

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AT CENTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls all churches to welcome the children and also to make our churches safe places for children to grow and learn. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and also to protect those volunteers from false accusations. It is also our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children.

PURPOSE

Center United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry for and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assures the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events, and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience. We will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

PROCEDURES: We adopt these minimum standards for our ministries with children and youth. We define a child as anyone under 18 years old. It is understood that Kid Zone will operate under a separate Safe Sanctuary Policy, according to its current procedure manual. To be reviewed and approved by trustees annually.

1. Safe Sanctuary Committee

- a. The Safe Sanctuary Committee will be an on going active committee consisting of a Chairman (to nominated by the Church's Committee on Lay Leadership), Pastor, Youth Minister/Director, Kid Zone Director, Kid's Klub leader, SPRC representative, Education representative, Trustee representative, Worship representative, and anyone else the nominating committee wishes to recommend.
- b. The Committee's responsibility will include
 - Scheduling and operating training classes as necessary
 - Annual review of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and any changes deemed necessary will be submitted to the Church Council for their approval.
 - Maintain a master log of volunteers who have signed the policy.
 - Making sure the policy is being followed and report to the Church Council any problems.
 - For record keeping, each year a copy of the policy and signatures of the volunteers will be kept indefinitely.

2. Screening and recruiting of paid staff who have responsibilities with our children and youth.
 - a. Applicants will follow normal hiring procedures as defined by the SPRC. The interviewing process should include the Pastor, the committee representative responsible for the work area, and the SPRC. References will be contacted.
 - b. They will be required to complete an authorization for Criminal Background Check & Child Abuse History Clearance, pass a drug screen test, complete an I-9 form, be certified or be willing to be certified in CPR and First Aid, and agree to have their driving records reviewed.
 - c. Follow-up background checks and drug test may be conducted as deemed necessary.
 - d. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on the church premise.

3. Screening and recruiting of volunteers who have responsibilities with our children and youth.
 - a. Volunteers should be in regular church attendance for at least six months before being able to be a lead volunteer with children. However, if the volunteer has not been in regular church attendance for six months, an exception to this rule can be made with an acceptable criminal background check. The church reserves the right to run a criminal background check.
 - b. Affidavits or application may be required.

4. Supervision
 - a. Two adult rule. There will be two unrelated adults in each room with children. If this is not possible, there will be a roving adult who moves amid the classrooms during the program period.
 - b. An adult is defined as someone at least 18 years old and at least 5 years older than the oldest child being supervised.
 - c. Each room will have an unobstructed window or the door will be left open at all times.
 - d. During times of transportation, if it is not possible to have two adults in the vehicle, the transport time should be closely monitored. In other words, departure and arrival times will be recorded.
 - e. All materials will be age appropriate.
 - f. For activities in which children leave the Church property and for overnight activities, their parents/guardians shall be required to sign written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate. This includes such events as lock-ins, retreats, day field trips, etc.
 - g. It is strongly encouraged that a parent accompany a child that has to leave the worship service for any reason.
 - h. The hallways will be monitored during church services.
 - i. No child will be left unattended during any church related event. If a nursery is not provided, it is the responsibility of the parents to supervise their own children.
 - j. All outside groups meeting on church property will fill out our "user agreement" which will include this Safe Sanctuary Policy.

5. Communication

- a. Any inappropriate communication on social/mass media (including but not limited to texting, emails etc.) between adults and youth is prohibited.
- b. Any one on one counseling with adults and youth must be in a public place or at the youth's house with a parent at home.
- c. No pictures of youth will be on church website without written parental/guardian permission.

6. Training

- a. Each work area/event chairman will be responsible to make sure the volunteers working with the children have read and signed the Safe Sanctuary Policy within the past year.
- b. CPR and First Aid training shall occur at least once a year for all staff members and be required every two years. This training will be offered to all volunteers.

7. Reporting

- a. Any person receiving information of abuse will report it immediately to the pastor or the lay leader and call local law enforcement.
- b. It is our intent to comply with all North Carolina laws.
- c. If the alleged abuse happened on church property or on a Church sponsored event by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner & they shall not be banned from other church ministries.

8. Responding

- a. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously; nothing will be covered up.
- b. The District Superintendent will be made aware of all allegations immediately.
- c. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.
- d. All contact with the media will be handled by the pastor.

I have read and agree to adhere to this policy. I am committed to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

Sign name

Write name

Date

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