



COVID Kids & Youth Ministry Policies

Our Savior Lutheran Church

Last modified June 2020

The guidance document has been designed for use in conjunction with the overall policy of Our Savior Lutheran Church & School and local public health directives. Advice of the local public health units must be followed, even in the event that it contradicts this document. This document will be reviewed and modified as applicable when COVID-19 restrictions can be lifted and/or amended to reflect new advice as it is given.

While the focus of this policy is on maintaining healthy operational measures for children's and youth ministry at Our Savior, please note that every effort will be made to uphold a welcoming and caring environment for our children, students, families, and staff.

Though we will attempt to take proactive preventative measures to ensure safety and cleanliness, we acknowledge that risk of exposure is possible and may result in temporary dismissal or omission from ministry events. All public activities, including participation here at Our Savior, remain at your own risk.

We strive to work closely with our families, local government, and national government to safeguard and protect our children and youth as closely as possible, trusting ultimately in the Almighty God who guards our steps. We know that the Lord is our refuge and strength, an "ever present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

MINISTRY STAFF SCREENING:

Ministry staff and leaders will conduct in-person inspection of classrooms and campus facilities. They will follow protocols requested by the overall church and/or local government to ensure safety of others, including wearing personal protective equipment and/or being screened prior to entering the premises.

Staff will be reminded regularly to remain home if they demonstrate any indication of illness. Substitute staff will be on call to step in, as necessary.

SIZING OF GROUPS:

Every attempt will be made to keep groups at a gathering size recommended by local governmental guidelines.

While grouped in smaller clusters, students will generally be expected to stay together with their small group and not mingle with other students.

ON-SITE STAFFING:

Staff will strive to work within only one location, limiting their movements between rooms.

Staff will also be reminded to look for indications of illness in children and students and follow protocol for isolation and reporting, if necessary.

We will encourage our ministry activities to stay in their designated spaces and use only the rooms assigned to them, even if other rooms appear available. This ensures that sanitation can be thorough and efficient.

HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOL:

We will make every effort to closely follow local public health officials when establishing our health and safety protocols in order to keep children and families safe in their communities.

As a staff, we have developed and implemented plans for the following:

- Sanitation of space, toys, and equipment
- How we report and communicate illnesses
- How we will encourage physical distancing
- How we will handle drop off and pick up procedures

SCREENING FOR SYMPTOMS:

Our Well Student Policy will be posted publicly in ministry spaces. We encourage students and families to read it and evaluate themselves for participation in ministry activities.

Our staff and leaders will self-assess their health and, per ministry directives, be subject to screening protocol before entering our campus.

We will remind students, parents, and guardians about our Well Student Policy at registration and through visible signage at entrance and drop off areas.

If children and/or students participate in screening protocol, we will take precautions to maintain 6 feet between individuals and to wear personal protective equipment. We will follow current advice from our local public health officials regarding these practices.

We will have alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content) placed at each screening station. Dispensers will not be in locations that are easily accessible by young children.

PROTOCOLS WHEN A CHILD/STAFF MEMBER BECOMES SICK:

Staff, parents and guardians, children and students must not attend the program or event if they are sick, even if symptoms resemble a mild cold. Please check with the CDC for an exhaustive list of symptoms.

Symptoms to look for include but are not limited to:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Headache
- General feeling of unwell
- Unexplained rashes
- Vomiting or diarrhea currently or within the last 24 hours
- Skin or eye infections
- Chicken pox, mumps, measles, etc.

If a student or staff/leader becomes sick while in the program, they should be isolated and family members contacted for immediate pick up.

If a separate room is not available, the sick individual should be kept a minimum of six feet from others. The sick individual should be provided with tissues and reminded of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper disposal of tissues.

If the sick individual is a child or student, a staff member/leader should remain with them until a parent or guardian arrives. If tolerated, the individual should wear a mask. The staff/leader should wear a mask and not interact with other students upon return to the group. The staff/leader should avoid contact with the sick individual, not handling their tissues or personal belongings.

All items used by the sick individual should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible, including chairs that have been used. All items that cannot be cleaned (i.e. paper, books, puzzles) should be removed and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 7 days.

If necessary, public health organizations should be notified and their advice followed.

Other students or individuals, including siblings or family members of the sick individual, as well as the staff/leaders in the program who were present while the child or staff member became ill should be identified as a close contact and grouped together until they can be picked up by parents/guardians to self-isolate at home. They must be encouraged to connect with necessary local public health organizations for clarification and direction on further testing and isolation.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES:

Open communication with families, students, leaders, and staff regarding the enhancement and seriousness of health and safety measures will be encouraged. New policies will be shared for everyone's information and so that all are aware of expectations. Our goal is to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible.

We will make attempts to publicly display helpful reminders on our campus so everyone understands that wellness and safety is our ultimate goal.

STAFF TRAINING:

We will continue to assess our ministries in collaboration with local and national health directives. We will ensure that our leaders are trained and equipped to serve confidently, with joy and excitement, while still maintaining our high standards of health, safety, and other operational measures.

Training will focus on how to properly clean spaces and equipment, how to safely conduct health screenings, how to minimize and manage physical distancing challenges, and what to do in the case that someone becomes sick.

DROP OFF & PICK UP PROCEDURES:

Our leadership teams will work together to develop procedures that support physical distancing and separate groups as best as possible (i.e. staggered entrance and exit times, single-door entry).

As much as possible, we will encourage parents/guardians not to go past our screening areas for ministry.

All entrances will have hand sanitizer and if in an enclosed space and physical distancing where social distancing cannot be maintained, individuals will be free to use facial coverings. We will be a non-judgmental environment that accommodates whatever level of personal protection someone wants to employ.

Our staff will be happy to explain safety measures in detail to inquiring individuals, though we will encourage those conversations to be held when they are not disrupting ministry events.

We will strive to use signage and markings to help direct individuals through new entry steps.

We encourage participants to minimize the usage of personal belongings while attending events (sweatshirts, backpacks, etc.) If they are brought along, we encourage clear labeling and that they are kept in a designated area of the room.

VISITORS:

We encourage that non-essential visitors be kept to a minimum during events and programs. We also encourage parents/guardians not to go past screening areas.

SPACE SET-UP, PHYSICAL DISTANCING, & EQUIPMENT USAGE:

We recognize that physical distancing between students is often difficult. Our primary goal is safety, but we also strive to provide a welcoming, caring, Christ-centered environment for our students.

When setting up spaces, we will attempt to provide spaces where students can be at least 6 feet apart. We will also assess our activities to minimize physical contact and shared objects or toys.

We will make an attempt to use toys and supplies which are made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected (i.e. avoiding plush toys). We will clean and disinfect supplies between events.

If sensory materials (i.e. playdoh, water, sand, etc.) are offered, we will provide them for single use and label with the student's name, if applicable.

We will attempt to use designated toys and equipment (i.e. balls, toys) for each group or classroom and keep them separate from other groups.

EVENT STRUCTURE:

We will diligently assess each ministry event and consider ways to maintain high levels of safety. The nature of our varied ministry means that an exact blueprint is not possible, but the general principals we will adhere to include the following:

- Minimize touching between students (no hand-holding for group prayers, no games where students touch each other, no mixing/mingling games)
- Suspend the sharing of supplies (scissors, markers, balls, toys, etc.)
- Clean high-touch areas frequently
- Avoiding singing or yelling when in close proximity to others
- Consider staggered entrance/exit times
- Use visual and verbal reminders to practice good hygiene
- Affirm students, parents, and leaders that we are making every effort to care for each other

We welcome conversation about how we are structuring our ministries during this unprecedented time, and are happy to answer questions that anyone may have about why we're doing what we do. We encourage these conversations during times when ministry events will not be disrupted.

FOOD:

In general, there will be no food provided at ministry events, except where required. In that case, special precautions for handling and serving food will be put in place. We will minimize shared snacks (i.e. a large bag of chips) and opt instead for individually-wrapped servings of food, if necessary.

We will encourage proper hand hygiene to be practiced at all times and discourage students from sharing utensils, snacks, or water bottles.

SIGNAGE:

We will strive to use signage and markings to provide helpful reminders for practicing social distancing, hygiene, and new methods of operation, including publicly sharing our Well Student Policy (see below).

WELL STUDENT POLICY:

For the protection of all students, staff, and leaders in our ministries, we would ask that you please adhere to these guidelines when considering if you should bring your child/student to events (Kids Ministry, youth ministry, or otherwise).

A healthy child/student does not display any of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Headache
- General feeling of unwell
- Unexplained rashes
- Vomiting or diarrhea currently or within the last 24 hours
- Skin or eye infections
- Chicken pox, mumps, measles, etc.

If a child/student currently has any of the above symptoms:

Please do not bring your child/student to the ministry event. Instead, we encourage you and your family to join us online, via our website or social media outlets.

If a child/student develops any of the above symptoms while in our care:

We will ask you to pick your child/student up immediately. We will not administer medication of any kind. We may ask you to follow up with us and report any possible infectious illnesses so that we can inform other families or staff about possible risk exposure. We will follow our own protocol regarding sanitation and communication of possible infection to involved individuals and local health care organizations, if necessary.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and ensures the safety of all the children, students, and families here at our church!