

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY
for
ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH-ERIE, PA
Revised 9/27/2021

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me.” (Matthew 19:14) In the spirit of Jesus, Asbury United Methodist Church loves all of the children/youth and vulnerable adults (C/Y/VA) who walk through our doors and desires to do all that we can to protect them in every way. National statistics concerning child abuse give rise for concern in all geographic areas of our country. It is our responsibility to be proactive in outlining requirements that will greatly reduce the risk of child abuse, to assure that our church is a safe haven for not only our children/youth and vulnerable adults, but also for those called to minister and teach to children/youth/vulnerable adults.

The purpose of this document is to define specific policies and procedures which will protect:

- All the children/youth/ and vulnerable adults who come to our church.
- Paid and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of abuse.
- Our church from legal liability.

DEFINITIONS

This policy must use the following definitions:

1. “Children” – any person from birth through 5th grade. Our ministries to children include, but are not limited to, Sunday School, Junior Church, Vacation Bible School and Music Camp.
2. “Youth” – any person from 6th grade through 12th grade. Our ministries to youth include, but are not limited to, Sunday School, Youth Group, Vacation Bible School and Music Camp.
3. “Vulnerable Adult” – Vulnerable Adults are individuals age 18 or older with a disability which prevents them from making decisions on their own and/or which leads them to require assistance with basic activities of daily living, such as toileting or dressing. The policies set forth here apply to vulnerable adults when they are under the direction and supervision of church staff and volunteers without their usual caretaker present.
4. “Leader” – any person age 23, or above, who is in a supervisory position of ministry with C/Y/VA required to obtain clearances. There should always be five years or more between the oldest C/Y/VA and the leader or helper.
5. “Assistant” – any person age 18, or above, who is in a position to support the leader’s ministry with youth and required to obtain clearances. There should always be five years or more between the oldest child or youth and the leader or helper.
6. “Helper” – any person ages 13-17 who is in a position to support the leaders’ and assistants’ ministry with C/Y/VA. Helpers work in tandem with leaders and helpers and must not be left alone with C/Y/VA for any significant amount of time.
7. “Representative” – any person who is giving their time to one of the ministries of our church (either as a volunteer or a paid staff person) that works with C/Y/VA.

OUR PLEDGE

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry with children, youth, and their families, we pledge to conduct our activities and ministries so as to ensure the safety and spiritual growth of all C/Y/VA entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers, and in the supervision of our children and youth. We will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff. We take seriously our moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe environment for, C/Y/VA as well as to support those who work with them, as we seek to proclaim our faith and follow in the ministry of Jesus Christ in our world.

AMENDMENTS TO THIS POLICY

Any proposed changes to our Safe Sanctuaries Policy must go through the following procedure:

1. Approval by the members of a called meeting of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee in which at least 75% of the members are present.
2. Consultation with the person, or persons, in charge over our ministries to children or youth.
3. Approval by the Church Council

A. TRAINING OF WORKERS WITH CHILDREN/ YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULTS

1. Leaders and Assistants must be trained in C/Y/VA abuse prevention, C/Y/VA abuse recognition. We strongly recommend being trained and/or certified in safety, first aid, CPR and first response.
2. Training must include information, explanation, and discussion of behaviors or other indicators which may signal problems, requirements of Pennsylvania law for reporting abuse and for reporting incidents of abuse.
3. All leaders and Assistants must sign the agreement Appendix E which states their willingness to comply with this Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

B. SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULTS

1. Before anyone is asked to work with children or youth in our church, they must be active in our churches worship service and church ministries for at least six months. (“Active participation is ideally weekly participation in worship and church ministries, with consideration given for varying work schedules and travel.”)
2. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee must ensure that all Leaders, Helpers and Assistants complete a Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 33) and a PA state Police Criminal Background Check (Act 34). Beginning at age 18, all volunteers dealing with children, youth and vulnerable adults will be required to have clearances. In addition, any volunteer Leader or Assistant who has not been a Pennsylvania resident for at least 10 years must obtain an FBI clearance check. All paid Leaders, and Assistants must obtain an FBI clearance check regardless of their residence. Forms are available on our church website or paper copy in the church office. Results of these background checks will be viewed by the Pastor, Director of Children and Youth and Secretary only and will be filed in a locked cabinet. The Director of Children and Youth must inform the leaders of groups that minister to C/Y/VA which persons have received their clearances. Payment for the criminal record check, child abuse check and FBI Criminal Background Check must first be paid by the individual and then reimbursed by the church. Each clearance must be renewed every 60 months/5 years. This must be monitored by the Chairperson of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee. All paid staff have to get all three clearances: Act 33, Act 34 and FBI clearance.
3. Anyone who has been convicted of a crime involving sexual, physical or emotional abuse of C/Y/VA must not be permitted to serve in direct contact with C/Y/VA at our church.
4. Whenever the qualifications of a person to work with C/Y/VA of our church are questioned the authority to decide who is, and who is not, permitted to work with C/Y/VA must be given to the members of a called meeting of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee. At least 75% of the members must be present. No individual member must be given lone authority to make this determination.

C. SAFETY PROCEDURES

1. Workers with children and youth must observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times in which no adult is ever alone with a child or a youth and no two adults who are related to each other are ever alone with a child or youth. (A parent, however, may be alone with their child in their vehicle and in our church building at any time and is not required to comply with the “Two-Adult Rule”.) If this is not possible, there must be a "roving" teacher/adult (with clearances) who moves amid the classrooms during the program period.
2. All leaders of C/Y/VA must be at least 23 years old and have obtained their clearances.
3. All assistants with youth or vulnerable adults must be at least 18 years old and have obtained their clearances.
4. Each room where C/Y/VA meet must have a window in the door (not covered by pictures or drawings), or a door which must remain open at all times.

Transportation of Children/ Youth/ Vulnerable Adults to Events Away From Our Church – Including Events That Require Overnight Accommodations

1. The following "Two-Adult Rule" supervision ratios must be followed whenever children and youth are being transported away from our church by representatives of our church other than a parent who is transporting their own child):
 - a. There must be at least one "leader" (age of 23, or above) who is of the same gender as the children/youth/vulnerable adult who are being transported off church grounds. Leaders must have all of the required clearances to go on a church trip.
 - b. There must also be at least one "helper" (age of 18, or above) for every one to six C/Y/VA of the same gender. An additional helper must be required whenever the number of children/youth exceeds six, to keep the ratio between children/youth and helpers at six to one.
 - c. If the above is not met, the trip will be cancelled.
 - d. Any child or youth (including friends of our church kids) who are transported off church grounds must have a "Transportation Permission Slip" (see Appendix A) which is signed by themselves and their parent, or guardian, and is on file in the church office at least ONE DAY BEFORE departure. Failure to comply with this policy will result in the child or youth not being permitted to attend the event.
 - e. Any child or youth (including friends of our church kids) who are transported off church grounds must have a completed "Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Medical Form" (see Appendix B) which is signed by themselves and their parent, or guardian, and on file in the church office at least ONE DAY BEFORE departure. Failure to comply with this policy will result in the child or youth not being permitted to attend the event. A copy of this form must travel with the C/Y/VA at all times (i.e. in their vehicle and in their place of accommodation). Medical forms must be renewed each September.

Transportation of Children/Youth/Vulnerable Adults To and From the Church

- a. Any representative from our church who is transporting children/youth/vulnerable adult from their home to our church, to attend any activity for which the adult is either a volunteer or a paid staff person, or from the church to their home after attending any activity for which the adult is either a volunteer or a paid staff person must comply with the "Two-Adult Rule".

Children/ Youth/Vulnerable Adult Event Requiring Overnight Accommodations

- a. The following "Two-Adult Rule" supervision ratios must be followed whenever C/Y/VA are sleeping overnight in our church:
 - There must be at least one "leader" (age of 23, or above) who is of the same gender as the C/Y/VA who will be attending the overnight event.
 - There must also be at least one "assistant" (age of 18, or above) for every one to six C/Y/VA of the same gender. An additional helper must be required whenever the number of C/Y/VA exceeds six, to keep the ratio between C/Y/VA and helpers at six to one.
 - If the Two-Adult Rule is not possible for transportation, a "Leader" may transport more than one, C/Y/VA not leaving the leader alone in a vehicle with only one C/Y/VA.

D. BATHROOM POLICY

Make sure to always check the bathroom before a child goes in so that they are not left alone with an adult. If children ever need assistance, make sure they are the ones asking for help. If help is needed, the 2-Adult rule applies (one adult MUST have clearances).

1.Babies: When working with children who are babies if it is possible the leader or assistant should change the child in an open area where they can be seen by another leader or assistant.

2.Pre-schoolers (2-5): If a toddler has soiled their clothes a leader, assistant, or helper should see if they can get the parent to come and change the toddler. If the parent cannot clean up the child remember the 2-adult rule.

3.School age children: (6+): These children should have complete privacy. If they need assistance due to a disability (broken arm, e.g.) see if their parent can assist them.

- Children should use the bathroom one at a time. Make sure to always check the bathroom before a child goes in so that they are not left alone with an adult or another child.

Never at any time should 1 leader or assistant be alone with children in the bathroom (unless related). If you need to get children to leave the bathroom, make sure you stand at the door with it open.

Under no circumstances should Youth Helpers escort children to the restroom.

E. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If any Leader, Assistant, or Helper is suspected of violating this Safe Sanctuaries Policy, they must be investigated by the members at a called meeting of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee in which at least 75% of the members are present, not by any individual member of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee. The person, or persons, in charge over the ministries where the alleged violation occurred must be present at this meeting to address the concerns, in addition to any helpers who were present at the event which is under investigation. If a violation of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy is found to have occurred the person, or persons, in charge over our ministries where the violation occurred must take steps to insure future compliance. Failure to comply with Safe Sanctuaries Policy in the future must result in this person, or these persons, being interviewed by either the Education Committee (in the case of unpaid persons) or the SPPRC (in the case of paid persons) who shall have the authority to remove this person, or persons, from their responsibilities.

1. Any C/Y/VA who witnesses a violation of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy by C/Y/VA or by the leaders, assistants, or helpers must be encouraged to bring their complaint to a member of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee, while refraining from telling others of the complaint due to the serious consequences that may result. If C/Y/VA abuse is suspected see letter "F".
2. In any church function with C/Y/VA the minimum accepted Safe Sanctuaries arrangement must be at least one "leader" (age of 23, or above) and one "assistant" (age of 18, or above). In any church function that involves just one C/Y/VA the leader and assistant must be unrelated.
3. No member of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee shall have the authority to mandate any additional Safe Sanctuaries requirements which are not written in the Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

F. REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE

1. Any leader, assistant or helper who suspect sC/Y/VA abuse has occurred must first secure the safety of the C/Y/VA who is on church property.
2. Anyone who suspects C/Y/VA abuse has occurred must report their suspicion immediately by:
 - a. Calling “PA Childcare” at 1-800-932-1313.
 - b. For vulnerable adult call “Adult Protective Service Hot Line” at 800-490-8505
 - c. Informing the person who is in charge of the activity in which the C/Y/VA was involved.
 - d. Informing the Pastor and Director of Children and Youth.
 - e. Strictest confidentiality must be maintained.
3. The leader, assistant or helper who suspects C/Y/VA abuse has occurred must never investigate the allegations themselves.
4. Upon learning of suspected C/Y/VA abuse, the Senior Pastor must follow all appropriate procedures for reporting the allegations to either the child’s/youth’s parents/guardians or to local law enforcement.
5. Any person from our church who is suspected of C/Y/VA abuse must be removed from all contact with C/Y/VA until the allegations are resolved.
6. Pennsylvania “Mandated” Reporter” laws must be obeyed.

G. RESPONSE AFTER REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE

1. A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of C/Y/VA abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously.
2. The Senior Pastor must serve as the official spokesperson for any reported incident and must be the only person authorized to speak to any media regarding the incident. In the event that the Senior Pastor is the subject of the allegation the Erie-Meadville District Superintendent will serve as the church spokesperson.
3. Pastoral care and support will be available to all persons involved with the incident.
4. In addition, those suffering abuse will be advised of an agency or person outside the church whom they can contact for advice or help.

H. INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN & YOUTH

Parent(s)/guardian(s) must be given the following information sheet which will be kept on file in the church office and in the office of the Director of Children and Youth once completed. Completing and returning this information sheet must be the responsibility of the Parent(s)/guardian(s). This form must be updated every September for regular attenders who have previously completed this form.

APPENDIX A – TRANSPORTATION PERMISSION SLIP

We are excited to go on our church trip with you! In an effort to insure the safety and well-being of our C/Y/VA, we are requiring each C/Y/VA and their parent/guardian to read and sign this permission slip and **turn it into the church office at least one day prior to the church trip.** In addition, we are requiring that each C/Y/VA turn into the church office a completed “Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Medical Form” **at least one day prior to the church trip.** Medical forms must be good for six months at a time and must be completed and turned into the church again after each six month period. Thank you for your cooperation.

While on a church trip the following actions will not be tolerated:

- Disrespect to leaders and assistants.
- Bullying, threats or swearing.
- Use of drugs (other than those prescribed) including alcohol and illegal substances.
- Inappropriate public displays of affection (PDA’s), as determined by the leaders and assistants. To avoid this potential problem, couples who attend church trips in vans are asked to sit toward the front of the van (not in the back seat), or to sit in separate seats.
- Inappropriate touching (i.e. sexual and/or violent), as determined by the leaders and assistants.
- Sexual communication done with others on the trip either verbally or through texts, emails, calls or letters.
- Music played too loudly (either through speakers or overheard through headphones or earbuds), as determined by the leaders and assistants, or music that contains inappropriate language (ie. swearing, sexuality, etc.) as determined by the leaders and helpers.
- Possession of weapons (including pocket knives), lighters, matches, firecrackers or fireworks.
- Clothing that is immodest, seductive or offensive, as determined by the leaders and helpers.
- Possession of pornography in any form, on any media.
- Boys going into girls’ sleeping quarters, or girls going into boys’ sleeping quarters.
- Illegal activity.

Violations of expected behavior on a church trip must result in the implementation of the following “Three Step Violation Plan”:

First Offense: Based on the seriousness of the infraction, parent(s) will be called and youth may be asked to remain in the presence of an adult for the remainder of the trip.

Second Offense: Based on the seriousness of the infraction, parent(s) will be asked to be in the presence of their youth at all church youth activities to help curb any behavioral problems, until youth leader(s) determine that the youth's behavior has improved.

Third Offense: Based on the seriousness of the infraction, parent(s) and youth will be notified that youth is not to participate in any church youth activities until parent(s) and youth counsel with Pastor and/or S/PPRC Chair (if a hired staff person is involved) concerning the behavioral problems. Youth will be suspended from "fun" youth activities for one month and all church youth activities must be attended with parent(s). This arrangement will be in effect until youth leaders, in consultation with parent(s), determine that youth's behavior - observed during youth's participation in activities with parent - has noticeably improved.

Signatures: I agree with all of the above stated rules:

Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Signature

Date

Parent /Guardian Signature

Date

(Remember to turn this Permission Slip into the church office at least ONE DAY BEFORE your scheduled church trip.)

APPENDIX B - CHILD/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT MEDICAL FORM

Please provide a separate form for each child/youth. Thank you!

I _____ understand that
 (Print name of parent or guardian)

Asbury United Methodist Church requires that each C/Y/VA who will be transported off church property or who will be sleeping in the church overnight must have an updated medical information given to the church office every six months.

1. Name of C/Y/VA : _____
 Date of Birth: _____

2. Phone numbers where I can be reached during events:

_____ (Home)

_____ (Cell)

_____ (Work)

4. Please list any existing medical conditions for which this C/Y/VA is currently being treated by a physician

Physician's Name: _____

Physician's Phone #: _____

4. Please list any prescription medications this C/Y/VA is taking and the dosage instructions:

5. Please list any other medical concerns regarding this C/Y/VA:

6. Name of your insurance company: _____

Insurance Company Group Number: _____

Insurance ID Number: _____

7. Your Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

APPENDIX C – OVERNIGHT EVENT PERMISSION SLIP

We are excited that your child will be joining us on our church sleepover! In an effort to insure the safety and well-being of our C/Y/VA we are requiring each C/Y/VA and their parent/guardian to read and sign this permission slip and turn it into the church office at least one day prior to the overnighter. In addition, we are requiring that each C/Y/VA turn into the church office a completed “**Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Medical Form**” at least ONE DAY BEFORE the overnighter. Medical forms must be good for six months at a time and must be completed and turned into the church after again after each six month period. Thank you for your cooperation.

While attending a church sleepover the following actions will not be tolerated. Violations must result in the implementation of the “Three Step Violation Plan”:

- Disrespect to leaders and assistants.
- Bullying, threats or swearing.
- Use of drugs (other than those prescribed) including alcohol and illegal substances.
- Inappropriate public displays of affection (PDA’s), as determined by the leaders and assistants.
- Inappropriate touching (i.e. sexual and/or violent), as determined by the leaders and assistants.
- Sexual communication done with others on the trip either verbally or through texts, emails, calls or letters.
- Music played too loudly (either through speakers or overheard through headphones or earbuds), as determined by the leaders and helpers, or music that contains inappropriate language (ie. swearing, sexuality, etc.) as determined by the leaders and assistants.
- Possession of weapons (including pocket knives), lighters, matches, firecrackers or fireworks.
- Clothing that is immodest, seductive or offensive, as determined by the leaders and assistants.
- Possession of pornography in any form, on any media.
- Boys going into girls’ sleeping quarters, or girls going into boys’ sleeping quarters.
- Illegal activity.

Violations of expected behavior at church sleepovers must result in the implementation of the following “Three Step Violation Plan”:

First Offense: Based on the seriousness of the infraction, parent(s) will be called and youth may be asked to remain in the presence of an adult *for the remainder of the overnighter*.

Second Offense: Based on the seriousness of the infraction, parent(s) will be asked to be in the presence of their C/Y/VA at all church youth activities to help curb any behavioral problems, until youth leader(s) determine that the C/Y/VA behavior has improved.

Third Offense: Based on the seriousness of the infraction, parent(s) and C/Y/VA will be notified that C/Y/VA is not to participate in any church youth activities until parent(s) and C/Y/VA counsel with Pastor and/or S/PPRC Chair (if a hired staff person is involved) concerning the behavioral problems. C/Y/VA will be suspended from "fun" youth activities for one month and all church youth activities must be attended with parent(s). This arrangement will be in effect until youth leaders, in consultation with parent(s), determine that youth's behavior - observed during youth's participation in activities with parent - has noticeably improved.

Signatures:

I agree with all of the above stated rules:

Child/Youth Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

(Remember to turn this Permission Slip into the church office at least ONE DAY BEFORE your church sleepover.)

APPENDIX D - Asbury United Methodist Church

Nursery and Sunday school Confidential Information Form

Child's Information

Name: _____
 Age: _____ Grade: _____ Birthday: _____

Parent / Guardian

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
 Where do you normally sit during church? _____

Names of Other Adults able to pick up Your Child

Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Phone _____	Phone _____	Phone _____

Emergency Contacts

Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Phone _____	Phone _____	Phone _____
Relationship _____	Relationship _____	Relationship _____

Medications: *Please list any prescription or over-the-counter medications taken on a regular basis and, if appropriate, specific circumstances for which they might be required.*

Medical Allergies: _____
 Dietary Allergies: _____
 Other allergies
 (bites, stings, etc.) _____
 Snacks permitted? _____

Special Needs: *Please describe any medical, physical, or emotional conditions which may impact or limit the ability of this young person to participate fully in any activities or any special needs which must be considered to ensure this young person has a positive experience participating in group activities. Also list any medical conditions of the child such as asthma, diabetes, or epilepsy that may require emergency attention prior to establishing contact with your medical and emergency contacts*

Medical Contacts

Family Physician: _____ Phone: _____
 Preferred Hospital _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

**APPENDIX E - AGREEMENT TO WORK WITH CHILDREN/
YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULTS
at
ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

I, _____, have read and agree with the
[Print your name]

Safe Sanctuaries Policy of Asbury United Methodist Church. I promise to comply with this policy in my ministry with children and youth in this church.

Signed: _____

Printed Name: _____

Your Age: _____

Date: _____