

A Training Session for Volunteers who Work with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults at Grace United Methodist Church

Child Protection Policy/Safe Sanctuary

Purpose of Training Session: *Churches must be holy, safe, and protective communities for children, regardless of age and ability. The purpose of this policy is to address the safety of our children and youth at all local, District or Annual Conference sponsored events. The written policy and procedures help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence or appearance of occurrence of abuse of children and youth and to help protect workers from false accusations and/or suspicions.*

Background Checks:

Why? To provide for the safety of the child and to protect the church from litigation and financial risk.

What is involved? An application for volunteer or employee status is completed and a background check is conducted. As an added security precaution it is highly recommended that each church verify an applicant's social security card before sending completed forms to the Conference office. All information is confidential.

Who would be eliminated by these background checks? Anyone whose background check indicates:

- Child abuse conviction whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful.
- Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.
- Criminal History of DUI or DWI recently, if driving is a possibility.
- Criminal History of drug-related conviction within the past five years.

Supervision:

Definition of Child Care Provider or Supervisor: Any individual, either volunteer or paid, who provides direct supervision of any child or youth at any church activity or church-sponsored activity.

General Supervision – The Rule of “2” will apply when possible. At all times, it is preferable to have at least two supervisors with children and youth.

- To achieve compliance with the Safe Sanctuary policy it may be necessary to combine groups; recruit, train and recruit volunteers; or cancel an event.
- Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, children and supervisors will be instructed to use the buddy system.
- A recommendation for one First Aid/CPR trained adult be present at all activities.

Supervision of Nursery/Child Care

- Open door policy where children are in a nursery childcare, or teaching situation. The rule of 2 adults in each class is preferable and recommended.
- **Goals For Worker to Child Ratios** – Grace United Methodist Church has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event.

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	10
Sunday School	2	14
Youth Programs	2	16
Mid-week Classes	2	14
VBS	2	14

Supervision of Children/Youth (To comply with Safe Sanctuary Standards)

- 2 Leader Rule Preference: 2 leaders per classroom, 2 leaders within line of sight indoors and outdoors
- Exception to allow 1 leader with an open door and window for visual supervision.
- Any one-to-one mentoring or consulting shall be conducted in sight of another leader.
- Understanding there is safety in numbers, one leader can be in contact with multiple youth (6th – 12th grade) when in line of sight of other leaders.

Definitions of 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. In the case of child's physical abuse, this definition includes an intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker.
- Physical abuse also may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse results from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth.

Sexual Abuse:

- Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. Sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to incest, rape, prostitution, romantic involvement with any participant, any sexual interaction or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in an activity that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples include but are not limited to: displaying sexually visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or

another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the present of another person, kissing and sexual intercourse.

Reporting of Incidents:

- Notify person in charge immediately (leader/director/pastor)
- Address any needs the child or youth may have, medical or otherwise.
Report to the parent(s) or legal guardians.
- Remove person suspected of abuse, for the safety and well being of the child/youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential. If the event leader is the suspect, the report should be made to the Conference supervisor.
- Following report of incident, the event leaders shall document the report and then speak with the alleged victim....using only open-ended questions. (See forms provided.)
- All conversation shall be documented, carefully and with confidentiality and filed with supervisor.

Signature: _____ Date: _____