At Church of the Savior we take very seriously our God-given responsibility to care for children. This set of guidelines is intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and to protect children, those who care for them and the mission of Church of the Savior.

 Throughout this policy the term “children” is taken to include ages from birth through the teen years unless the specific context clearly requires a narrower interpretation.

1. Three General Principles

 In order best to ensure the safety of children and those who care for them at COTS, we will at all times refrain from three inappropriate “T”s: (A) inappropriate **T**opic; (B) inappropriate **T**ime alone; and (C) inappropriate **T**ouch. Below we have set out some examples which we trust will be obvious but are certainly not exhaustive, of behaviors addressed under each category.

 **(A) Topic**

(1) COTS staff and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually-oriented conversations or other interactions with children, and are not permitted to discuss any information about their own personal relationships or sexual activities with any child in any COTS ministry or program.

It is, however, expected that with pre-teens and teens ministry discussions will address at age-appropriate levels issues related to purity, relationships, human sexuality and human sexual activity. Such lessons will be conducted consistent with the teaching of Holy Scripture and in every instance with two or more adults present.

(2) COTS staff and volunteers will not talk to children in a way that is harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating. It is our goal that verbal interactions between staff or volunteers and children be affirming and uplifting, keeping in mind the responsibility of the Christian community to aid parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children. Mindful that adults and children have different emotional resource levels and that children and even adults may misspeak in the heat of the moment it is our goal that COTS staff and volunteers will take particular care to practice and encourage one another to practice asking and giving forgiveness.

 **(B) Time Alone**

(1) For the protection of all involved, it is inappropriate for staff or volunteers of COTS to be alone with any individual child or student unless in a location easily and continually observed by others. Should a staff member or volunteer find him or herself alone with a single child, that person shall immediately take the child to a place where others are present or capable of observing.

(2) Volunteers using the COTS building will check every room and bathroom prior to leaving their event.

(3) Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to a place where they are able to be observed.

(4) The standard ratio for the COTS nursery will be 2 workers to 8 children or better. If a worker is “out of ratio” (s)he must immediately notify the program supervisor (on Sunday mornings, often the head usher) who will make diligent effort to find additional workers to bring the worker to children ratio back into compliance with COTS policy.

(5) Occasionally a COTS volunteer may transport children not his or her own. Children should be transported directly to their destination without stopping. Where possible children should sit only in the rear seats. Staff and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.

(6) At the close of any activity staff or volunteers are responsible to release children in their care ONLY to those known to them to be parents or legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child. If for any reason a staff member or volunteer is uncertain concerning the propriety of releasing a child, he or she should immediately locate or contact his or her immediate supervisor or the Rector before releasing the child.

 **(C) Touch**

(1) Under no circumstances will COTS volunteers use physical force to discipline children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents.

(2) The following guidelines will ensure best age-appropriate handling of bathroom use:

(a) Nursery children in particular will need assistance with bathroom activities. Diaper changing shall be done on the nursery area changing table only. Diapers should always be changed in full view of other nursery workers. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon completion of changing their soiled diaper.

(b) Pre-schoolers who are toilet training and need assistance shall be accompanied by a nursery worker. During the use of the toilet, the bathroom door shall be left partially open.

(c) School aged children should not be accompanied in the bathroom by an adult (other than one of their parents) unless in need of assistance. In that case, the person giving the assistance shall take care that another person is within hearing distance at all times.

2. Living the Principles

Church of the Savior has a zero tolerance for abuse in our common life. Every staff member, ministry leader and volunteer has a responsibility to act in the best interests of all children in every ministry program or activity. In particular all who work with children should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in “grooming” a child for sexual abuse.

To that end every member of the clergy associated with Church of the Savior and every paid ministry staff member is required to complete sexual abuse awareness training via MinistrySafe, the provider to the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh. This training will be renewed every two years. Lay ministry volunteers, while not required by the Diocese to receive this training, are nonetheless encouraged to do so. Further details are available from the Parish Administrator.

In addition, all who work with children in any capacity in any COTS ministry, whether on COTS’ campus or off site, will be furnished with a copy of this policy and the Ministry Safe fact sheet entitled Sexual Abuser Characteristics and will be expected to familiarize themselves with the contents of both.

**Under Pennsylvania law, all clergy are mandated reporters of suspected instances of sexual abuse. Lay staff or volunteers are not presently required to report directly to the State authorities. In keeping with current State law, then, any staff member or volunteer who observes any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse, whether physical, emotional or sexual, must immediately report his or her observations to the immediate supervisor (if any) *and* to the Rector, whose responsibility it will be to see that suspected abuse is properly reported.**

Where to do so is possible and particularly in cases where observed questionable behavior may better be described as inappropriate rather than as actually abusive, the person making the observation will be encouraged to put into practice Jesus’ instruction regarding conflict in the Church in Matthew 18:15-20. The level of encounter appropriate to the situation will depend on the gravity of what has been observed and the mutual discernment of the person making the observation and the supervisor or Rector.

If the ministry supervisor and the Rector ascertain that there has been a violation of this policy such that investigation by law enforcement or child welfare agencies is warranted, the violator shall be suspended from involvement in ministry with children at COTS pending resolution of any investigation by law enforcement or child welfare agencies. A person determined to have engaged in actual abusive conduct shall thereafter refrain from further involvement in any activities or ministries of COTS involving children, students or vulnerable populations.

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