

## **LWML Child Protection Policy**

### **General Purpose Statement**

Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in LWML sponsored programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

### **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term "volunteer" means anyone involved in childcare at events or in youth programs.

### **Selection of Workers**

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in LWML programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

#### *Written Application*

Persons under the age of 18 are not permitted to assist with childcare. If there is a shortage of volunteers, childcare should not be provided, or alternative childcare options should be explored.

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign an application form to be supplied by LWML. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous employment information, and disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the LWML.

#### *Reference Checks*

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at LWML.

#### *Criminal Background Check*

A national criminal background check is required for all "volunteers" as defined above.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing LWML to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children at LWML sponsored programs and activities.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the LWML President or LWML District President on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the LWML.

#### *Two Adult Rule*

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth programs may have only one adult in attendance during the session; in these instances, doors to the room should remain open and there should be no fewer than three children with the adult. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult in any sponsored activity. This is for the protection of the child and the adult.

#### Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.

Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.

Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.

Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at an LWML event or program becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the LWML President or LWML District President for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred during an LWML sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be followed:

The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.

The worker or volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from future LWML sponsored programs or activities during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the alleged victim or with witnesses.

All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and LWML will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. LWML will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.

The insurance company will be notified, and LWML will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.

LWML will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation. All other representatives of LWML should refrain from speaking to the media.

A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.

Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will not be permitted to volunteer with children or youth at any LWML sponsored program or activity.

#### Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below third grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian.

### Sick Child Policy

Children who are observed by volunteers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

### Medications Policy

It is the policy of LWML not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the person designated as the childcare or program leader to develop a plan of action.

### Discipline Policy

It is the policy of LWML not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the person designated as the childcare or program leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

### Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should be escorted in a group by workers to the bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.

### Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

#### Training

LWML will provide training on this child protection policy to all childcare workers.

Please click on the link below to access the Child Protection Policy plus the accompanying forms to complete:

[Personnel - Child Protection Policy and Background Check - Formstack](#)