

# Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines

For

## North Scottsdale United Methodist Church

This policy has been developed for children, youth, and adults  
for the purpose of reducing the risk of abuse in the church.

Draft 2/19/08, Revised 03/03/08, Implementation: September 1, 2008, Revised 06/18/13

Jesus said, *“Let the children come to me.” (Mark 10:14)* For the church to be faithful in bringing children to Jesus, helping them to develop a personal relationship with Jesus, and teaching them to be disciples, we have to first create a safe place where children, youth, and adults know that an effort has been made to insure personal safety and comfort for all.

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April, 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and youth and also to protect those volunteers and paid staff from false accusations. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children.

We adopt these minimum standards for our ministries with children and youth:

### Procedures:

#### 1. Screening and recruiting

- A. A parent/guardian will be allowed to enter classrooms to give his/her child any necessary assistance.
- B. All adult\* volunteer or staff persons who have regular and direct contact with children and vulnerable adults\*\*shall be required to fill out an application which includes:
  - a. Standard contact information
  - b. Experience and qualifications for the position
  - c. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history and allegations of criminal conduct
  - d. Waiver of confidentiality allowing the church to secure the background checks necessary for the position being sought
    - a) The background check may consist of three reports: the U.S. Criminal Indicator report, the Sexual Offender Registry, and Social Security trace and address locator.
    - b) A current fingerprint clearance card from the state of Arizona will substitute for the background check.
    - c) A Department of Motor Vehicles report may be required for those having driving responsibilities.
    - d) Fingerprinting check can be requested at any time.
    - e) Listing of 3 non-related references. This list shall have complete contact information for all references.
- C. Staff persons and volunteers will submit to the screening procedures prescribed by this policy. All new applicants and persons who have had a break in service of two or more years, and those with six or more years since their last background check, shall submit to the screening procedures.
- D. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's personnel file. Information on the release forms and the reports will be protected and stored in a secure location to insure confidentiality.

- E. References may be followed up in writing or by phone. Detailed notes of conversations will be included in the personnel file.
  - e. Information from references will not be shared with the applicant.
  - f. Oral notification of acceptance is sufficient and no reason will be given to an applicant who is refused approval for work.
- F. Persons shall demonstrate an active relationship with the local church for at least six months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in children's activities or have references deemed adequate by staff personnel to replace the six month waiting period.

## **2. Supervision**

- A. Persons will sign a statement that they understand and will follow the procedures outlined in the policy.
- B. We will strive to meet the supervisory standards of the "two-adult rule." The two-adult rule requires that no matter the size of the group, there will always be two unrelated adults present, one of which may be a "roamer" who oversees several rooms.
- C. No person shall supervise a group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the children/youth with which he/she is working
- D. Each room or space where children are being cared for shall have a window in the door or an outside window with open blinds or the door should remain open and the door shall be left unlocked. Activities should occur in open view. Should the activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this policy, the staff person in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity and the children/youth are properly supervised.
- E. An exception to the above is Special Event Nursery coverage. This may be staffed by two persons, ages 14 or over, who are known in the church and one adult roamer. Nursery caregivers who are under the age of 18 need to have completed a child care/babysitting training as specified by the Education Committee. The outer door facing the parking lot must be locked for security. The nursery attendants will have a phone to summon help and the roaming adult will have a key to the door.
- F. Registration materials for activities in which children/youth are taken away from the standard meeting location shall require written permission forms which include pertinent health information in order to participate.
- G. When an adult transports a child/youth alone, the adult will get written permission from the parent to do so.
- H. Restroom Procedures
  - a. Two, three, four year olds and kindergarten students must go in pairs to the restroom and be accompanied by an adult worker. Workers should assist only when absolutely necessary.
  - b. First through fifth graders may be sent in pairs without an adult.
  - c. Sixth grade and above may go to the restroom unaccompanied.
- I. Sunday School Pick-up

All children birth through Kindergarten must be picked up by their family or designated caregiver in order to leave Sunday School. b. All youth in first grade and above may leave class unaccompanied, once the service is over.
- J. Medical Treatment and/or Emergency
  - a. A basic first aid kit will be kept in the Education office and in the kitchen for minor cuts, scrapes, burns, etc. In the case of serious injury, one of the adults will stay with the minor and administer first aid and the other adult will call 911 and attempt to locate the parent/guardian. After the

emergency is addressed, the incident will be documented by the responding adults and filed in the church office.

- b. If the activity is taking place at an offsite location and the child/youth needs to be transported to the hospital, one of the adults chaperoning will take the injured child/youth and one other child/youth with them to the hospital so that they are not alone in the car.

K. Fire Emergency

- a. In case of a fire, the children/youth will be evacuated by one of the adult volunteers. If the fire is small and it is safe to do so, the other adult volunteer should attempt to extinguish the fire with a fire extinguisher.

**3. Response/Reporting Procedures – Reports of abuse are required by law.** Any person who reasonably believes that a minor is or has been the victim of physical injury, abuse, child abuse, a reportable offence or neglect that appears to have been inflicted on the minor by other than accidental means, shall immediately report or cause reports to be made of this information to a peace officer or to child protective services in the department of economic security.

- A. Take steps to protect the alleged victim.
- B. Immediately notify the adult in charge who will immediately notify the pastor.
- C. The incident must be reported to either CPS or the local law enforcement. In the absence of the pastor, the director of education or another designated adult will make the report.
- D. Take notes to record what was said to whom, when authorities were notified, who was involved, etc.
- E. Do not confront the accused.
- F. Do not contact the family. The pastor or investigating agency will do this.
- G. Act discreetly and maintain confidentiality of all involved. Remain unbiased recognizing that allegations must be fully investigated.
- H. If the accused is an adult staff or volunteer, this person will be suspended from his/her position until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved.
- I. The pastor will designate a single spokesperson who will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation. The privacy and confidentiality of all parties should be protected and information provided only as necessary.
- J. The pastor will share necessary information with the district superintendent in a timely manner.
- K. In the event of a case involving clergy, follow the above guidelines *and* the procedures outlined in the current *Journal of the Desert Southwest Conference of the United Methodist Church* under the title ‘Policies and Procedures for Dealing with Clergy Sexual Misconduct.’ The most current copy is available in the church office.
- L. Pray for the child/youth and his/her family and the accused. Maintain an attitude of prayer throughout the process.

This policy is compiled from the conference recommended safe sanctuaries policy and from policies developed by other churches and is adapted to the needs of North Scottsdale UMC.

Notes:

\*Adult is defined as someone who is 18 years old or older.

\*\*Arizona law particularly protects “vulnerable” adults. An adult is deemed vulnerable when he (or she) “is unable to protect himself from abuse, neglect or exploitation by others because of a physical or mental impairment.” [Arizona Revised Statutes section 46-451(A)(10)]

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Print Name

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Signature