

LOS GATOS UMC CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

For Workers with Children and Youth at Los Gatos UMC

Thank you for your interest in working with Children and Youth. This protection policy is important to us as it helps protect our children and youth, you (the volunteer and/or staff), and the church. We ask that you carefully read over the whole Child and Youth Protection Policy, after each page initial the bottom, and sign the last page to indicate that you have read the document and accepted the procedures, rules, and regulations. Thanks for helping us to protect our children and youth.

I. RATIONALE

Because God has given us a sacred opportunity and a great responsibility to nurture and protect children and youth and the persons who work with them, the Los Gatos United Methodist Church (LOS GATOS UMC) will take reasonable steps to educate its staff and volunteers in the recognition and prevention of opportunities for and instances of child abuse. LOS GATOS UMC will put in place reasonable procedures in order to provide a safe and supportive place for children, youth, and the persons who work with them, to protect children and youth from child abuse on its campus and in its programs, and to appropriately intervene in instances of alleged abusive behavior, caring for all involved.

All staff and volunteers should take the following precautions to prevent confusing situations:

- Have other staff members present anytime children are dressing, undressing, bathing, etc.
- Respect the child/youth's privacy and do not become more intrusive or curious than necessary monitoring health and welfare.
- Respect that child / youth's wishes in terms of limiting means of the expression of affection -or concern.
- Protect your own privacy and do not discuss personally sensitive or intimate matters with children or youth.
- Do not pursue personal, private relationships with children / youth.
- Whenever possible, adults should be assigned in teams of two or more in programs involving children and youth at LOS GATOS UMC.
- Whenever possible, volunteers who have been affiliated with LOS GATOS UMC for less than six months should be paired with a longer term volunteer or staff member.

Please Note: The Director of Children's Ministries (DCM), the Director of Youth Ministries (DYM), and the pastors will make random visits to all classrooms and youth events. All proceedings of the Child Care Team and records related to the screening of staff and volunteers will be kept confidential. Records will be kept locked in a file in the main office.

Because we believe that each person is a beloved child of God, LOS GATOS UMC will provide appropriate support to all parties involved in any allegation of child abuse, the child or youth, the parents, the accuser, and the accused. The Child Care Team will initiate said support.

II. COVENANT/STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SELECTION

The following criteria must be satisfied for each of the paid staff and volunteers who work with children and youth on a regular basis before they will be permitted to participate with children and youth as part of the Los Gatos UMC program:

- An employment application must be completed, including references. References will not be required on a 3+ year Los Gatos UMC volunteers.
- A criminal reference check will be conducted by the fingerprinting of all paid and volunteer staff who works on a regular basis with children and youth. Persons with any known criminal child abuse convictions will not be permitted to work with children or youth as part of the LOS GATOS UMC program.
- References will be checked and documented.
- A Statement of Disclosure completed
- The Covenant for Working with Children and Youth must be signed.
- The Driver's Applications Form completed
- The Student Ministry Counselor Commitment Form completed
- A personal interview will be conducted by any combination of a designated pastor, the DCM and/or DYM, and a representative from the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) who will determine their eligibility for the job.

Initial: _____

III. Child Abuse and Neglect

i. DEFINITION OF ABUSE

According to the California law, every person who has reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused is mandated to report the suspected abuse. Volunteer leaders and workers are no exception. California law defines child abuse as any of the following:

- A child is physically injured by other than accidental means
- A child is subjected to willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment
- A child is abused or exploited sexually.
- A child is neglected by a parent or caretaker who fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision

ii. MAKING A DETERMINATION OF CHILD ABUSE

Whether a child gives indication of abuse through behavior, physical condition, or verbal communication, the staff person and/or volunteer should be sensitive to the conflict and trauma the child has experienced.

- Do not, panic or overreact to what the child / youth disclose.
- Do not criticize the child/youth or claim that the child/youth misunderstood what happened.
- Do not promise not to tell anyone, but respect the child/youth's privacy. Assure the child / youth that you will keep the disclosure in limited confidentiality discussing it only with adults in charge who need to be involved in the reporting process. Follow through on this assurance for the protection of the child / youth's dignity.

Avoid interviewing the child/youth repeatedly, but encourage him or her to be willing to share with other adults who will act to provide help.

No staff or volunteers should confront a parent or parents or suggest any suspicion of child abuse.

Inappropriate sexual advances should not be confused with physical contacts which are appropriate expressions of affection and concern.

iii. REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

At any LOS GATOS UMC event, if a volunteer/leader/staff person suspects the abuse of a child or youth, whether it may have occurred at the event or prior to the event, that volunteer/leader/staff person should discuss his or her suspicions with the head of the event and/or a pastor. Preliminary information should be reported on the church's Child Protection Screening Form, copies of which can be found in the church school office or church office. Preliminary information should include:

- The child's name, age, gender, and names of other family members.
- Address and phone number.
- Parent's place of employment.
- Description of the suspected abuse.
- Current condition of the child or youth

All allegations of child abuse will be taken seriously. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer to report suspected abuse to the Child Protective Services. However, if the staff member or volunteer feels consultation is necessary to determine if their suspicions are reportable, a "Child Care Team" meeting can be called to review the case. The Child Care Team will be composed of a pastor, the DCM and DYM, a health care professional and/or the parish nurse, an attorney, and a social worker. All proceedings and decisions will be kept confidential.

If it is determined that the suspicions of child abuse are well founded, a report will be submitted to the Santa Clara County Child Protective Services. The proper forms can be obtained from the office manager. Copies of these forms will be kept in a locked file by the office manager.

When such a report is made, the appropriate Conference staff will be notified. The Conference number is (916) 374-1517

If the suspected abuser is a staff member or volunteer of the LOS GATOS UMC, they shall be removed from any situations where direct, private contact with the child/youth could occur. Appropriate measures should be taken by the leadership of the church to preserve a sense of security and normality. This could mean that the suspected person is asked to leave.

Initial: _____

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. SCREENING

The SPRC will have the ultimate authority for the screening and hiring of staff. The DYM, DCM, and pastor(s) will screen all support staff and child / youth volunteers.

Administrative Steps:

A. Completion of Forms

The DYM and DCM will provide applicable forms to each potential volunteer and staff member who works with children and youth and will confirm completion and return of these forms. Employee records will be maintained by the Church Business Administrator. Volunteer records will be maintained by the DYM and/or the DCM.

B. Confidential Applications

Review of confidential applications will be done by the DYM, DCM, pastor, and/or a SPRC representative. The applicant either is or is not authorized to volunteer or be employed based on the review of each confidential application.

C. Criminal Reference Check

A criminal reference check will be conducted on volunteers and paid staff. The DCM and DYM will arrange for fingerprinting of all paid and volunteer staff for whom a criminal reference check will be conducted through the California Department of Justice and review the information provided by the California Department of Justice.

D. Interview

The DCM and/or the DYM will interview each new volunteer and complete an interview form after conducting the interview.

E. References

The assigned interviewer will check references for each new volunteer and will complete a response form. (Not required for 3+ year LOS GATOS UMC volunteers.)

F. Filing of Records

The Business Administrator will file all confidential applications, reference forms, statements of disclosures, covenant for working with children and youth, driver's application forms if applicable, and criminal reference checks in secure confidential files.

G. List of Volunteers

The DCM and/or the DYM will keep a list of approved volunteers and staff members for child and youth work.

All staff/volunteers who work with children & youth on a regular basis will be required to complete yearly training for screening for child abuse awareness. This training will be made available during the Fall Teacher Training event, which will include CPR training.

GUIDELINES AND SAFETY STANDARDS

The following are the minimum requirements for acceptance as a children or youth event leader or staff person.

1. All persons working directly with children and youth must complete a Covenant/application form with three references and a back ground check which shall be kept on file at Los Gatos UMC. The references will be held confidential. The pastor assigned to oversee youth work shall review this application. A person will be allowed to work with children and youth only with approval of the pastor. A satisfactory reference check does not guarantee the right to work with children and youth, and the application may be rejected for any reason that the pastor determines to be significant. In the event that, within 30 days prior to the start of an event, a staff person or volunteer backs out for any reason, and another staff person must be recruited, the pastor shall send the staff person a covenant and application form to fill out and submit immediately. References will be obtained by phone or in person.
2. The Statement of Disclosure and Los Gatos UMC covenant must be signed and dated.
3. All church school teachers & youth leaders will complete a training program, provided by the DCM and DYM or the pastor.
4. Teachers and leaders are prohibited from bringing to or using at an event any of the following: fireworks, firearms (loaded or unloaded - whether in the trunk of the car or any other so-called secure place), knives (of any length) except when used under adult supervision as a part of a youth or children event, other weapons, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and illicit drugs.
5. All volunteers who work with children & youth shall be evaluated at the close of each year by the staff. These evaluations will be kept confidential.
6. All volunteers who work with children and youth shall provide a written evaluation for each staff person working with children and youth. These are to be maintained by SPRC. They are to be used for continued staff recommendations or bans' and are to be kept confidential.

Initial: _____

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____

LOS GATOS UMC COVENANT

For Workers with Children and Youth at Los Gatos UMC

To provide a safe and supportive environment for children and youth and the persons who work with them at LGUMC, to provide a strong and healthy volunteer environment at LGUMC, and to minimize the possibilities of child abuse occurring in connection with LGUMC ministries, when I am working with children or youth as part of a LGUMC ministry,

I, _____ (print name) agree:

- ❖ To treat all children and youth with respect and consideration
- ❖ To treat all children and youth equally regardless of sex, race, religion, culture, health status, financial situation, beliefs, and/or sexual orientation
- ❖ To use positive techniques of guidance such as redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism.
- ❖ To have age-appropriate expectations, establish guidelines, & environments that minimize the need for discipline.
- ❖ To reframe from any behavior that could be considered abusive to children or youth, including:
 - Physical abuse - striking, spanking, shaking, slapping
 - Verbal abuse - humiliation, degradation, threats
 - Sexual abuse - inappropriate touch or verbal exchange
 - Mental abuse - shaming, withholding love, cruelty
 - Neglect - withholding food, water, basic care.
- ❖ To remain at all times with any child under the age of 8 who has been left in my care.
- ❖ To release a child under the age of 8 only to his or her parent, unless specifically instructed otherwise by the parent.
- ❖ To remain in view of others at all times whenever I am working with a child or youth.
- ❖ To check the rest room or ask the Sunday School supervising staff to do so to ensure that it is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing a child under the age of 8 to use a rest room.
- ❖ To leave restroom doors open when assisting a younger child.
- ❖ To conduct or supervise private activities, such as diapering, with another adult or where I will be visible to others.
- ❖ To respect children's and youth's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say no to touching.
- ❖ To maintain an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity to be a positive role model for children and youth.
- ❖ To refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children and youth.
- ❖ To not use profanity, tell inappropriate jokes, or share intimate details of my personal life in the presence of children or youth.
- ❖ To not date LGUMC or Los Gatos program participants who are under 18 years of age.
- ❖ To inform the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries if I believe there is any reason I should not be charged with the care of children or youth, including any physical or psychological condition.
- ❖ To be aware of the health of children 'or youth, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns" etc.' and to report any concerns I have about suspected abuse to the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries
- ❖ To attend training session in the recognition of the child abuse and to review the policies and procedures regarding the care of children and youth offered by LGUMC
- ❖ To comply with the LGUMC Volunteer and Child Protection Policy.

Anytime that I am scheduled to work with children or youth, if I am under the influence of alcohol, any illegal substance or prescription drug which impairs my ability to work safely with children or youth, I will call and inform the staff that I cannot work and no questions will be asked.

I understand that abiding by these promises is important and necessary to my participation with children and youth as part of Los Gatos UMC children and youth ministries. Together we can make a difference in young people's lives.

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____

STUDENT MINISTRIES COUNSELOR COMMITMENT

For Workers with Children and Youth at Los Gatos UMC

I, _____ am committed to serve as a counselor of the Student Ministries, for the school year of 2010-2011. I understand that my personal conduct is directly related to the success of this ministry, so I will be responsible in my actions and live my life out as a follower of Christ. As a follower of Christ I am called to love all and here at Los Gatos UMC we are a reconciling church, which welcomes all persons as Christ did regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, physical or mental health, family status, or financial circumstances. Los Gatos UMC's mission is to reach out with God's Love. I understand that my first responsibility is to ensure the safety and well-being of the students. I will participate in student activities to the best of my ability, respect my fellow counselors and leadership, and be the best representative of Christ that I can be.

(Initial each one and Sign the bottom)

____ I acknowledge that Christ as my savior, and I have a personal relationship with Him.

____ I am committed toward growing and maturing my relationship with God, through personal study, active church attendance, and involvement in accountability.

____ I am committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both Godly and "above reproach," knowing that my lifestyle is a model for the students I work with.

____ I understand the philosophy and values of this ministry and agree with its purpose, and commit to shepherding all students that God blesses me with.

____ To the best of my ability I will attend trainings, meetings, and retreats.

____ Because I am making a significant commitment and my presence is important, I agree to be consistent and timely to the events, meetings, small groups, and/or gatherings I commit myself to. Knowing that my presence is important, I will dedicate my full attention to the students and the ministry at hand which means no answering phone calls, emails, or texts unless there is an emergency. Also realizing that ministry is ever changing, I need to be flexible to adjust to the ever changing needs, schedules, and programming.

____ I agree to keep in regular contact (weekly is recommended) with students who I am assigned to.

____ I agree to follow the guidelines of Los Gatos United Methodist Church and RATS Student Ministry (*room Reservations, care rooms, curriculum, etc.*) As well as local, state, and national laws.

This includes:

***NO** alcohol, drugs, or sexual misconduct at any student ministry event. (*Grounds for immediate dismissal*)

*Will in **NO** way Abuse another *individual (student, counselor, or other individual)*,

Mental/Emotional/Verbal, Sexual, and Physical. (*Grounds for immediate dismissal from the ministry*)

***NO** smoking on campus or at any student ministry events.

***NO** dating, flirting, or inappropriate touching of any of the children, youth, or any of the participants under the age of 18 and will keep my relations with them purely friendship. (*Grounds for immediate dismissal*)

*Uphold all safety regulations and rules covered in guidelines and trainings

*Be with students at all times when on duty

*Staff relationships with other staff members will not interfere in ministering to youth.

*All language will express mutual respect, No foul language or put downs will be permitted.

____ I agree to keep the youth pastor and small group coordinator well-informed of what is happening with students that I interact with (*prayer concerns, celebrations, birthdays, special events, and etc.*)

Thanks for volunteering to change lives. These guidelines help build a successful ministry, protect you, and protect the youth. All conflicts or problems should be directed towards the youth pastor and/or senior pastor.

**Note: Any major laws broken, use of drugs, alcohol, sexual misconduct, or abuse of any kind is grounds for immediate dismissal!*

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____