

Safe Sanctuaries for Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

Christ Church United Methodist

Louisville, Kentucky

Becoming Living Proof of God's Love, One Person at a Time

SAFETY AND ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Purpose:

The Safety and Abuse Prevention Policy and operational procedures seek to provide for the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We expect to reduce the risk of abuse in our congregation, protect our volunteers and employees, and be a place where people can feel safe disclosing abuse.

- Jesus taught that *“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,” (Mark 9:37 NRSV)* and *“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6 NRSV).*
- At each baptism, we affirm our responsibility to provide a safe sanctuary by doing all we can to provide a place of love, safety, and security.
- The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that *“...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”*

Statement of Covenant:

We pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that affirm and assure the safety and spiritual growth of all people under our direction and care, as well as those individuals who work with them, to the extent practicable. Specifically, among other things, we strive to:

- Follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff;
- Implement prudent operational procedures in all children, youth, adult, and special needs ministries, including events and camps;
- Educate our volunteers and staff regarding the use of applicable, appropriate abuse prevention, safety and other policies and methods;
- Have a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and
- Be prepared to respond to inquiries if an alleged incident occurs.

Conclusion:

In all of our ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be *“...surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.”* (From *“Congregational Pledge 2,” “Baptismal Covenant II,”* in The United Methodist Hymnal).

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SAFETY AND ABUSE PREVENTION OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

DEFINITIONS:

Abuse

Abuse is harm or a threat of physical or emotional harm to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by a parent, guardian, or other person. Abuse includes: a) the infliction of physical or emotional injury by other than accidental means; b) the creation of a risk, or allowing the creation of risk, to a child by other than accidental means; c) committing or allowing to be committed an act of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or prostitution of a child.

“Child,” “children,” or “youth”

Any person who has not reached his/her eighteenth birthday. For operational procedures only, eighteen year olds who are still in high school will also be considered youth.

Exploitation

Exploitation is obtaining or using another person's resources, including but not limited to funds, assets, or property, by deception, intimidation, or similar means, with the intent to deprive the person of those resources.

Helper

A volunteer who assists the supervisory adult. Under no circumstances are Helpers to be alone or responsible for children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Two supervisory adults are still required.

Mentoring

Mentoring situations are defined as any one-one-one ministerial, coaching, or care meeting or discussion between a supervisory adult (such as a Confirmation mentor or Youth volunteer) and a child/youth. Such mentoring is an invaluable function in the spiritual and emotional development of children and youth. Mentoring relationships which occur outside regular events and activities should only occur with the parent's or guardian's consent.

No Past Convictions/Arrests/Charges/Accusations

No adult Church member or other volunteer who has been convicted of, entered a guilty plea to, entered an *Alford* plea to, or entered a plea of *nolo contendere*/no contest to, or been the subject of deferred prosecution or criminal diversion, or been charged with or accused of any crime (felony or misdemeanor) involving children under the age of 18, child pornography, child abuse, child neglect (either sexual abuse, physical abuse or emotional abuse), or any other crime or act of neglect involving a child under the age of 18 will be allowed to volunteer or otherwise be allowed to work with children or youth in any Church-sponsored activity. If there are any

questions regarding the parameters of this provision, it is incumbent upon the church member or other volunteer to seek clarification from the Minister for Faith Formation.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care situations are defined as any one-on-one ministerial and/or care meeting or discussion between a ministerial employee (e.g., Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Youth Minister, Children's Minister) and a child/youth. Such care is a necessary and extremely important function in meeting the needs of children/youth and helping them cope with the problems of life. "Counseling" in this document refers strictly to professional counseling.

Safe Sanctuaries Administration

The office of the Minister for Faith Formation is responsible for overseeing the administration, adherence, and execution of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Operational procedures, including conducting and tracking the criminal background checks, and making available the "approved" Supervisory Adult list.

Sexual Abuse

According to Kentucky State Law: Sexual abuse includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any contacts or interactions in which the parent, guardian, or other person uses or allows, permits, or encourages the use of the child for the purposes of the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person.

This type of abuse occurs when sexual contact between a youth, child and an adult (or older, more powerful youth or child) happens. The youth or child victim is not capable of consenting to such contact or resisting such sexual acts. Often, the youth or child victim is physically dependent on the perpetrator (for example, a parent). Additionally, the youth victim is often psychologically dependent on the perpetrator (for example, a teacher or a youth worker). Examples of sexual abuse include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to pornography and/or prostitution. (from Safe Sanctuaries for Youth, page 16)

Sexual Exploitation

According to Kentucky State Law: Sexual exploitation includes, but is not limited to, a situation in which a person allows, permits, or encourages the child to engage in an act which constitutes prostitution under Kentucky law; or a person having custodial control or supervision of a child or responsible for his/her welfare, allows, permits, or encourages the child to engage in an act of obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child as provided for under Kentucky law.

Supervisory Adult

A supervisory adult is one who is AT LEAST 18 years of age or older and is AT LEAST 4 years older than the children/youth being supervised. These volunteers at Church-sponsored programs who have supervisory responsibility with children, youth (e.g., Sunday School teachers, Youth leaders, Confirmation teachers, etc.), or vulnerable adults are required to sign a statement giving their permission to screen their criminal records, review previous employment, and check references. Ministry area staff are responsible for ensuring that adults are fully screened and trained before deploying them for active service in a supervisory role.

Supervisory Responsibility

Overseeing or directing a ministry or activity with no paid staff persons in the room. Safe Sanctuary Procedures govern supervisory responsibilities.

Vulnerable Adult

A vulnerable adult is someone who is aged 18 years or older who is or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness and is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. *Law Commission Report, 1997*

Requirement Terms

Must/Shall -- This word indicates a requirement is to be strictly followed from which no deviation is permitted.

Should -- Indicates that there may exist valid reasons in particular circumstances to ignore a particular item, but the full implications must be understood and carefully weighed before choosing a different course.

SCREENING PROCEDURES:

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse and exploitation of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. It can be time consuming and expensive, but well worth the effort for peace of mind that the most reliable, committed, and experienced staff and volunteers are in place for every program that involves children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

1. **Who needs to be screened?** All staff and adult volunteers (called “Supervisory Adults”) who have regular and direct supervision with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall fill out a Volunteer/Employment Application, a form for two references, a form authorizing a criminal background check, and Covenant agreeing to follow all operational procedures. Information given will include:
 - a. Standard contact information
 - b. Experience/qualifications for the position
 - c. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal convictions
 - d. Waiver of confidentiality allowing the church to secure the background checks and references necessary.
 - e. Listing of 2 non-related references. Complete contact information is needed for all references. The application process is considered incomplete if full contact information for the references is not provided.

2. **Criminal Background Check:** All supervisory adults shall be checked, at minimum, by a multi-state criminal check, a sexual predator search, and a social security trace. Youth ministry volunteers should also be checked by a motor vehicle report. In addition:
 - a. Staff will be screened according to personnel policies.
 - b. Clergy who serve in the Kentucky Annual Conference are screened and trained in professional boundaries and Safe Sanctuaries policies upon entrance into the Conference and once during each quadrennium. This documentation is kept in the personnel files of the Conference.

3. **SIX-MONTH RULE.** Persons shall demonstrate an active relationship (having attended worship and ministry activities regularly) within the Christ Church congregation for at least six months *before* being allowed to be in a supervisory role in activities for children, youth, or vulnerable adults. In the case of new staff hires, references deemed adequate by the hiring supervisor will replace the six-month waiting period.

4. **Screening Chain of Responsibility (References & Background Checks):**
 - a. **Staff:**
 - i. *Screening staff applicants*—hiring supervisor and/or search committee is responsible for full screening, including reference checks. Full criminal background check is to be done by the Controller’s office.

- ii. ***Current staff background checks***—The Controller is responsible for oversight of periodic background checks for all staff (repeated every 3 years) except for clergy. Clergy are screened through Annual Conference procedures.

b. **Volunteers**

- i. ***Reference checks***—The ministry area staff should make two reference contacts for each new volunteer applicant.
- ii. ***Background checks***—Authorization forms, made available through ministry area staff, are filled out by volunteers and submitted directly to the Minister for Faith Formation office for confidential processing. All volunteer applicants will receive confirmation that their background checks have been processed and have either been approved or referred to the Review Committee for further, confidential review. Criminal background checks should be repeated at least every three years for all volunteers. Supervisory Adults who have a lapse in active service shall undergo a repeat background check.
- iii. ***Background check review committee***—A review committee of three people will examine background checks that require further review. All discussions will be strictly confidential. The committee may offer an opportunity to a volunteer applicant to explain any offenses reported on the criminal background check. The committee will notify the volunteer applicant, in writing, of its decision about the applicant's suitability to serve in a particular way. The committee will make every effort to offer appropriate alternatives for serving within the congregation. The committee will let the appropriate staff persons know only that the volunteer is not able to serve in particular ministries. This committee will consist of two supervisory or clergy staff and one lay person with expertise in law, human resources, or child safety.

- c. **Storage of Confidential Information**—All confidential information will be kept in locked files, under supervision of either the Controller (for staff) or the Minister for Faith Formation (for volunteers). Access to these files will be strictly confidential, limited to those needing access as indicated by these procedures. .

SUPERVISION PROCEDURES:

Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse or exploitation of children, youth, or vulnerable adults and to protect staff persons and supervisory adults from unfounded accusations.

1. **Training** is a requirement for all staff and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Ministry Area staff are required to ensure that each volunteer has received proper training of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and procedures *prior* to having direct supervision of children/youth/vulnerable adults. Thereafter, an annual training should include:
 - a. review of the Safe Sanctuaries policy,
 - b. ministry specific operational procedures for supervision,
 - c. ongoing training on how to identify and report abuse.
2. **Four Year Older Rule.** No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is AT LEAST 18 years of age or older and is AT LEAST 4 years older than any children/youth being supervised.
3. **Two (unrelated) Adult Rule.** No child, youth, or vulnerable adult should be alone with one adult at any time. The two-adult rule requires that, regardless of the size of the group, there should always be at least two non-related, supervisory adults present in a room or vehicle. To satisfy the two-adult rule, an adult 'roamer' can be utilized as the second adult who moves throughout the hallways, classrooms, and entryways during programming, in order to monitor safety and encourage a welcoming, safe atmosphere for children, parents, and teachers. This 'roamer' should also be available to substitute for an adult who must temporarily leave a classroom.
Bathroom Guidelines: When children/youth/vulnerable adults need adult supervision in a bathroom, the two-adult rule must be observed. The supervisory adult must be in sight lines of the other adult and make use of a partially or completely open door when assisting a child/youth/or vulnerable adult in a bathroom.
4. **No child, youth, or vulnerable adult shall be left unsupervised** while attending a ministry activity/event.
5. **All ministry activities should occur in open view.** Each room or space where ministry activities/events occur must be open to public view. For example: enclosed spaces such as classrooms shall have a viewing window, a glass panel in the door, a ½-door configuration, or an open door.
6. **First Aid.** Where practicable, at least one adult present at every Church activity should be certified in basic first aid.
7. **Communication and Advance Notice to Parents.** As a standard practice, parents should be kept abreast of the details and content of their children's or youth ministry's activities. Parents should be fully informed with enough advance notice to

- provide time for parents to consider whether or not their children or youth will participate in a given activity. Particular care will be given to fully inform and prepare parents regarding any content or activity that may be deemed potentially controversial or dangerous. Permission/Registration forms with medical information should accompany children/youth for any on-site retreats and/or activities involving travel, overnight stays, or extreme sports activity (e.g., skiing).
8. **Trips, Tours, Outings and Retreats.** Trips, tours, outings and retreats may provide opportunities for child abuse if not properly planned, supervised, and monitored.
 - a. All adults on such trips shall be Supervisory Adults.
 - b. The ratio of adults to children shall be between 1:5 (middle school/children) and 1:10 (high school), with a proportionate number of male and female supervisory adults.
 - c. Provisions shall be considered for the physical separation of male and female children/youth in sleeping areas or during unsupervised periods in private locations. (see #10 below)
 - d. Physical romantic contact between children/youth and adults is prohibited at all times.

 9. **Transportation Procedures.** Ministry events involving transportation shall require written/ signed permission from parents/ guardians.
 - a. An adult who transports students shall be fully screened through our “Safe Sanctuaries” procedures, including a DMV background check.
 - b. Where available, each passenger should have a seat belt and the use of them should be enforced.
 - c. When possible, caravans should be used during travel.
 - d. The Two-Adult Rule applies.
 - e. There should be a cell phone or some other way to communicate in an emergency.

 10. **Sleeping Arrangements.** Adults shall not sleep in the same bed as youth. In a hotel-type situation, when possible, an adult room should be between two youth rooms. This is also recommended for a dormitory setting.
 - a. Adults should arrange among themselves to check on the student rooms on a random schedule during the evening.
 - b. Minimizing the possibility of danger from within the group, as well as from strangers, a hotel where the rooms open to the interior of the building, rather than to the outside, should be chosen.

 11. **Interpersonal Boundaries.** All students are expected to stay with the group during regularly scheduled activities, events, and retreats (except when given specific permission to be apart, i.e. during retreats etc.)
 - a. Adults should model appropriate behaviors.
 - b. No profane language is allowed.
 - c. Males and females may not enter sleeping quarters of the opposite sex.
 - d. Personal space and privacy will be respected. No inappropriate touching or contact that violates the feeling of safety or respect will be tolerated.

12. **Physical Safety and Monitoring:** Supervisory adults should be conscious of safety concerns when leading activities and games. Proper equipment and adequate supervision of the activity should always be in place.
13. **No illegal drugs, alcoholic beverages, fireworks, or weapons** are permitted during regularly scheduled activities or during trips, retreats, activities, or events.
14. **Mentoring and Pastoral Care Procedures.** Although confidentiality and privacy are important, the nature of pastoral care and mentoring situations may also create an opportunity for abuse or for false accusations of abuse. Staff and volunteers who provide pastoral care or mentoring should receive training on proper operational procedures.
 - a. **Mentoring**
 - 1) When possible, a “buddy system” with two supervisory adults meeting with the child/youth is the best approach.
 - 2) Mentoring should occur in a well-trafficked area as opposed to a remote location. Meeting area doors should remain open, if possible, and unlocked in all cases. If the door must remain closed, it should have a small glass window in it.
 - 3) Off-site mentoring should be conducted in public places *and* with parent’s permission. If possible, an adult of the same sex should perform the mentoring.
 - 4) Mentors should never promise complete confidentiality. Children/youth should be informed that anything shared with them can be shared with a ministry staff. Everyone has a duty to report when a child/youth is in danger or at risk.
 - b. **Pastoral Care**
 - 1) For private pastoral care with a ministry staff person, he/she should maintain a personal log of such sessions.
 - 2) Staff members should avoid counseling regarding issues beyond their training and ability and refer all such matters to professionals.
 - 3) Staff should be alert for behavioral indications on the part of the child/youth that may signal transference of emotional or sexual interest and shall terminate any one-on-one session immediately upon such indication and inform his/her supervisor.

REPORTING PROCEDURES:

Reporting is required by any staff or volunteer who personally witnesses an incident of abuse or exploitation, when an allegation of an event of abuse or exploitation is made to staff or a volunteer by a third party, and/or when a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse or exploitation to staff or a volunteer. It is crucial that reporting is immediate and the allegations dealt with by proper authorities as soon as possible to the incident or disclosure. Investigating suspected abuse is the responsibility of the authorities, not the person making the report (Definitions may be found in the KY statute, KRS600.020).

1. According to Kentucky State Law: anyone who suspects abuse shall report directly to Child Protection Services immediately. To explain, the staff person or volunteer who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported or disclosed, or who suspects abuse is required to report the incident/suspected abuse **immediately** to the staff person in charge of the ministry/activity. Upon receiving such information, the staff person in charge of the ministry/activity (with the reporting person present) shall **immediately** call the **child protection hotline** at (800) 752-6200, if a child is involved, or Adult Protective Services at 595-4803, in the case of an adult. If the concern relates to another state, the call will be referred to that state. The staff person in charge of the ministry/activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately attempt to obtain necessary information such as the name of the alleged victim and his/her address and family information.
2. If the accused is an appointed clergy, or a member of his/her family, the allegations shall be reported to the District Superintendent (502) 425-4240 . The District Superintendent shall also report to the proper authorities as set forth in paragraph 1 above. The District Superintendent will take responsibility and act according to established rules of The Book of Discipline with respect to claims against a clergyperson. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office in Crestwood, KY (502) 425-4240.
3. All clergy are included in mandatory reporting as required by The Book of Discipline and Kentucky state law.

All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law. ¶341.5 The Book of Discipline
4. After the volunteer and staff person in charge has reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, and appropriate supervisors have been informed, the appointed clergy are to report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.
5. The person in charge of the ministry/event shall keep a written record of the steps taken by the Church in response to the reported abuse. The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place.

RESPONSE PROCEDURES:

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

1. All media requests for statements should be directed to the Senior Pastor, or an official spokesperson, who shall be in contact with the District Superintendent. An official spokesperson will be designated to speak on behalf of the church.
2. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, a supervisor or clergyperson will remove the accused from further involvement with children or vulnerable adults and advise the accused there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care should be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.
3. When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or a volunteer has committed an act of abuse or exploitation, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry activities/events with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with The Book of Discipline.
4. The supervisor or a clergyperson will notify the parents of the alleged victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well-being of the child or youth until the parent(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, the advice of the authorities will be followed concerning notification of others.
5. All allegations will be taken seriously. The care and safety of the alleged victim is considered the **first** priority; every effort will be made to respond in a positive and supportive manner to the alleged victim and family. All involved will receive care and support to help prevent further harm and to create a climate in which healing can take place.