

Safe Sanctuaries:

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church

First United Methodist Church, Forest City

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Forest City, NC 28043
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Biblical Reference: Matthew 18:5 & 6

Purpose and Implementation

This Policy shall:

- a. be a guideline for local church ministries and activities;
- b. be a resource for our local workers both volunteer and paid staff.
- c. take effect on January 1, 2006

All local church workers, members, staff and volunteers shall adhere to this policy as a minimum standard on and after such date.

Definitions.

1. Abuse: Physical, emotional, mental, sexual, or other kinds 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 North Carolina statutes.
2. Child, Children: All persons from birth through twelve years of age.
3. Youth: Students from twelve years of age through seventeen years of age. A
4. 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.
5. Adult: Individuals that are age eighteen years of age or older.
6. 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.
7. Staff: Individuals that are compensated by any United Methodist Church entity or any entity sponsored by this local church and who performs specific services that are related to this local church.
8. Volunteer: A person who participates as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any local church Event and/or Ministries without compensation.
9. 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 local church activity.
10. Conference: Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church
11. Local Church: First United Methodist Church, Forest City

Statement of Policy.

Abuse of a Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult is prohibited in any local church activity:

1. A member of Staff or a Volunteer for any local 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 local church official designated for receiving such reports, and any required report in compliance with North Carolina statutes must be made.

2. Reports of observed or suspected Abuse may be made orally and/or in writing to a local church official and such official shall document the report in writing if it is made orally.

V. Implementation of Policy.

1. Screening of all Staff or Volunteer members who work Children, Youth and/or Vulnerable Adults. Screenings should be conducted by those designated by local board policy. Each staff member or volunteer should have a written application with references on file in the church office.
2. 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.
3. Background Investigations: Background investigations shall be required on all members of Staff and Volunteers working with Children, Youth and/or Vulnerable Adults.
4. Responsible Adult Supervision:
 - i. General: It is the requirement of this policy that our local church () of the Western North Carolina Conference shall provide adequate adult supervision at District and Conference Events and Ministries, attended by Children, Youth and/or Vulnerable Adults.
 - ii. Unrelated Adults: A minimum of two unrelated adults shall be required at all (local church) activities involving Children, Youth 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.
5. Reporting Abuse:
 - i. Reporting Requirements: The reporting requirements of this policy and the State of North Carolina must be complied with.
 - ii. Local Reporting Requirement:
 - a. At each local church activity, there shall be at least one person that has been clearly designated to receive reports of alleged Abuse

of Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults, and all such reports shall be promptly submitted to this person, and any report required by North Carolina statutes shall be timely made. In the absence of such designation, the primary on-site supervisor shall receive any such report, and shall document it in writing if the report is received orally.

b. 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 persons: ministry coordinator, ministry coordinator designee, pastor(s).

c. Prior to each Event, information will be given to all Staff and/or Volunteers on the process of reporting Abuse.

d. A bulletin board in each area of the local church Ministry shall have a written statement of this policy posted in a clearly accessible and readable form.

e. Any program guide or handbook related to Children, youth or Vulnerable adults of this local shall include a written statement of this policy in a clearly accessible and readable form. This shall also be published at least two times a year in the local church newsletter or church bulletin.

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 (to be reviewed, revised and adopted) Draft Revised (Nov. 10, 2005)