

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Child Abuse Prevention

Chippewa United Methodist Church

Approved by Administrative Council:

Chair -

Date –

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes [a] child... welcomes me.” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “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). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse.”

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church-1996. Copyright © 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission. [pp. 384-386])

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation’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

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth as well as all the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law.

Thereby Be It Resolved

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (“Baptismal Covenant II.” *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

Definitions:

1. **Paid Staff:** Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric or employee who is paid.
2. **Children/Youth/Minor:** Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. **Adult:** Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.
4. **Volunteer:** Any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and /or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.
5. **Sexual Abuse:** The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape. And in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
6. **Child Emotional Abuse:** Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by law.
7. **Registered Sex Offender (RSO):** Any individual, male or female, who has been convicted of a crime involving a sexual act, where federal, state or local laws require them to be placed on a public, sexual offender registry after they have served their criminal sentences or when they have been released on parole.

I. EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers 18 years or older who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

Employment Application: All paid staff must complete the Employment Application.

- Application includes a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes Chippewa UMC to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.
- Authorization and waiver of any right to confidentiality or to pursue damages against the churchy caused by a reference's response.
- An interview of qualified applicants will be conducted.

Clearances: All persons (Employees age 14 & up, Volunteers age 18 & up) working with children and youth *in any capacity* are required to have the following three clearances before beginning employment or volunteer work at CUMC:

1. Federal Criminal History clearance from the FBI

Employees – All employees of Chippewa United Methodist Church must obtain fingerprint based federal criminal history (FBI)

Volunteers - If you have been a Pennsylvania resident for the entire previous 10 years you will submit the **Unpaid Volunteer Affidavit**. Get form from requesting Church Department Director. (a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under §6344)

If you have not been a Pennsylvania resident for the entire previous 10 years you must obtain the Federal Background Check (FBI)

2. PA Criminal History clearance from the Pennsylvania State Police

3. PA Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services

Renewal Requirement for Clearances: Clearances must be renewed every 60 months.

Mandated Reporter Training: All paid church staff will be required to take Pennsylvania Mandated Reporter training through the University of Pittsburgh's Child Welfare Resource Center. This free web-based training and can be accessed online at www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu

Covenant Statement: All CUMC staff and the volunteers who work with children and youth will be asked to sign a covenant statement, before beginning employment or volunteer work that he/she agrees to follow the church's policies and procedures for the prevention of child abuse.

Six-Month Rule: Volunteers will have attended CUMC for at least six months before being assigned to work with children/youth. Volunteers not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only in an assistant capacity with two other non-related adults until he/she meets the six-month attendance requirement.

Confidentiality: Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and background clearance checks will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the covenant form will not be permitted to work with children.

II. PROCEDURES FOR OUTSIDE GROUPS USING CUMC WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- The Safe Sanctuary Policy will be given to all outside group leaders to review the church's policies and procedures for the prevention of child abuse. (Groups include but not limited to: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Sports teams, school bands)
- Leaders of the group must sign a covenant to abide by the church's policies and procedures.
- Outside groups must communicate to church officials for verification the screening and training procedures used by the group for the prevention of child abuse.

III. PROCEDURES TO INSURE THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND WORKERS

Staff and Volunteer Identification

- Paid employees and volunteer workers will wear a name identification tag when participating in ministry with children and youth.

Two Adult Rules

- CUMC will strive to have no fewer than two adults present during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth. A concerted effort will be made to recruit enough leaders and helpers to insure such staffing. The following guidelines will be used in relation to this rule.
- Ideally, the two adults will not be related
- Adult “roamers” will move around the building on a regular basis to check on the activities and the classrooms.
- We will stress to community groups using our facilities that two or more adult leaders need to be present with their group.
- Two classes will be combined, if practical, if no adult leaders can be found for a class. A posted notice will inform parents where to pick up children.
- Children in the Nursery through 5th grade should not be dropped off in a classroom without a teacher present. A parent should stay with the child until supervision arrives.
- Will release minors only to a parent or guardian and utilize sign-in and sign-out sheets.
- Will use two paid staff or volunteers when transporting minors in vehicles.
- Will encourage minors to use a “buddy system” whenever minors go on trips off Chippewa UMC property.

Parent Pick Up/Child Release Authorization

- Children in Nursery through 4th grade should be picked up at their classrooms after an activity by a parent or a person designated in writing by the parent.
- In the case of a guest student, the teacher or director of the activity will ask the parents their pick-up/release preference for their child.

No Workers Under the Age of Eighteen

- An approved adult is anyone 18 years or older who has completed the worker application process. No one under 18 can supervise children, they can be considered helpers.

“Five Years Older” Rule

- Paid Staff and Volunteers who work with children and or youth in a supervisory position are required to be at least five years older than the children and or youth they are leading. Volunteer leaders, student leaders, and interns who are not five years older than the youth they are working with will be considered “in-training” and under the supervision of the Ministry Director.

Open Classrooms

- Classrooms or child care rooms will be visited by church staff or volunteer ministry directors to ensure that the classrooms are being properly supervised. Parents are welcome to visit the classrooms at any time.

Storage and Utility Room Doors Are Locked

- Storage and utility rooms throughout the church will be locked and access provided only to appropriate staff or adult workers. If access is needed to any of these rooms during normal business hours and the staff person in charge is not available, the

volunteer should go to the church office. If the office is closed the volunteer will need to see one of the church custodians.

Door Windows

- Only classrooms with windows in the doors will be used for children and youth activities. Sight lines through the windows should always remain unobstructed.

Advance Notice to Parents

- Notice will be given in advance to parents/guardians with full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. (E.g. leaving the church property or a trip requiring special clothing.)
- A written permission form must be signed by the parent or guardian before the child can participate in the event or activity.
- A medical release and information form must be filled out and signed by a parent or guardian for trips (of significant length) off the church property.
- A Participation Covenant for trips reminds everyone that Safe Sanctuary standards are still in place.

Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries

- All paid staff and volunteers will observe the following guidelines:
- Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
- To the extent possible, Chippewa UMC events that are co-educational will have both male and female chaperones.
- Whenever possible, at least two unrelated paid staff or volunteers will be in the room when minors are present. Doors will be left fully open if one adult needs to leave the room temporarily and during arrival to the class or event before both adults are present. Speaking to a minor or minors one-on-one should be done in public settings where paid staff or volunteers are in sight of other people.
- Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and /or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.
- If you recognize an improper relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
- If one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolate environments.

Open Door Counseling

- At counseling sessions with children or youth a room with a window will be used and the door should remain slightly open. The session should be conducted when others are nearby and another adult in the building should be informed of the time frame of the session.

Limited Counseling Sessions

- When a youth seeks counseling, determine at the initial meeting if you are qualified to meet their needs, if you do not believe so, refer them to another counselor. If you do agree to counsel a youth, agree to two or three sessions, and then refer them to another counselor if the problems have not been resolved.
- Adult workers or helpers must be attentive to appropriate dress codes and use of language.

Off Site Church Sponsored Ministry

- All church groups holding church sponsored ministry events off site of church property must abide and follow the church Safe Sanctuary policy. This includes but

is not limited to home-based Bible Studies, Discipleship Ministry groups, women's and men's groups, etc.

Appropriate Equipment and Supervision & Safety

- Arrange for the ministry to take place in an appropriate setting. If traveling off church property, plan ahead for traveling arrangements, hotel rooms, camping areas, etc. in relation to the Safe Sanctuary policy.
- Youth should never share a sleeping room with adult workers unless they are family members.
- Adult workers should know how to safely operate any equipment that is needed. When activity requires some specialized equipment, the equipment should be selected to suit the participants and the activity and to include appropriate safety and program features. No youth under the age of 16 will be permitted to use industrial tools such as but not limited to power saws or utility knives unless written permission is granted from the parent/guardian of the youth.
- Tool usage will be under the direct supervision of the adult worker.
- Adult youth workers must assure that every participant has and uses the appropriate personal safety equipment. For example, activity afloat requires that each participant properly wear a life jacket; bikers, horseback riders, and whitewater kayakers need helmets for certain activities; skaters need protective gear; and all need to be dressed for warmth and utility as the circumstances require.
- For most activities, common-sense procedures and standards can greatly reduce any risk. These should be known and appreciated by all participants, and the supervisor must assure compliance.
- Every activity has a minimum skill level, and the supervisor must identify and recognize this level and be sure that participants are not put at risk by attempting any activity beyond their abilities.

Restroom Policy

- Adult supervision will be given children Nursery age through Kindergarten.
- When assisting a child in the bathroom the volunteer should not close the door completely, but privacy should be respected. The volunteer will stand outside the restroom but within hearing distance of the child.
- When assisting children with clothing, the volunteer will stay in view of others so they can see what is taking place.
- Adult leaders of other age group children should use their own judgment about escorting a child to the restroom.

Classroom Discipline

- All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures:
- Never engage in physical discipline of a minor. Volunteers or paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse of any kind.
- If a child is behaving inappropriately the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is. Example: "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building."
- If this measure is not effective the child will be guided to another activity.
- If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed away from other students to work or play but will be appropriately supervised.
- If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to the Director of the Ministry in which the child is participating for supervision as long as one other adult or helper is present.

- If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parent or guardian (as soon as possible.)
- At no time during the disciplining child's disruptive behavior shall physical punishment, verbal abuse or ridicule be used.

Transportation

- Drivers who transport children for church related activities must be at least 21 years of age, have a valid driver's license for the type of vehicle being driven and have current motor vehicle insurance coverage.
- Proof of these criteria will be requested and placed on file.
- All state laws and regulations need to be observed when transporting children and youth. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has issued guidelines for the use of passenger vans.
- Approved volunteers (18-21 years of age) who work in the Youth Ministry may transport youth for contact work with written permission of a parent or guardian.

Accident / Incident Report Forms

- Workers supervising children and youth are responsible to fill out an Accident Report / Incident Report when a child has been injured or an incident has occurred.
- When an accident or incident occurs, the parent shall be notified promptly. The parent will be given a copy of the Accident / Incident Report form to communicate clearly what has happened.
- A copy of the form should be turned into the Ministry Director who will file it.

Annual Review

- An annual Safe Sanctuary review will be offered for all employees and children/youth volunteers. The annual review will consist of the following:
- Church's policies for the prevention of child abuse.
- Procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth.
- Church Safe Sanctuary Covenant Statement for employees and Volunteers
- Appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse.
- Details of the state laws regarding child abuse.
- A printed copy of the church's Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures will be available on the church website and in the church office for anyone who wishes to read it.

Insurance

- The church will work with our insurance agent, *Church Mutual*, to secure adequate coverage for the scope of our ministries including coverage for abuse of children or youth.

IV. Social Media -

Social Networking Sites-Relationship and Group status

- Adults should not submit "friend" requests to minors or youth. Youth may request friendships with adults, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
- Youth workers who choose to accept friend requests from minors or youth should be monitored by other youth workers (within the congregation) to maintain full access to the youth workers profile and correspondence.
- Authorized youth workers who choose to accept friend requests from minors or youth should use all privacy settings applicable to shield youth from any inappropriate content that may exist within the authorized youth worker's profile.

- All youth and adults should be informed that any communication that is sent via digital means (email, social networking site notes or posts, etc.) is not confidential and may be reported or shared with others.
- When and where available, authorized youth workers may choose to create separate private and professional profiles on networking sites to create a line of privacy.
- It is strongly recommended that “closed” groups, but not “hidden” groups be used for Fellowships/Youth groups. These groups should have both youth and adult administrators.
- Fellowships/youth groups should decide within their covenant whether their social networking site groups are open to parents of current members.
- Covenants should be created to govern what is appropriate and inappropriate content to be placed and displayed in the online group for a Fellowship/Youth group.
- Any inappropriate material that is not covered by “Mandatory Reporting” laws should be deleted from the site. Any material that is covered by “Mandatory Reporting” laws should be reported to the clergy, documented for church records, and then deleted from the site.
- Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by authorized youth workers and parents.
- Parents should be informed that content that appears on youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of authorized youth workers.
- Adult members of the congregation who seek religious or spiritual advice from the clergy via digital means (email, social networking site posts, etc.) should be informed that their communication is NOT confidential. Use of digital means to communicate nullifies confidentiality.
- When and where available, clergy are encouraged to consider creating a personal and a professional account to maintain appropriate boundaries with members of their congregation or other members of communities of faith.
- Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from their church members. These encounters may create tension in “real world” relationships.
- Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
- Clergy are encouraged to use privacy settings to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.

Transitions

- Clergy who are leaving a specific ministry setting (congregation, cluster youth ministry, association, conference) should refrain from offering pastoral care through digital communication after the END date of their contract/call/covenant with the church.
- Former youth members and adult leaders of youth groups, due to departure, removal or loss of eligibility (aged out of a program) should be removed from digital communication youth groups (Facebook groups, list serves, etc.)

Digital Covenants

- All church sponsored web sites will have at least two paid church staff Administrators who will monitor the web sites.
- It will be acknowledged that materials posted on any church sponsored sites (and or group pages) are not CONFIDENTIAL.

- Any content deemed inappropriate by web site Administrators will be removed from church sponsored web sites or group pages.

In Addition, the following points will be acknowledged:

- a) All church sponsored web sites will maintain appropriate language.
- b) All members of a church sponsored web site will be approved by the web site administrator.
- c) Individuals may tag themselves in photos but will not tag others
- d) Photos deemed inappropriate behavior (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, sexual acts, etc.) will be not be tolerated and will be deleted.

Video Chats, Blogs or Video Blogs

- Adults will refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
- Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.
- All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
- All clergy and authorized youth workers should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth. Your voice is often considered the voice of the church, and your content may be viewed as church policy.

Publishing/Posting Content Online

- The church staff in charge of any church sponsored activity should take care to secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
- Videoing of congregational services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media MUST post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast. Congregations are NOT considered PUBLIC space and therefore must inform participants when they are being videoed.
- Photos that are published on the church sponsored web sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

Email or Texting (Includes Twitter)

- Email/Texting is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
- Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted in an email/text message.
- All email/text users should take a moment to consider the ramifications of their message before clicking on the “send” or “reply to all” button.

V. POLICY FOR REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS

Purpose: Chippewa United Methodist Church accepts as central to its mission the establishment and maintenance of a safe and caring environment for every child of God, not the least of which are minor children. At the same time, Chippewa United Methodist Church remains a place of grace for all sinners, including those whose crimes are public.

Knowing that children do not yet have the ability to protect themselves, and are therefore at particular risk, we determine to provide heightened protection for them by carefully monitoring any known registered sex offender (an “RSO”) who participate in the life of the congregation, whether on or around church property or while participating in official church activities off-site.

God's grace has been extended to all. Grace invites repentance, and repentance requires acknowledgement of sin, sorrow for sin, and a turning away from sin, all with the support and prayers of God's people. Believing this, and while remaining faithful to the protection and safety of our children, we establish the following policy with regard to the presence and participation of RSO's in the life of the congregation.

1. For purposes of this policy, an RSO is any individual, male or female, who has been convicted of a crime involving a sexual act, where federal, state or local laws require them to be placed on a public, sexual offender registry after they have served their criminal sentences or when they have been released on parole.
2. Upon learning of an RSO's desire to participate in the life of the congregation, the Pastor(s) and the Chairperson of the Safe Sanctuary Committee (the "Chairperson") shall meet and confer about obtaining a written release from the RSO in order to ascertain such information as, for example, the nature of the RSO's offense(s), the name of the RSO's probation officer, whether or not the RSO is presently under the care and treatment of a mental health professional, whether admitting an RSO into the life of the congregation is an event that must be reported to the church's insurance carriers, whether one or more of the RSO's victims is a member of the congregation, and such other facts as are, or may be, relevant to the decision of whether or not to admit the RSO into the life of the congregation (an "RSO Inquiry").
3. All information obtained through an RSO Inquiry shall remain confidential as between the Pastor(s), the Chairperson and any professional whose advice and counsel they may seek as being necessary or desirable to the RSO Inquiry.
4. If, in the sole discretion of the Pastor(s) and the Chairperson, the RSO Inquiry either (1) fails to uncover sufficient information as would lead a reasonable person to conclude that it is prudent to invite the RSO into the life of the congregation, or (2) discloses information that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that it would not be prudent to invite the RSO into the life of the congregation, then in either event the RSO shall not be invited to participate in the life of the congregation at that time.
5. If deemed necessary or desirable by the Pastor or Chairperson, an RSO Inquiry may remain ongoing or be updated from time to time, even after a particular RSO is invited to participate in the life of the congregation, in order to determine whether the status of the RSO as a participant or non-participant in the life of the congregation should be re-evaluated and/or changed.
6. If, after an RSO Inquiry, the RSO is invited to participate in the life of the congregation, then prior to entering onto church property, having any contact with the congregation or participating in any official church activities (on or off site), the RSO must agree, in writing, to strictly abide by each of the following requirements for participation in the life of the congregation (collectively, "RSO Procedures"):
 - At all times while the RSO is participating in any official church activities (whether on church property or off site), the RSO shall be accompanied by a chaperone selected by the Pastor(s) or Chairperson. Male RSO's shall be accompanied by an adult male chaperone, and female RSO's shall be accompanied by an adult female chaperone.
 - The RSO shall not have contact of any nature with any children (other than his or her own child(ren)) except in the presence of a chaperone.

- Notwithstanding anything in this policy to the contrary, the RSO shall not enter into the education wing, youth house, or other areas where children's and youth activities usually take place, even if the RSO is accompanied by a chaperone.
 - The RSO must be actively involved in one or more treatment programs with a licensed and qualified mental health professional until such time as the mental health professional writes a letter to the church opining that in his/her professional judgment, the RSO is no longer benefitting from such treatment and giving the basis for such opinion.
 - The RSO shall abide by parole, probation, personal protection orders, bond conditions and any other court-imposed conditions, as well as all other generally applicable rules and policies of Chippewa United Methodist Church.
 - The RSO shall not access any church computers, smart phones or other internet-accessible devices, and shall not take any photographs.
 - Failure of the RSO to strictly abide by each of the foregoing rules shall constitute grounds for immediately terminating the RSO's participation in the life of the congregation.
7. Nothing in this policy is intended to be or shall be construed as conferring any legal or other right on an RSO who has been invited to participate in the life of the congregation to continue in such status indefinitely as a matter of right. To the contrary, at any time and for any reason, the Pastor(s) may, in his/her/their sole pastoral discretion, require an RSO to dissociate from the congregation.
 8. This policy does not address admission into the life of the congregation of an individual who is not an RSO but who is suspected of, been charged with, is under investigation for or who otherwise has not been found guilty in a court of law of, one or more offenses which, after conviction, would result in such individual becoming an RSO. The request of any such individual to participate in the life of the congregation shall be evaluated on an ad-hoc basis by the Pastor(s) with the advice and counsel of the Chairman and any other professional whose advice and counsel they may deem necessary or desirable.
 9. The protection and safety of all who participate in the life of our congregation, particularly children, is paramount. Therefore it is the legal, moral and ethical obligation of all members of the congregation to promptly report any known or suspected violations of this policy, as well as any instances of sexual harassment, unwanted sexual advances or inappropriate sexual behavior of any kind to the Pastor(s) or the Chairperson.
 10. Notwithstanding any privileges granted to an RSO by this policy, nothing in this policy is intended to relieve any RSO of any obligation, restriction or condition with which such RSO is obligated to comply by virtue of any law, rule, regulation or order of court.
 11. This policy shall be provided to all new members of the congregation, and any updates to this policy shall be made available to the congregation as and when they are made.

These procedures represent the minimum requirements to be observed. Individual programs and ministries may impose additional guidelines appropriate to their programming to insure the safety of our children and workers.

VI. MANDATED REPORTING FOR ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

The following adults are considered mandated reporters and are required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse:

- An employee of a child-care service who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- A clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization.
- An individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child.
- An employee of a social services agency who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- An independent contractor who has direct contact with children.

Mandated Reporters

- A mandated reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:
- The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.
- The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.
- A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
- An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

Making a Report

Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313.

Can anyone report suspected abuse?

Anyone who is concerned about the safety of a child is encouraged to make a report. Individuals who are encouraged, although not required by law, to make a report of suspected child abuse, can make a report to ChildLine by calling 1-800-932-0313.

Must I report suspected abuse if I learn of the abuse from someone other than the child who was allegedly abused?

Yes. Nothing requires the mandated reporter have direct contact with the child in order to make a report.

Do I need to notify anyone within the church?

Yes, after making the report to ChildLine, you are required to immediately thereafter notify the staff person in charge of ministry program or event who will in turn immediately notify the Pastor. The Pastor will notify the District Superintendent.

What if a mandated reporter fails to follow the law?

The penalties for a mandated reporter who willfully fails to report child abuse range from a misdemeanor of second degree to a felony of the second degree.

Am I protected from civil and criminal liability if I make a report of suspected child abuse?

Yes, persons making a report of suspected child abuse are immune from civil and criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith.

If I make a report is my identity protected?

The identity of the person making the report is kept confidential with the exception of being released to law enforcement officials or the district attorney's office.

VII. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

- Any allegation of abuse requires a process to address responding to legal authorities, the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator, and the press. The response must be quick, appropriate, compassionate, and unified.
- All procedures observed in handling the allegations will be documented immediately and throughout the investigation.

Response to Alleged Victim Abuse

- The Pastor will notify the parents if it appears that they have no previous knowledge of the matter.
- Care and comfort will be extended to the alleged victim until the parents arrive. Ensure the child's safety at all times.
- The Pastor or District Superintendent will immediately notify the church's insurance company and then confirm the notification in writing. The church's attorney will also be notified.
- No one will confront the accused with allegations. No one will be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegations. No one will assess blame or investigate the allegation.
- Confidentiality for both the victim and the accused will be observed by everyone involved.
- Care and comfort will be shown to the alleged victims, the accused and their families. All involved will be treated with dignity. A sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being of all involved will be communicated.

Response to Alleged Perpetrator of Abuse

- The alleged perpetrator of abuse shall immediately, yet with dignity and respect for their sacred worth, be removed from further involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, and advised that there has been an allegation of abuse.
- Details of the allegation of the abuse shall not be discussed with the alleged perpetrator at the time of removal. The accused will be immediately suspended from his/her employment or volunteer duties. If the accused is a staff member, the Pastor will notify the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.
- In any removal of clergy, staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, to avoid contamination of investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.

- When it has been alleged that a member of the clergy or church staff or a volunteer has committed an act of abuse, 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 thoroughly investigated and the outcome determined by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with the Book of Discipline.
- Questions of later resumption of ministry activities/events with children, youth or vulnerable adults by the alleged perpetrator shall be guided by church and Conference policy, and the recommendations of legal and social service authorities, where appropriate.

Response to the Media

- The District Superintendent, the Conference Director of Communications, and Pastor, in consultation with appropriate congregational leadership, shall decide on *a single spokesperson* for contact with the public/media. All media requests for statements shall be directed to that person

VIII. DISQUALIFICATION

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been accused, reported or convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

- Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
- A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.
- A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.
- Any paid worker or volunteer who willfully disobey this policy will be considered for removal from their ministry position.

IX. POLICY REVIEW

The Child Abuse Prevention Policy will be reviewed annually by the Safe Sanctuary Committee to insure the integrity and practicality of the policy and procedures. Changes and adaptations to the policy will be done by the Safe Sanctuary Committee and will be approved thereafter by the Administrative Council.