

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

Youth Volunteer screening policy and process

Intent:

The intent of this policy is to protect our young members and guests from predators via a certification program and a set of rules for youth interaction. The intent of certification is to insure that there are a sufficient number of pre-cleared people to supervise youth activities and insure the safety of our Lord's younger lambs. In no way does this policy prohibit or discourage anyone from attending services or participating in events at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church.

Policy:

Any person certified through this procedure shall be considered a "Youth Certified Adult Volunteer." Other persons may, from time to time, assist with youth related activities. Persons driving will be both youth and driver certified.

Certified Adults are strongly encouraged to take the "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training course, Darkness to Light" Which is linked on our web site under "Resources" for your convenience. The cost is minimal. Assistance is available. The URL is:
[http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkGcISE/b.6143709/k.F02C/Stewards of Children ONLINE Prvention Training.htm](http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkGcISE/b.6143709/k.F02C/Stewards_of_Children_ONLINE_Prvention_Training.htm)

A Youth Certified Adult Volunteer shall at all times be present at any organized youth event with the exception of the Nursery Attendant who may be a minor.

Adults are discouraged from being alone with a minor person who is not their child, whether they are certified or not. Exception: Pastor, Elder, or Youth Leader in the context of hearing confession or counselling.

A Youth Certified Adult Volunteer may at times be alone with a group (2 or more) of minors (teachers, group leaders, guides, drivers, etc.) A non-certified adult needs a certified adult present in the room.

If the activity involves driving, the driver will also be driver certified. Certification does not waive the need for a driver's license. If the state removes or restricts a person's license, certification is also suspended whether the church knows about it or not.

SOTH will make available one or more appointed screeners who will process the background check and make their recommendation to the council. Screeners will be initially screened by a council officer (not self-screened.)

Unless there is record of conviction for offenses listed in the section "**Reasons for disapproval**" at the end of this document, the recommendation shall be for approval.

The Parish Secretary shall keep a list of certified persons and provide a certificate to cleared applicants.

The council may delegate to the Secretary the power to certify on the recommendation of the screeners. Any recommended dis-approval shall be returned to the applicant who may consider appeal.

An applicant who has been dis-approved may appeal to the Board of Elders. The Elders will hear their case and consider all facts that the applicant feels are relevant to over-riding the recommendation of the screeners.

Appealed cases shall be decided by the council. Unless there are serious facts known to council members, the Elder recommendation should be heavily weighted and the person approved by council.

Process:

An adult wishing to be certified will start by filling out an “**Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Verification and Fingerprint Information**” form. Return the form to the *Parish Secretary*.

Council will provide a pool of funds to pay for necessary screening.

Screeners run requested level of background check and make recommendation to council. Screeners may use any or all methods of investigation to uncover records including but not limited to records searches via Kootenai County’s web site, other public records searches, paid searches via First Advantage. Screener will redact SSN, DL number, DOB from form ASAP before storing or passing the form on.

If the recommendation is dis-approval, a copy of the application will be returned to the applicant. The original application will be stored in a “Hold” file for 90 days and then destroyed unless approved by council action.

If the recommendation is approval, the application is forwarded to council (or their delegate) for approval.

If approved, the Secretary adds the person to the “Certified” list, noting the levels of certification and issues a certification card.

If an applicant appeals to the Board of Elders, the board will make their recommendation to council who will vote the application up or down. A council officer will contact the applicant to inform them of the decision and forward the final application to the Secretary for action (either add the name to the certification list or place the application in the 90 day hold file.)

The Secretary shall periodically screen the Hold File and destroy any application more than 90 days old.

Reasons for disapproval:

Adult Youth Volunteer:

Presence on the sex offender registry for crimes against children

Recent drug arrests

Conviction of domestic violence

Driver:

Currently suspended or revoked license

Active license but extensive, recent history of impaired driving convictions