

# Hosanna! Safe Child Policy

Hosanna! Lutheran Church is committed to providing a God-honoring environment which fosters a sense of security, enrichment and well-being for each child who receives ministry care. As part of that commitment, Hosanna! will immediately respond to any concerns about suspected maltreatment of children. Maltreatment of any kind will not be tolerated at Hosanna!

## Definitions

For purposes of this policy, maltreatment includes the following:

1. **Mental injury** means an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child as evidenced by an observable or substantial impairment in the child's ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior with due regard to the child's culture.
2. **Neglect** means failure by a person responsible for a child's care to supply a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, health, medical, or other care required for the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so; failure to protect a child from conditions or actions that seriously endanger the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so; failure to provide for necessary supervision or child care arrangements appropriate for a child after considering factors as the child's age, mental ability, physical condition, length of absence, or environment, when the child is unable to care for the child's own basic needs or safety, or the basic needs or safety of another child in their care.
3. **Physical abuse** means any physical injury, mental injury, or threatened injury, inflicted by a person responsible for the child's care on a child other than by accidental means, or any physical or mental injury that cannot reasonably be explained by the child's history of injuries, or any aversive or deprivation procedures. Abuse does not include reasonable and moderate physical discipline of a child administered by a parent or legal guardian which does not result in an injury. Actions which are not reasonable and moderate include, but are not limited to, any of the following that are done in anger or without regard to the safety of the child: throwing, kicking, burning, biting, or cutting a child; striking a child with a closed fist; shaking a child under age three; striking or other actions which result in any nonaccidental injury to a child under 18 months of age; unreasonable interference with a child's breathing; threatening a child with a weapon; striking a child under age one on the face or head; purposely

giving a child poison, alcohol, or dangerous, harmful, or controlled substances which were not prescribed for the child by a practitioner, in order to control or punish the child; or other substances that substantially affect the child's behavior, motor coordination, or judgment or that results in sickness or internal injury, or subjects the child to medical procedures that would be unnecessary if the child were not exposed to the substances.

4. **Sexual abuse** means the subjection of a child by a person responsible for the child's care, by a person who has a significant relationship to the child, or by a person in a position of authority, to any act which constitutes criminal sexual conduct which includes any act of sexual penetration or other sexual contact. Sexual abuse also includes any act which involves a minor which constitutes a violation of prostitution offenses. Sexual abuse includes threatened sexual abuse.

### **Guidance On What To Do When Maltreatment Is Suspected or Observed**

If maltreatment is suspected or verbally reported by a child:

1. Assess the child's immediate well-being. Great care must be taken not to create for the child a situation that does not exist. Ask open-ended questions such as:

*"I see that you have hurt your arm. How did that happen?"*

*"You're telling me that somebody has hurt you. Do you know who it was?"*

*"You are telling me your body hurts. Can you tell me where your body hurts?"*

*"I'm glad you told me. It's important that you are safe. Do you feel safe?"*

*"Is there anything else you want to tell me?"*

It is important to hear what the child is saying without interjecting adult interpretations. If the child has given an answer, accept it without further probing. It is not a volunteer's responsibility to investigate the incident, only to determine the child's immediate safety.

2. Document your observations and conversation.
3. Volunteers must immediately (the same day) contact a member of the Youth Leadership Team (YLT) or a staff member and report the incident. The child need not be present during this conversation.

4. The YLT will assess the situation and make decisions as to further action.

*All actions taken will actively seek to keep the child safe while making every effort to minister to the family with compassion and love.*

#### **If maltreatment is witnessed:**

1. Immediately intervene on behalf of the child by stating, "Children are not treated in that way at Hosanna!" Use your best judgment in protecting the child's safety.
2. Assess the situation. Oftentimes children are pulled harshly by the arm, called derogatory names, or spoken to inappropriately when adults are stressed. Offering to help alleviate the stress helps both the child and the adult.
3. Document the incident.
4. Volunteers must immediately (the same day) contact a member of the Youth Leadership Team (YLT) or a staff member and report the incident. The child need not be present during this conversation.
5. The YLT will assess the situation and make decisions as to further action.

*All actions taken will actively seek to keep the child safe while making every effort to minister to the family with compassion and love.*

### **Reporting**

Reporting suspected maltreatment is a serious matter that must not be taken lightly. Reports of suspected neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse or maltreatment of a child must be based on a good faith basis. Persons who suspect such abuse or neglect of a child are encouraged to make accurate reports and provide as much information as possible so that Hosanna! may properly and thoroughly investigate the situation.

Any person, paid or volunteer, who works directly with children and/or youth is mandated by law to report maltreatment which you know, have reason to believe, or suspect has occurred within the past three (3) years.

### **Volunteer Reporting Procedures:**

1. If any maltreatment is suspected or becomes known a report by the

volunteer must be made immediately (the same day) to a member of the Youth Leadership Team (YLT) or another staff member. The YLT is made up of the Children and Youth Executive, the Director of Children's Ministry and the Student Ministry Director.

2. The volunteer should provide the following information, to the extent possible:
  - a) Name of youth involved.
  - b) Name of suspected abuser (if known).
  - c) Nature and extent of maltreatment, including dates and places if known. **(It is not the volunteer's responsibility to investigate the incident.)**
  - d) The nature under which the information was learned.
  - e) Names of other youth present when incident occurred or was discussed.
3. The volunteer is not to discuss the incident with anyone else, including family members of the youth.
4. The individual on the YLT whom the volunteer makes a report to will be responsible for contacting Child Protection Services (CPS), the Lakeville Police, or the Dakota County Sheriff. Further assistance from the volunteer may be required as part of the reporting and investigation process and the volunteer is expected to cooperate as required in the investigation.

### **Reporter's Protection:**

Hosanna! does not allow retaliation against any person for reporting maltreatment in good faith, or against the child with respect to whom a report is made, because of the report. Additionally:

- The name of the reporter is confidential except by court order; and
- Reporters are immune from civil or criminal liability if acting in good faith.