

Providence United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Adopted by the Church Council on June 11, 2013

Policy and Procedure

When the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus, he was quick to respond, "Let the children come to me." Jesus taught that 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 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 designed to set procedures for the safety of the children and youth of the Providence United Methodist Church (PUMC). This is based on our understanding of the widespread problem of abuse throughout our country.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure 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 programs and events. We will be responsible for 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 perpetrator.

Requirements of Staff and Volunteers

- All paid staff will be interviewed and written permission will be received for a criminal background check prior to the person assuming the position.
- Volunteers working with children (birth to 18 years) at PUMC must complete a background check and the Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire before they are eligible to begin a direct contact care provider position.
- Volunteers will be required to become familiar with our safe sanctuary policy and will be required to attend CPR and First Aid Training.
- The "Two Adult Rule" will require that no fewer than two adults will always be present. This may be the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms. At least one of these adults shall have training in safe sanctuary policies and procedures.

Emergency situations may arise when the "Two Adult Rule" is not feasible. However, at no time will an adult be one-on-one with a child in an isolated or closed situation. In emergency situations, childcare will be relocated to a room near a meeting area and the doors will be left open.

- No person in charge of children's activities shall supervise a group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the children with whom he/she is working.
- No one shall serve the congregation who, in the belief of the leader, sponsoring agency, or event director, may represent a potential threat of committing abuse or violating this policy.
- No one shall serve if he/she is known to have been "convicted of" or "pled guilty to", or "pled no contest to" any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act or guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such a conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults involving adults, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the physical abuse of an adult with special needs.
- No one shall work or serve as a care provider to children, who has had a verdict or judgment rendered against him/her in any civil action arising out of any personal act or conduct related to sexual abuse of an adult or child. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict occurred and judgment was rendered.
- At a minimum, a First Aid Kit will be available in the kitchen of the fellowship hall between the stoves and outside door along with a plan implemented to keep it stocked and up to date.
- Outside groups will not be screened by PUMC but will be asked to sign a user agreement. Outside groups are responsible to ensuring compliance with the Safe Sanctuary policy while using our facility.
- If abuse is witnessed an immediate intervention is expected.

Responsibility for Screening Process:

- The Pastor and/or a representative of the SPRC will be responsible for screening all paid staff employees.
- SPRC will be responsible for screening all Sunday school, nursery, and children's program volunteers, and for all volunteers with the youth programming area.

Screening Process:

- The Pastor and SPRC will be responsible for receiving, reviewing, confirming, and processing employment applications and volunteer Sexual Misconduct Questionnaires.
- References will be requested of all applicable groups noted above and it will be left to the discretion of the screeners (noted above) to follow up on specific reference listed.
- The results of the interview or Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire, especially when sensitive areas have been discussed, shall be kept confidential.
- A background check for arrest and convictions of all paid staff applicants will be performed by the SPRC. The application form and background check process will be the responsibility of the SPRC.
- The maintenance of application, background, and other forms shall be maintained and secured by the SPRC. The documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet in the office of the Pastor.

Reporting:

- Upon receiving information or suspicion of abuse, the teacher, staff person, volunteer, or any other individual will report immediately to 911, MD Protective Services at 301-600-2464, and the Pastor or SPRC member.
- The Pastor, or SPRC member, shall call 911 and the MD Protective Services at 301-600-2464.
- Upon receiving information or suspicion of abuse by church volunteers or staff, the person(s) shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident report has been resolved. This should be handles in a discreet manner and the individual(s) shall not be banned from adult church ministries.

Responding:

- 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.
- The Pastor or his/her designee is/are the only person(s) authorized to make a statement to representatives of the media. All requests for statement should be directed to the Pastor.
- The District Superintendent will be contacted immediately.

I have read, understand and have received a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Procedure for Providence United Methodist Church as adopted by the Providence United Methodist Church Council on June 11, 2013

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____