

Davis Memorial United Methodist Church Abuse Prevention Policy  
(Safe Sanctuary)

I. Biblical Reference

The Bible holds children in a special place and we are reminded that we are to protect all children. Specifically, Matthew 18:5-6 gives us requirements for what we are to do.

Matthew 18:5-6: *Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

II. Purpose and Implementation

This policy shall:

- a. Be a guideline for Davis ministries and activities.
- b. Be a resource for our workers, both volunteers and paid staff.
- c. Take effect on March 1, 2009

All Davis Memorial United Methodist Church workers, members, staff, and volunteers shall adhere to this policy as a minimum standard on and after March 1, 2009.

III. Definitions

- a. Abuse: Physical, emotional, mental, sexual, or any other kind of abuse directed at, or observed, or occurring with or to a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult, including the definition of "Abuse" set forth in Section 261.001 of the Texas Family Code.
- b. Child, Children: All persons from birth through twelve years of age.
- c. Youth: Students from twelve years of age through seventeen years of age. A person becomes an adult for purposes of this policy when the person attains age eighteen regardless of the grade level at the time of a person who is a student.
- d. Adult: Individuals that are age eighteen years of age or older.
- e. Vulnerable Adult: An adult who has one or more mental, physical, or emotional impairments that render the person incapable of self-care and/or independent living without help.
- f. Staff: Individuals that are compensated by any United Methodist Church entity or any entity sponsored by Davis Memorial United Methodist Church and who performs specific services that are related to Davis Memorial United Methodist Church.
- g. Volunteer: A person who participates as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any Davis Event and/or Ministries without compensation.
- h. Background Investigation: Use of a qualified risk assessment service to evaluate the criminal history as well as any other relevant background information of Staff and Volunteers for Davis Memorial United Methodist Church activity.
- i. Conference: Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church
- j. Local Church: Davis Memorial United Methodist Church

IV. Statement of Policy.

- a. Abuse of a Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult is prohibited in any Davis Memorial United Methodist Church.
- b. A member of Staff or a Volunteer for any Davis Memorial United Methodist Church activity who observes or suspects that Abuse has occurred concerning a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult must immediately report such observed or suspected Abuse to the Chair of SPRC, and any required report in compliance with Section 261.001 of the Texas Family Code must be made.
- c. Reports of observed or suspected Abuse may be made orally and/or in writing to a Davis Memorial United Methodist Church official and such official shall document the report in writing if it is made orally.

#### V. Implementation of Policy.

- a. Screening of all Staff or Volunteer members who work with Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. Screenings should be conducted by the person designated by SPRC. Each staff member of volunteer should have a written application with references on file in the church office.
  - i. General: For the purposes of this policy, persons who work with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults are those who have direct contact with and supervision of Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. This does not include those persons who are employees of independent contractors who are involved in events, such as bus drivers of contracted bus lines and the like.
  - ii. Background Investigations: Background investigations shall be required on all members of Staff and Volunteers working with Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. Screenings shall be conducted by LexisNexis.
- b. Responsible Adult Supervision:
  - i. It is the requirement of this policy that Davis Memorial United Methodist Church of the Central Texas Conference shall provide adequate adult supervision at District and Conference Events and Ministries, attended Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults.
  - ii. Unrelated Adults: A minimum of two unrelated adults shall be required at all Davis Memorial United Methodist Church activities involving Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. Additional adults may be required based on other factors such as if the ratio of adults to Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults exceeds 1:10, the physical structure of the location or facilities, or the duration of the event. Circumstances may necessitate more than two adults for an event to be conducted safely, even for a ratio of less than 1:10.
  - iii. Age Difference: Except in the case of events involving Vulnerable Adults, a five-year difference in ages of the primary on site-supervisor and the oldest supervised participant is required. Persons closer in age to those supervised may be acceptable in assisting the primary on-site supervisor(s).

iv. Miscellaneous provision: Coed overnight activities require both male and female adult leaders without exception.

c. Reporting Abuse

i. Reporting Requirements: The reporting requirements of this policy and the State of Texas must be complied with.

ii. local Reporting Requirement:

1. At each Davis Memorial United Methodist Church activity, there shall be at least one person who has been clearly designated to receive reports of alleged Abuse to Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults, and all such reports shall be promptly submitted to this person, and any report required by Section 261.001 of the Texas Family Code shall be timely made. In the absence of such document in writing if the report is received orally.
2. In addition to the report required by item 1 above, any person who observes or suspects Abuse of a Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult may report it to the following hotline phone number (1-800-252-5400) available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.
3. Prior to each Event, information will be given to all Staff and/or Volunteers on the process of reporting Abuse.
4. 4. A bulletin board at Davis Memorial United Methodist Church shall have a written statement of this policy posted in a clearly and accessible and readable form.
5. Any program guide or handbook related to Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults of Davis Memorial United Methodist Church shall include a written statement of this policy in a clearly and accessible and readable form. This shall also be published at least two times a year in the Davis Memorial United Methodist Church newsletter, *The Compass*.

iii. It is very important that all parties be sensitive to the alleged victim and his or her family as well as to the accused. Pastoral care should be available to all in the time of crisis.

Adopted March 1, 2009