Church
Phoenix, Arizona

Purpose

It is the purpose of the volunteers and staff of Esperanza Lutheran Church to provide a safe and secure environment for minors entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage growth in our relationship with God and one another.

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our minors, staff, volunteers, visitors, and our entire church family at Esperanza Lutheran Church.

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

"Any sexual activity with a child - whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child." Church Law and Tax Report's *'Reducing the Risk'*

Background Checks, Confidentiality, & Disqualification

Staff and volunteers who regularly work with minors at Esperanza Lutheran Church will be required to complete a background check or provide a fingerprint clearance card. While this process understandably trespasses into the privacy of our lives, the security of our minors outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigation and disclosures. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all background checks, or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be maintained in the strictest of confidence by the pastor/pastor designee. In reviewing the background check, if a question arises, an interview by a pastor(s)/pastor designee may occur.

Specifically, for those employed by Children of Hope Preschool, a check of public records for history of conviction of a crime against children (Child Abuse Registry) will be completed prior to any caregiver's contact with children. Prior to employment, the Preschool Director will require the following from candidates for employment.

1. Background Check
2. Child Abuse Registry Check
3. Level 1 Fingerprint Clearance Card

All potential staff, substitutes, and volunteers at the preschool will be required to attest to any previous convictions whether they have ever been convicted of any crime against children or other violent crime. A volunteer's or staff person's failure to fully disclose previous convictions will be viewed as automatic grounds for dismissal.

The Children of Hope Director may review the candidacy of an employee who has criminal offenses on their record on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the board.

A potential employee can appeal a disqualification with the Children of Hope board.

Registered Sexual Offender at Esperanza Lutheran Church

Esperanza Lutheran Church may allow a person known to be a registered sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation, but they must adhere to specific guidelines. The pastor/pastor designee will first check with the offender's probation/parole officer for any restrictions regarding attending services or other functions where children are present. The pastor/pastor designee will ask the probation/parole officer to put any restrictions in writing. If restrictions do not prohibit participation, people with sexual offenses on their record may participate with the following stipulations.

1. No person convicted of child sexual abuse may participate in any program or event at Esperanza Lutheran Church.
2. Level 1 offenders may be in conversation with the Preschool Director and pastor, with the approval of the council, to participate in the community life of Esperanza.
3. A level 1 sexual offender cannot participate or volunteer with any program specifically for children or youth such as Vacation Bible School or Sunday Funday.
4. A known sexual offender can only participate in a predetermined service each week and will sit in the front row or in a place determined by the pastor/pastor designee.
5. The identity of a sexual offender who volunteers with the congregation will be disclosed to congregational leaders who oversee the specific program.

Children of Hope Preschool Teacher Requirements

Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect.

We shall be familiar with the risk factors for and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse and physical, emotional, educational, and medical neglect. We shall know and follow state laws and community procedures that protect children against abuse and neglect. When we have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, we shall report it to the appropriate community agency and follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken. When appropriate, parents or guardians will be informed that the referral will be or has been made. When another person tells us of his or her suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, we shall assist that person in taking appropriate action in order to protect the child. When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of children, we have an ethical responsibility to protect children or inform parents and/or others who can.

All staff will receive training regarding the risk factors for and symptoms of child abuse and neglect as a part of their orientation process within 10 days of beginning work.

Volunteer Enlistment

- This policy shall be administered by the pastor(s) or pastor's designee.
- All *paid staff* who work with minors at Esperanza Lutheran Church will be required to complete a background check or provide a copy of a current fingerprint clearance card. All background check

documentation and fingerprint clearance card copies will be kept in a secure file accessed only by pastor/pastor designee.

- All *regular volunteers* who work with minors at Esperanza Lutheran Church will be required to complete a background check or provide an Arizona Fingerprint Clearance Card completed in the last 5 years. All background check documentation will be kept in a secure file. (Only the pastor(s)/pastor designate of Esperanza Lutheran Church will have access to the background/reference check report.)
- All paid staff and regular volunteers who transport minors are required to submit a copy of their current driver's license, current vehicle registration, and current proof of insurance. All items will be secured in the church office.
- No regular volunteer will be allowed to work with minors until the background check is complete or fingerprint clearance card is produced.
- All regular volunteers will be required to attend a 1-hour training session on how to prevent child abuse.
- All regular volunteers will be given a copy of the Esperanza Lutheran Safeguarding God's Children policy.
- A Safeguarding God's Children training will be provided by the pastor/pastor designee at least two (2) times a year.
- COH teachers will go through their own continuing education regarding the safety of children, so they do not need to attend the annual Safeguarding God's Children training.

Basic Expectations

The expectations for all staff and volunteers working with minors include the following:

*Staff and volunteers must adhere to the Esperanza Lutheran Church Safeguarding God's Children Policy.

*Staff and volunteers will portray a positive role model for minors by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy and maturity.

*All preschool parents have the opportunity to sign a photo release for their children at Children of Hope Preschool (Addendum B). Parents of other children and youth in the Esperanza community have the opportunity to sign a photo release as part of the permission form (see Addendum A).

Specific Prohibited Acts when Working with Minors

The following acts or omissions, without limitation, are violations of this Esperanza Lutheran Church SGC Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program with minors and are to be immediately reported to the designated program staff after the safety of the minor involved has been assured.

*Reporting to work or volunteering under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or substances, including the illegal use of prescription drugs

*The illegal use, sale, manufacture, distribution, or possession of drugs while on Esperanza's premises and while operating vehicles during Esperanza or Children of Hope programs

*The use, sale, possession, transfer, or purchase of alcoholic beverages on Esperanza's premises or while working or volunteering at Esperanza, except in connection with church or preschool-authorized events

*Working or volunteering under the influence of prescription or nonprescription drugs that could impair judgment or motor functions and potentially place persons or property in jeopardy

*Possession of a weapon of any kind

- *Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor
- *Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any people
- *Physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor
- *Any physical touch to which the minor does not consent
- *Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of Esperanza Lutheran Church
- *Mental or emotional injury to a minor, including verbal harassment or racial slurs
- *The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials
- *Smoking or using tobacco products in the presence of a minor. Esperanza is a smoke-free campus.
- *Profanity
- *Inappropriate dress. All staff and volunteers working with minors shall be neat and clean; clothing may not be sexually explicit or include images or words displaying tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or drug paraphernalia.
- *Failure to report witnessed sexual abuse or physical abuse of minors, elder adults, or vulnerable adults to the Preschool Director, pastor, or program leader

Behavioral Guidelines for Ministry with Children and Youth at Esperanza Lutheran Church

1. All staff and volunteers care for and minister with children with an expectation of “no 1-on-1 and open door rule.” This means, 1 child and 1 adult cannot be alone in the same room with one another at any time unless the door is open and other adults are within eyesight.
2. Staff and volunteers may return hugs initiated by children, but shoulder-to-shoulder hugs (“side hugs”) or A-frame hugs (where only the top portion of bodies touch) should be used.
3. Adults will encourage children to initiate less invasive forms of physical affection such as high fives, fist bumps, and handshakes.
4. In the presence of at least one other adult and the consent of the minor, an adult may pat a minor on the back, shake hands, give a high five or fist bump. If the minor feels uncomfortable with such touch, adults will respect the minor’s boundaries.
5. Be extra careful with pre-teens as physical contact is confusing.
6. Do not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, or degrade a child.
7. Do not do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves.
8. At COH, teachers may assist with toileting or change the diapers of toddlers. Two adults are present whenever this is done.
9. At COH, teachers encourage 3 year olds and 4 year olds to use the bathroom without assistance. When a child is upset or discouraged, teachers may provide assistance. Two adults must be present whenever this is done.
10. For church programs, one adult may take elementary age or older children to the bathroom, but adults shall not enter the bathroom with them.
11. The church will have a “reasonable worker/child ratio” in each situation. At COH, the reasonable ratio will be at least as low as state standards. Beginning in the 2023-2024 academic year, the ratios will be:
 - Toddler Room – 1 teacher to 4 children
 - 3 Year Old Room – 1 teacher to 7 children
 - 4 Year Old Room – 1 teacher to 8 children
12. Pastor, staff, or appointed volunteers will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time.

13. Parental Permission Forms shall be obtained in advance for involvement in church sponsored programs and activities. See Addendum A.
14. Staff or volunteers, such as confirmation mentors, may meet with youth one-on-one in a public space in view of others or in a private space, such as a home, within view of other adults.
15. A list of regular volunteers will be available in the church office upon request.
16. The church will educate all volunteers and paid workers who deal with minors as to the church's policies and procedures concerning Esperanza Lutheran Church Safeguarding God's Children Policy.
17. At COH, without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian having legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.
18. Anyone who observes abuse of a minor will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Report any inappropriate conduct to the congregational president, pastor, teacher, or Preschool Director of Esperanza Lutheran Church for handling.
19. One adult transporting minors in a vehicle is permissible provided that their arrival time at the event and their return time to Esperanza is specified to their parents and respected.
20. Parents/grandparents/guardians will come to the minors' Sunday school or Vacation Bible School room to pick up their child(ren) following programming instead of children coming to the parents. Any adults specified in the Permission Form (Addendum A) who may not pick up children will not be allowed to do so.
21. At COH, parents must sign in and sign out their children. All adults picking up children must be on the approved pick up list. When someone not on the approved pick-up list picks up a child, the Preschool Director requires written permission from a parent/guardian and the photo identification of the adult at time of pick-up.
22. When a child's actions or words warrant a parent-teacher conference or parent-pastor conversation, the parent will be notified, for example, when a child wants to use a different gendered bathroom than expected or their behavior endangers the safety of other children.
23. On overnight trips and camps, adults will sleep with the whole group or may sleep in a separate room with only other adults. When only communal showers are available, adults will shower at a different time than minors.
24. Adults will not communicate with minors on the adults' personal social media platforms or through texting, except in very specific agreed-upon circumstances like mission trips when communication is necessary for safety and where the parents of the minor have full knowledge of the communication.
25. When leading an online meeting or event, at least two adults will be present.
26. Zoom links and links from similar platforms for youth meetings will not be openly shared with the public.
27. Online topical material will be limited in the same way in-person discussion is, meaning, for instance, no conversation of a sexual nature except with full knowledge and consent of parents and from an educational perspective.
28. Screenshots and videos from Zoom and similar platforms will not be taken without parental permission. When Zoom and similar platform meetings are recorded, recordings will only happen with the express permission of parents. When meetings plan to be recorded, notice will be shared prior to the meeting.

Occasional Volunteer Workers

Adults volunteering occasionally are encouraged to go through the background check process and attend the training.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. ELC shall be Esperanza Lutheran Church.
2. SGC shall be Safeguarding God's Children.
3. COH shall be Children of Hope Development Center.
4. "Minor" shall be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen (18).
5. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
6. "Regular Volunteer" shall be defined as any Sunday school teacher, Christian Education Director, Vacation Bible School Coordinator, Confirmation Mentor, and Mission Trip Chaperone.
7. "Occasional Volunteer" shall be defined as any adult who occasionally serves as a volunteer with minors. These adults are always accompanied by a regular volunteer or staff.
8. "Child Abuse" shall be defined as "any sexual activity with a child - whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child."
9. "Background check" is the procedure used to check the background of staff and volunteers.
10. "Qualified Persons" shall be defined as Pastor(s)/pastor designate.
11. "No 1-on-1 or open door rule" requires an adult working with minors to be accompanied by at least one other minor or to provide visual access to the room.
12. "Reasonable adult/child ratio" shall be defined as at least 2 adults per 6-12 youth, one additional adult per 1-6 additional youth.
13. "Parental Permission Form" shall be defined as ELC SGC Policy Addendum A.

Non-Emergent Care

Minor injuries that occur should be managed using basic first aid. Parents will be notified of the injury asap. First aid kits are located as below:

First Aid Kits

First Aid Kits are available in the following places.

- Esperanza Kitchen
- Each classroom at Children of Hope Development Center
- Director's Office at Children of Hope Development Center
- 2nd Floor
- Esperanza Office
- In at least one car when volunteers are transporting minors to or from a church event

When to Call for Emergency Medical Services

- the child is unconscious, semi-conscious or unusually confused
- the child's airway is blocked
- the child is not breathing
- the child is having difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or is choking
- the child has no pulse
- the child has bleeding that will not stop
- the child is coughing up or vomiting blood
- the child has been poisoned
- the child has a seizure for the first time, a seizure that lasts more than 5 minutes, or an atypical seizure
- the child has injuries to the head, neck or back
- the child has sudden, severe pain anywhere in the body

- the child’s condition is limb-threatening (for example, severe eye injuries, amputations or other injuries that may leave the child permanently disabled unless he/she receives immediate care)
- the child’s condition could worsen or become life-threatening on the way to the hospital if not transported by EMS
- moving the child could cause further injury
- the child needs the skills or equipment of paramedics or emergency medical technicians
- distance or traffic conditions would cause a delay in getting the child to the hospital
- The child has received an epi pen injection for an allergic reaction. If a child has an epi pen, an adult will know this and know how to use it
- When you are not sure if it is best to call EMS

Emergency Plan

1. Call 911 – see more details below about when to call 911
2. Check the scene for the safety of yourself and others
3. Check the victim
4. DO NOT move the victim! Wait for emergency personnel unless safety is an issue.
5. Stay with the victim
6. Remove additional people away from the scene
7. Have the parental permission form available for medical staff
8. Call the family of the victim
9. Communicate with other staff or volunteers
10. Call the pastor(s) or paid staff

Current ELC SGC Parental Permission Form Addendum A will be held in confidence by pastor(s) designee to be made available at all times in case of emergency.

When traveling in a vehicle:

- Current vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and driver’s license will be available.
- All passengers will wear seat belts and follow applicable seat requirements for minors.

Report of and Response to Elder Abuse

Elder abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults, such as adults with developmental disabilities, while on Esperanza property or by Esperanza clergy or volunteers will follow the same reporting and response process as is below in the section entitled “Response to Sexual Abuse.”

Response to Sexual Abuse

Esperanza Lutheran Church will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of sexual abuse. All accusations of sexual abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege sexual abuse and those who have been accused of sexual abuse.

When an allegation is made involving sexual abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The pastor or an appointed person will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If the pastor is the individual accused of sexual abuse, then the congregational president will conduct the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws.

2. Report the matter to Esperanza Lutheran Church's insurance carrier.
3. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
4. Esperanza Lutheran Church may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
5. An official of Esperanza Lutheran Church (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with the congregation council of Esperanza Lutheran Church and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
6. The congregational president and/or pastor(s) of Esperanza Lutheran Church will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
7. The pastor(s) of Esperanza Lutheran Church will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
8. During the investigation, the pastor(s) of Esperanza Lutheran Church shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
9. The congregational president and/or pastor(s) of Esperanza Lutheran Church (and legal counsel or other consultants) may meet with the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
10. Communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of Esperanza Lutheran Church.
11. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.
12. Hire a consultant or assign a spokesperson to respond to media or prepare a statement for the media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of Esperanza Lutheran Church's attorney.

**Esperanza Lutheran Church Safeguarding God's Children Parental Permission Form
Addendum A**

Youth's Name: _____ Birth Date: ____/____/____ Grade in Fall : _____

Youth's Name: _____ Birth Date: ____/____/____ Grade in Fall : _____

Youth's Name: _____ Birth Date: ____/____/____ Grade in Fall : _____

Youth's Name: _____ Birth Date: ____/____/____ Grade in Fall : _____

Youth's Name: _____ Birth Date: ____/____/____ Grade in Fall : _____

Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____

Address (include city): _____

Home Phone: (____) ____ - ____ Parent A-Work: (____) ____ - ____ Parent B-Work: (____) ____ - ____

Cell Phone: (____) ____ - ____ E-mail: _____

Another person who can be contacted in an emergency if the parents/guardian cannot be reached:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) ____ - ____

Relationship to the youth: _____

Medications the youth is/are currently taking:

Allergies/other health concerns that we should know about (asthma, seizures, diabetes, food allergies, etc.):

Has each youth received a tetanus shot within the last 10 years? _____

Doctor Name and Phone #: _____ (____) ____ - ____

Insurance Company: _____ Policy #: _____

Who is the policy holder? _____

Hospital preference: _____

Photography Release

____ Yes, I, the undersigned, give permission for my child to be photographed, through traditional photography, screenshots, and recordings for publication in Esperanza Lutheran Church related publications. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be alerted of recorded online events and meetings prior to the event.

____ No, I, the undersigned, do not give permission for my child to be photographed.

Activity Release

To the best of my knowledge, my child is in good health and is in sufficiently good physical condition to engage in any reasonable athletic events or activities included in Esperanza events. I give permission for participation in outings and activities except:

For children in 5th grade and younger:

In the case that I am not able to pick up my child, he/she has permission go with

Name	Relation	Phone number
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Name	Relation	Phone number
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____ Yes, my child has permission to walk home.

My child does not have permission to go home with _____

General Parental Consent

I release and discharge Esperanza Lutheran Church and/or its representative from any liability whatsoever while my child is participating in activities or events sponsored by Esperanza Lutheran Church off of church property or when my child is engaged in any other activity or event on the property of Esperanza Lutheran Church. I accept full responsibility for any damage and/or injury which may occur to my child, his/her property or property of Esperanza Lutheran Church.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

**THIS PERMISSION WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT FOR ACTIVITIES HELD BETWEEN
SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 through AUGUST 31, 2024.**

**Children of Hope Child Development Center
Photo Release Form
Addendum B**

I, _____ hereby authorize _____
(Parent or Guardian) (Name of Student)

to participate in the making of projects consisting of photographs, video, film production, internet / website titled "Children of Hope Preschool" on or about the 2022-2023 school year. I specifically understand that Children of Hope Child Development Center shall hereby retain any and all rights in the photograph(s), or video/film production, internet/website, including but not limited to, the right to reproduce, copy, edit, exhibit, publish, or distribute such photograph(s), video, film and/or internet.

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____