



ST. MATTHEW'S NEW LIFE SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

*Reducing the risk of abuse in the church for the
protection of children, youth and vulnerable persons*

COVENANT

When the disciple tried to keep the children away from Jesus, he was quick to respond, "Let the children come to me" Jesus taught the children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. Today, the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children very seriously. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against abuse in our churches. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent child abuse in every situation, but it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a thorough practical policy of prevention. This policy is a guideline procedure for our church. It's based on analyzed data. We take responsibility to adequately educate our congregation about abuse.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect all the children, youth, and vulnerable person's that come to us, to protect both our paid and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of abuse and to limit the extent of legal liability of our church. A copy of the policy is filed with the United Methodist Insurance. Presented herein is a comprehensive plan that will include all the areas of the issue: Behavioral Policies, Screening Procedures, Supervision of Children and Youth & Vulnerable Persons, Driver Policy, reporting and a Response Plan. All data and documents are kept confidential and are securely maintained. These delineated policies are the MINIMUM necessary precautions for protecting children, youth and vulnerable persons. Our church will endeavor to monitor updates and recommendations by St. Matthew's New Life, United Methodist Church.

BEHAVIORAL POLICIES

All employees and volunteers are specifically prohibited from committing any act of child/youth mistreatment, neglect, or abuse on church owned property or at any church activity for all employees and volunteers include, but are not limited to:

- Physical abuse: strike, spank, shake, slap

- Verbal abuse: humiliate, degrade, threaten
- Sexual abuse: inappropriate touch, verbal exchange, or allowing children to view sexually explicit material
- Mental abuse: shaming, cruelty
- Neglect: withholding food, water, basic care
- Smoking or using tobacco products
- Use of alcohol, illicit drugs, or abuse of prescription

ALL PEOPLE MUST BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY!

SCREENING PROCEDURES

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

- A. Applicants /volunteers shall demonstrate an active relationship within the church (regular attendance for at least six months) before being allowed to be in any role in children’s, youth’s, and vulnerable person’s activities. In the case of new staff hires, references deemed adequate by the hiring supervisor will replace the six month waiting period.
- B. Persons who have a break in service of one or more years shall submit to screening procedures.
- C. Our church reserves the option to perform background checks of persons who have five or more years of service.
- D. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant’s confidential personnel file which will be maintained. All applications and related forms must be completed.
- E. During an interview, this policy will be reviewed with each applicant who will be in charge of children’s, youth, and vulnerable adults activities prior to service.
 1. All staff, ministry team leaders, and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable person shall be required to fill out the Sex Misconduct Compliance Form for Lay Persons.
 2. Applicants shall be required to perform a History/Background Check Form permitting a criminal history check that may include criminal records, sex offender registry, child abuse registry, and Motor Vehicle report (when applicable).

3. A motor vehicle report documenting applicants driving record will be required for those applicants that may be driving children, youth, and vulnerable person to church related functions with the exception of private arrangements made between parents/guardians.
4. References are checked and documented. NOTE: Volunteers must be known by the supervising person or recommended by someone whose judgement is trusted by the supervising person.
5. The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is responsible for maintaining the required documentation.

Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children and youth:

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & VULNERABLE PERSONS

The following process should be followed in the supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable person. For all church sponsored events:

- The “2 Adult Rule” shall be observed (2 adults per classroom, 2 adults within line of sight.). This may include the presence of an adult roamer who moves in and out of rooms.
- Both of the adults should be at least 18 years old or five years older than the maximum age of the participants.
- Each room or space where children are being cared for shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open. All activities should occur in open view. Should the children’s activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which it difficult to comply with this policy, the person in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, and the children, youth, and vulnerable person are properly supervised.
- Registration materials for activities in which children are taken off church property and not under the direct supervision of their parent/guardians shall require signed written permission forms.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable person if there is no nursery attendant.

OVERNIGHT ACCOMODATIONS

At events that require overnight accommodations: We strongly recommend that at least (2) adults be present in every room.

- When staying in a hotel, adults shall sleep in separate rooms from children/youth and vulnerable person; or if necessary for children/youth and vulnerable person to share a room with an adult, adults shall sleep in separate beds from children/youth and vulnerable person, so long as any one adult shall not be alone with any one child/youth or vulnerable person.
- Recognizing accommodations may be restrictive in some cases one adult is adequate, so long as any one adult shall NOT be alone with any one-child/youth or vulnerable person.

DRIVER POLICY

All church related activities requiring transportation for children/youth and vulnerable person as a part of the event must adhere to the following policy:

1. Drivers must have a valid Maryland or DC driver's license and Motor Vehicle Report (with acceptable results), and must adhere to applicable laws.
2. To the extent reasonably possible, in vehicles carrying more than four children/youth and vulnerable person, there should be an adult in addition to the driver.
3. Passengers are required to wear seatbelts and use child safety seats as required by law.
4. Owner of the vehicle must have evidence of insurance and at least minimum state of ownership requirements.
5. No smoking, consumption of alcohol, illicit drug use, or abuse of prescription medicine at any time while in the vehicle, at any time by the driver or adult passenger while traveling to, from, or during a church sponsored children/youth and vulnerable adults activity.
6. Driver of the vehicle should refrain from cell phone usage, or any other distraction (i.e. DVD players, IPODS, and other electronic devices) while driving.

REPORTING

1. When the incident is reported, all involved must first join in prayer to seek God's presence and asked for the truth to be revealed.

2. Once an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner.
3. The ministry team leader, volunteer, or helper who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported is required to report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the children's activity.
4. The person in charge of the children's activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclose show immediately attempt to attain necessary information such as the name of the alleged victim and his or her address and family information.
5. Upon receiving such information the person in charge of the children's activity will call the police department to make a report if it appears that the behavior is illegal. This line of reporting shall be followed in all such incidents.
6. Any person who it is the object of the report shall be required to refrain from all children's activities until the incident report is resolved.
7. In any removal of a person from any children's activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that and investigation is still being conducted.

RESPONSE PLAN

1. Focus on conflict transformation Colossians 3:12-15. Scripture: Ephesians 4:31.
2. A quick compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's activity, the entire staff of the activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.
3. Any announcement of the allegations should go through SPRC.
4. In response to all the allegations of child abuse, the person in charge of the children's activity shall make the initial contact with the police department if it appears the behavior is illegal.

5. If the allegation is against a staff person, ministry team leader, volunteer, or helper, or if it occurred in the course of a children's activity, the person in charge of the children's activity and SPRC should be contacted immediately.

DEFINITIONS

- **Adult** – A person 18 years of age or older.

- **Child on Child Abuse** Is defined as any of the follow– Bullying: unwanted physical (touching and verbal (name calling) between children.

- **Child** – A person under the age of 18 years of age
- **Child Abuse** – any act, failure to act, or series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator, which creates an imminent risk of physical and/or emotional injury, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
 - Any act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental physical or emotional injury to a child under the age of 18 years of age.
 - Any act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under the age of 18 years of age.
 - Physical neglect by perpetrator constituting prolong or repeat it lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life including adequate medical care, which in danger of the child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.

- **Vulnerable Adult** - adults whose mental or physical condition makes them susceptible to abuse.

- **Verbal Abuse**- Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades, or threatens any child or youth.

- **Physical Abuse** – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health.

- **Sexual Abuse** – Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation of another person
- **Children and youth activities** - any activity of program in which children, youth and vulnerable adults are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.
- **Youth assistant** - Is anyone under the age of 18 who may work with children and youth only when supervised by at least two adults over the age of 18 years. Youth assistants cannot be in charge of, nor left alone with children and youth. Background checks on youth under the age of 18 are inaccessible, so choose youth with great care.
- **2 Adult Rule** - shall be observed (2 adults per classroom, 2 adults within line of sight.). This may include the presence of an adult roamer who moves in and out of room.
- **Ministry Team Leader** – Is any Ministry Team Leader, volunteer, helper, who supervises children, youth, or vulnerable youth activities. This person has regular and direct contact with children. Must be 21 years of age or older, and is counted in the two adult rule.
- **Helper** - means anyone who aids in ministry, including a youth ages 11-17, and is not counted in the 2 adult rule.
- **Persons required to report child abuse** – Persons who in the course of their employment, occupation, or practice of their profession, come into contact with children. Such Persons include, but are not limited to, Ministry Team Leader, Volunteer, Helper, Two adult rule, workers, mental health professionals, and peace and law enforcement officers.
- **“We”** - means St. Matthew’s New Life United Methodist Church. **“Church”**- means church members and coordinator.

ST. MATTHEW’S NEW LIFE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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