

SAMPLE
Safe Sanctuary Example Policy
For a Medium-Sized United Methodist Congregation

Why we have this policy in Place:

- Biblical Mandate
- Part of the baptism covenant we make with each child
- Mandated from the General Conference of 1996 that each United Methodist Church have a policy
- For the protection of volunteers in case of false allegations of abuse
- Our Insurance company will not cover the church without a policy in place

Purpose:

It is the purpose and intent of _____ UMC to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children and youth of our faith family.

Goal:

Our goal is to protect minors from any type of inappropriate sexual behavior, molestation, abuse, or neglect by employees or volunteers of the church and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

Statement of Covenant:

- Acknowledge the risks
- Adopt an ongoing plan
- Take steps to implement the plan
- Continue ministry to our church families and neighbors

Definitions:

A. employee – anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis

B. volunteer – anyone who is not paid by the church, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors. Examples: nursery, childcare, preschool, grade school, middle school, high school, and college workers, bus drivers, teachers, chaperones, VBS helpers, others as designated by the administrative body of leaders.

C. minor – anyone under the age of 18 years.

D. child sexual abuse- The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines it as "any sexual activity with a child... whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child. Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children... in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can

include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.”

Policies and Procedures:

The policies and procedures set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities whether clergy, paid staff, or volunteer. This policy will address four (4) areas that are critical for the protection of the children, our employees and our church. Those four areas include selection process, protection policy, reporting procedures, and responses to allegations.

I. Selection Process:

- A. Current or new employee
 - 1. Receive a written job description
 - 2. Complete an application form with 3 reference checks
 - 3. Complete a background check consent form
 - 4. Receive appropriate clearances of all checks to work with minors
 - 5. Undergo personal interview
 - 6. Attend safe sanctuary training
 - 7. Renew background check every 3 years

- B. Regular, Occasional, and Last-minute volunteers
 - 1. Complete an application form with references
 - 2. Complete a background check consent form
 - 3. Receive appropriate clearances of all checks to work with minors
 - 4. Attend safe sanctuary training
 - 5. Renew background check every 3 years

All records, forms, and reports of both employees and volunteers will become part of a *confidential* file that will be kept by the Safe Sanctuary Team at the local church.

II. Protection Policy:

- A. Two Adult Rule - Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of children. Floaters may be used when needed.
- B. Five Year Rule - All persons working with minors must be at least five years older than the age group they are leading/supervising.
- C. Six Month Rule - Any *volunteers* working with children must be a member or regular attender at church for at least six months.
- D. Adult to Child Ratios -
 - a) 1:3 preschool
 - b) 1:5 elementary
 - c) 1:7 junior high
 - d) 1:8 senior high
- E. Windows/Open Doors - All rooms where minors are meeting will have windows (in doors or walls), half doors or open doors for all teaching/learning activities.
- F. Overnight Activities

1. Hotel Setting: No adults in the bed with a child. If possible, choose hotels with rooms opening to inside hallway.
 2. Bunkroom Setting: At least 2 same gender adults may sleep in a large room with multiple bunk beds.
 3. Off-site trips information exchange:
 - a. Parent must receive contact info to include:
 - 1) start/stop times
 - 2) location of event
 - 3) program content
 - 4) lodging information
 - 5) covenant rules expected of their child
 - b. Staff/volunteer/drivers must receive:
 - 1) all contact information for parents
 - 2) signed parent/guardian permission/liability form
 - 3) health/emergency information
- G. Transportation:
1. Drivers should have license and insurance on file with church.
 2. Everyone should wear seat belts
 3. No one under 85 pounds should sit in the front seat
 4. If a charter bus is rented ask the coach company if a background check is done on their drivers. If not, look for another charter bus company.
 5. Never let youth drive from church to off-site location. Either plan to meet at location or transport with adult drivers.
- H. Preschools/Weekday Programs
1. Each church preschool must have a detailed, working preschool security policy that should be conscientiously followed.
 2. All Employees and Volunteers shall abide by the preschool security policy as well as any other applicable age-specific guidelines of the Safe Sanctuary policy.
 3. Due to the professional relationship of the teacher and student, parents understand that only one teacher may be present in certain learning or artistic performance programs. All professional teachers shall complete the "employee" selection process, even if they are volunteers
- I. Outside Groups Meeting in Your Church Facilities
1. It is recommended that the local church's board of trustees/Safe Sanctuary team require that all outside organizations review, and agree to comply with all of the church's safe sanctuary policy.
 2. They should provide their own background checks and train their own leadership.
 3. Documentation should be kept on file in the church office.

III. Reporting Procedures

Alabama State law encourages voluntary reporting of child abuse in faith-based ministry settings. In keeping with Christian beliefs that children should not be abused and neglected, "Your Church Name" UMC will practice and advocate voluntary compliance

with the Alabama State law suggesting reporting of suspected abuse/neglect of all minors.

- A. Allegations of suspected abuse/neglect will be reported to the senior pastor, the Department of Human Resources and local law enforcement.
- B. A written abuse report is to be placed with authorities within 24 hours.
- C. Notification must also be giving to the District Superintendent, who will then contact the communication department of the NAC, and the Bishop.
- D. If the Pastor is accused of abuse, the Safe Sanctuary committee chair or SPRC Chairperson should directly report the incident to the District Superintendent.

IV. Response Procedures

- A. A quick, compassionate and unified response to alleged incidents of child abuse is expected.
- B. All allegations will be taken seriously, with grace shown to ALL parties.
- C. The Pastor will yield to the District Superintendent. Church personnel are not to undertake an investigation of the incident. However, in all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's activity, all those present should be at the service of official investigation agencies.
- D. The church will keep a Christian perspective on how they portray the incident to the community. The church will let the law decide the truth, show respect to both parties, and as a community of faith, vow to keep these matters private.