

Lazy Mountain Bible Church Protection Policy

(For children, youth, and those who work with them)

The Gospel of Mark records that when people brought little children to Jesus, He took them in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them. It is our desire to bring children to Jesus, too.

We recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care; therefore, we seriously take our responsibility for them. These guidelines are set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the children entrusted to us.

We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our children's ministries. All of our guidelines are designed to protect and promote growth in God for each child and adult.

Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children under the sponsorship of LMBC must follow these policies and procedures. Individual programs may impose additional guidelines as appropriate to their ministry setting. "Christian Education Workers" are individuals who regularly supervise or have custody of minors, whether through pastoral ministry, in the nursery, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, camps, or other youth activities.

I. Pre-interview Requirements for Christian Education Workers.

- A.** Member/Six month Rule: In order to serve as a volunteer Christian Education Worker, a person must be a member of the church or have been in regular attendance for at least six months, or have a letter of recommendation from their former church, and Elder approval.
- B.** Reading of Doctrinal Statement (our beliefs on pages 1-3 of the LMBC Constitution).
- C.** Reading of the LMBC Teaching Position.
- D.** The Completion of the "Christian Education Worker's Application."

II. Interview: The applicant will be interviewed by the Director of Christian Education or a department head. This may be formal or informal.

III. Post-interview Requirements.

- A.** Child Protection Policy
- B.** Classroom Management Policy

IV. Child Protection Policy

- A. All Christian Education Workers must read this policy statement, especially the sections describing signs of abuse and Christian Education Worker's responsibility to report inappropriate behavior. This policy statement shall be made readily available to all Christian Education Workers.
- B. All Christian Education Workers should pray regularly for the children in our church, thanking God for the privilege of ministering to them and asking Him to protect them from any kind of harm. Workers should also pray that God would give them wisdom and discernment so that they will be sensitive to help and protect the children.
- C. Staffing Guidelines for 0-12th grades: At least one approved adult (at least 18+ years old) should be in each room at all times. An approved adult or teen (14-18 years of age) can work as a second teacher. A 12 year old may work in the classroom as a helper if they have completed and passed Youth In Training Level 1. Unless a special exception is made, a teen teacher needs to be at least five years older than the students they are working with. Teen teachers should be left in charge only in an emergency situation. It is preferred that each classroom has two teachers and that they are in the room at all times.
 1. However, we realize that two deep staffing may not always be available to make this possible. In that case, we will take the following steps:
 - a. Utilization of Approved Individuals: Try to find an approved volunteer to fill in. If you cannot, please let the Department Head know and they will help you find a substitute.
 - b. Approved Volunteer Checker: If an approved volunteer cannot be found that is willing to help for the full class session, try to find an approved volunteer or church staff member to check on your classroom at random times throughout the class session if you are comfortable teaching alone. This could be your Department Head, the Christian Education Director, non-teaching Pastor, or another adult. Let your Department Head know who you used as a checker in case any questions were to arise. Also, check to see if there is someone already assigned to be a weekly checker, if so, let them know about your class needs. An assigned checker is the person we call our "Walk About."
 - c. Combining Classes: Two classes may be combined, if practical, to meet staffing requirements. A notice will be posted for parents telling them where to pick up their children.
 - d. Utilization of Parent Helpers: Parent Helpers that are not approved volunteers can be used if needed as last minute staff. However, they should be well known to the teacher. They cannot be used as a Head Teacher without the knowledge and approval of the Christian Education Director or Department Head.
 - e. Cancellation of Class: If an approved adult cannot be found to be the Head Teacher, and the class cannot be combined with another class, as a last resort, the class can be canceled. Elementary students and older should be sent to the Worship Service and younger aged children need to be returned to their parents.
 2. In the event that a teacher is alone with the students before class starts, it is OK to have the door shut as long as parents are coming and going, or you have a volunteer random checker. (This may be needed in the nursery with small children that need to be kept in the room). In classrooms with older students, the door should be propped open if there is not a window available for anyone passing to look into the room. Parents are welcome to stay in the room with their child if they would like to for a couple of weeks if needed; but shorter visits will be encouraged as the child adjusts to the classroom.

3. Parents are welcome to drop in and visit any classroom at any time during any day of the week. (For security reasons, nursery is not a parent drop in area; but they can look in the window frequently.)
 4. When the occasion arises that babysitting is required for a one-time church sponsored event not defined as children's ministry, (example: annual meeting, Women's Bible Study, etc.) and the church facilities are used, the following is required:
 - a. An approved adult must be present to ensure that child protection policies relevant to the situation are followed.
 - b. Two-deep leadership is requested if at all possible. Strict adherence to the staffing guidelines listed above needs to be followed at all times.
- D. Child Security Policies**
1. Drop off Policy (0-6th grade) Children are never to be dropped off in a classroom without the teachers present. Generally, supervision will be provided 15 minutes before a program starts.
 2. Registration Policy (0-6th grade) Parents must register any child who attends a program regularly, from the first visit.
 3. Pick up Policy (0-5 years of age)
 - a. 0-2 1/2 years of age – Parents of children in the baby and toddler nurseries will be assigned a beeper to be returned to pick up the child.
 - b. 2 – 5 years of age – Children in this class will be released to responsible family members only.
 - c. All children should be picked up within 10 minutes of the class ending so that teachers can be where they may need to be.
 4. Bathroom Policy (4 years old – 6th grade) We strongly encourage parents and their children to visit the bathroom prior to each class. If a younger child needs assistance in the bathroom, a teacher may enter to assist observing the following guidelines:
 - a. Avoid taking children to the bathroom alone. Take them in pairs if possible.
 - b. If one child must go to the bathroom, the adult should escort the child to the bathroom, check to see that the room is vacant, and then remain outside the bathroom in the hallway (or prop open the door).
 - c. Never go into a bathroom with a child and shut the door. If you need to enter a stall to help a child, leave the stall door open!
 5. Bathroom Policy (older students) If they really need to go to the bathroom, send them in pairs to a restroom that is well used (e.g. don't use the office restroom unless you have a class in that building).
- E. Overnight Policy:** There will not be overnight activities for children younger than third grade unless it is specifically a parent/child outing.
1. All overnight activities should be pre-approved by the Christian Education Director or Pastor.
 2. All overnight activities should have a ratio of two leaders for every ten children. The two leaders will have an assigned group of children that they will be responsible for during the duration of the overnight event.

3. All supervising adults need to go through the approval process, including application.
- F. Proper Display of Affection (0-12th grade) Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:
1. Hugs – one arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are **positive** contact. Avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs or kisses.
 2. Lap Sitting – Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children 5 years old and younger. Encourage all others to sit next to you.
 3. Causal Touch – **Gentle** contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms, and hands. Physical discipline should never be used on children or students.
 4. Backrubs – Anyone working with our children should refrain from giving back-rubs.
- G. Discipline Policy (1-12th grade) All interaction regarding discipline needs to be carefully considered in light of a child's dignity and fragile life. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training, and correction. Physical punishment will not be used. For additional information, see the *Classroom Management Policy*.
- H. Special Concerns for Youth Ministry.
1. Driving – When a staff member (volunteer or paid) is driving students home, they should never be alone, one-on-one, with a student of the opposite sex in the car if possible. Written permission should be given by the parents in the event any volunteer staff might have to drive a student home alone. If driving home several students, keep a student of the same sex with you until the last if possible. Additionally, the driver must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car should not exceed the number of seatbelts.
 2. Lunches – One-on-one lunch appointments with the opposite sex may be made if separate transportation is used. Eat in public places. Be sure parents are aware of the appointment and approve of it.
 3. Dating – At no time shall anyone working with youth pursue a dating relationship with a student. Staff should always be sensitive to students with "crushes."
 4. Open-Door Policy – At no time should volunteer staff working with youth have a one-on-one meeting behind closed doors. For your protection, keep the door at least partially open.
 5. A Youth Mentoring Policy has been approved by the Elders for specific approved leaders. Permission for one on one mentoring has to be worked out with the CE Director, or Youth Director. Policy training and monthly reports are also required to participate as a leader in this program.

V. Responsibility of Christian Education Workers to admonish or report inappropriate behavior.

- A.** There are two problems that Christian Education Workers should watch for:
1. Behavior by anyone in this church, especially a Christian Education Worker, that indicates he or she may be inclined to abuse, molest, or otherwise harm any child, especially one under the care of this church.
 2. Indications that a child under the care of this church is being abused, molested, neglected, or otherwise harmed, whether by someone in this church or outside this church.
- B.** Admonishing and reporting inappropriate behavior by a Christian Education Worker:
1. If you observe a Christian Education worker (or another member of the church) talking or acting in a manner that seems to be innocent but might appear to others to be inappropriate, you should privately admonish that person and encourage him or her to exercise greater care in words and actions (see Matt. 18:15).
 2. If you observe a Christian Education worker (or another member of the church) talking or acting in a manner that gives rise to reasonable suspicion or has the potential of improper involvement with a child, you should promptly report your concern to the Christian Education Director or to the Senior Pastor, who will look into the matter and take appropriate corrective measures.
 3. Behaviors to watch for in leaders working with children:
 - a. Inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of children.
 - b. Use of pornography, including inclination toward sexually explicit television shows, movies, books, or magazines.
 - c. Excessive and inappropriate attention to a particular child, especially if it involves an effort to be alone with the child.

VI. Reporting actual or suspected abuse or neglect of a child

- A.** Our understanding of Alaska State Law is that volunteer Christian Education Workers in a church are not required to report actual or suspected child abuse or neglect, unless child care is provided for compensation (AS §§ 47.17.020, 47.17.290[3]). Should a Christian Education Worker voluntarily make a report to civil authorities, the law provides that he or she will be immune to civil or criminal liability, provided the report was made in good faith and without malicious purposes (AS § 47.17.050).
- B.** No single indicator of abuse or neglect is necessarily cause for alarm, but it may be cause to observe a given person or situation more closely. When multiple indicators appear together; however, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with the Senior Pastor or the Director of Christian Education or, in urgent cases, to make an actual report to the authorities. (The nearest office of the Division of Family & Youth Services (DFYS) is located at 268 Fireweed in Palmer. The phone number is 745-1701. The nearest State Trooper Office is located at 453 South Valley in Palmer. The phone number is 745-2131.).

- C. Indications of physical abuse: A child reports injury by others; unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries, or human bites; child is unusually wary of physical contact with adults, demonstrates extremes in behavior, or seems frightened of parents or caretakers.
- D. Indications of sexual abuse: A child reports abuse by others; has difficulty walking or sitting; torn, stained or bloody underclothing; complaints of pain or itching in genital area; bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal, or anal area; unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters; or other unusual and excessive behaviors inappropriate for a child of that age.
- E. Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, talk first with the Children Education Director or the Senior Pastor, who will help you decide what steps are appropriate and, if necessary, who else to contact.

VII. Guidelines for church leadership to follow should an allegation occur.

- A. Document all efforts at handling the incident.
- B. Report the incident immediately to the church attorney and insurance company.
- C. Contact the proper state authorities following the guidance of the church insurance company and attorney.
- D. Notify the parents.
- E. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or youth member is secured.
- F. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
- G. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- H. Use a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.