



# MINISTRYSAFE

## Salado United Methodist Church Student Safety Policies

**This sample form contains color-coded prompts and instructional comments within the body of the document.** Because there is no ‘one size fits all’ policy form, the authors have attempted to provide guidance on as many matters as possible. It is expected that ministry leaders **will modify these policy documents** to fit the programs, positions, facilities and other factors that makes each student ministry unique.

**Red type** is instructional and should be removed from a final draft of your policy document.

**Yellow highlights** relate to positions or titles assigned to a person or persons with supervisory responsibility (i.e. Youth Minister or Senior Pastor). Modify this document such that the correct position or title for YOUR ministry is associated with the responsibility described. Remove the highlights in your final policy document.

**Blue highlights** relate to specific state reporting requirements. The reporting requirement for the state of Texas is listed in this form. Remove the highlights in your final policy document.

**Green type** relates to state reporting requirements and policy language options depending on specific state law requirements

Dear Student Ministries Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Salado United Methodist Church!

At Salado United Methodist Church, we take our responsibility to care for students very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which students can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Salado United Methodist Church staff members and volunteers. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for students, protecting students, you, and the mission of Salado United Methodist Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

***Salado United Methodist Church***

# **Salado United Methodist Church Safety Policies & Procedures for Student Ministries**

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## **Overview of the Salado United Methodist Church Safety System**

Because we love students and desire to protect them, Salado United Methodist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Salado United Methodist Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the Salado United Methodist Church Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a student for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Salado United Methodist Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Salado United Methodist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training (live or online at [www.MinistrySafe.com](http://www.MinistrySafe.com)). This training will be renewed every two years.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Salado United Methodist Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- complete an Employment Application (employees only)
  - complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
  - complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
  - provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)
- \*a volunteer must attend Salado United Methodist Church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, students or vulnerable populations.

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

### **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

Salado United Methodist Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

***\*This policy segment is intended to clearly identify for an inappropriate applicant the hurdles which exist to gaining access to children or students at 'Salado United Methodist Church'. In addition, the segment describes measures in place to equip other staff members and volunteers to recognize the abuser characteristics and behaviors, as well as reporting requirements. These policy segments provide an 'opt out opportunity' for would-be molesters.***

## **Student Safety Policy**

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

Salado United Methodist Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at Salado United Methodist Church to act in the best interest of students in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor, the Youth Minister, or the Senior Pastor.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Salado United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Salado United Methodist Church Safety Committee Chair and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the Salado United Methodist Church Safety Committee. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a student for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or a member of the Salado United Methodist Church Safety Committee.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Salado United Methodist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Salado United Methodist Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Student Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

## **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

In order to maintain a safe environment for students, Salado United Methodist Church staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Youth Minister, or the Senior Pastor.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Youth Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Salado United Methodist Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Salado United Methodist Church.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at Salado United Methodist Church.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

Staff members and volunteers at Salado United Methodist Church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the immediate supervisor of the area, the Youth Minister, or the Senior Pastor.

Texas state law requires that any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

In 2013, the state of Texas modified Chapter 261.101(b) of the Texas Family Code (reporting statute) such that 'professionals' (teachers, nurses, doctors, day care employees, more) must personally make a report to the appropriate authorities ... "a professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report".

Administrators should periodically check state reporting requirements for modification of reporting requirements.

A staff member or volunteer will immediately notify an immediate supervisor, Youth Minister or Senior Pastor. Together with the immediate supervisor, Youth Minister or

Senior Pastor, the staff member or volunteer will make a report to the appropriate Texas state authorities. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate Texas state authorities.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Youth Ministries, the Youth Minister or Senior Pastor will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the student spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Senior Pastor will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

If appropriate, the Youth Minister or the Senior Pastor will inform the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-5400) or Child Protective Services (817-321-8680).

#### **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

The Salado United Methodist Church Safety Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

# **Salado United Methodist Church Safety Committee**

## **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Salado United Methodist Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each quarter.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Salado United Methodist Church Student Ministry to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

## **COMPOSITION**

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. the Senior Pastor (Lara Whitley Franklin)
2. the Director of Nurture (Kristen Von Gonten)
3. Youth Minister (Mark Rich)
4. A Member of the SPRC (David Scales)
5. A Member of the Trustees (Patsy Sanford)
6. Mother's Day Out Director (Terri Tepera)
7. Nursery Coordinator (Candi Murray)
8. Children's Ministry Chair (Christy Rakowitz)
9. Youth Ministry Chair (Tricia Rich)

## **MEETINGS**

David Scales (SPRC representative) will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Salado United Methodist Church policies and procedures related to student safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Youth Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Salado United Methodist Church Staff Parish Relations Committee regarding safety issues.

## **Student Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan**

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interactions with students.

1. **Each supervisor** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each week for programs that occur weekly.
2. **The Youth Minister** conducts written performance evaluations every six months for individuals in paid staff positions.
3. **The Youth Minister** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
4. **The Senior Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of a Student Ministry program at least once each quarter.
5. **The Senior Pastor** meets with Youth Minister once monthly to discuss Student Ministry.
6. **Staff Parish Relations Committee** meets with Youth Minister once each year to discuss Student Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
7. **The Youth Minister** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs that occur weekly.

## **BUILDING SAFETY**

The Youth Minister will be responsible for ensuring that the Salado UMC Youth Ministry Building is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and students in student classrooms.

No student will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during youth ministry programming or meetings. Youth Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual student in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single student, that staff member or volunteer will take the student to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

(Example: If a student desires additional conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members are present.)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Any two students together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

## **STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO**

Salado United Methodist Church is committed to providing adequate staff and volunteer supervision in all Student Ministry activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for Student Ministry activities and programs:

For groups up to and including 10 students, there will be at least 1 staff member or volunteer supervising. For groups ranging 11 to 29 students, there will be at least 2 staff members or volunteers supervising. For groups larger than 30 students, there will be at least 3 staff members or volunteers supervising.

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the responsible Youth Minister or the Youth Ministry leader. The responsible Youth Minister or the Youth Ministry leader will make diligent efforts to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

***\*The above ratios are MinistrySafe minimum recommendations. Where supervision is concerned, more is generally better.***

## **DISCIPLINE**

It is the policy of Salado United Methodist Church that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children or students. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or

correction or inappropriate behaviors by students. If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, that student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the student's parent will be contacted to pick up the student. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff/volunteer will verbally redirect students involved and will try to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Youth Minister.

## **INTOXICANTS**

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Salado United Methodist Church facility, while traveling with students, or while working with or supervising students.

## **NUDITY**

Staff and volunteers in Salado United Methodist Church's student ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), staff member/volunteer will submit a plan to the Youth Minister concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

## **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS**

Salado United Methodist Church recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.

### **Individual Meetings**

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed unless prior approval is obtained from the Youth Minister.

In the event a closed-door meeting must occur, the student staff member must inform another staff member and ensure the door remains unlocked.

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for students. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of students:

1. Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one student in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Salado United Methodist Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented Salado United Methodist Church, unless in an emergency.

4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Salado United Methodist Church owned or rented vehicles.

## **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a student in the care of Salado United Methodist Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Youth Ministry programs.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their student is involved at Salado United Methodist Church. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with Youth Ministry programs will be required to complete the Salado United Methodist Church volunteer application and screening process.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Salado United Methodist Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, Salado United Methodist Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Youth Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in the student program:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and students are important for student's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Youth Minister or the Senior Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the student, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other students or student staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff or volunteers in the Student Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Student staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by staff or volunteers must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Youth Minister or the Senior Pastor.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time student's ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the students the church's views on these topics.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members and volunteers of Salado United Methodist Church's Student Ministry are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented printed materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of students.

## **SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

It is anticipated that certain Student Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff/volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. The 2-adult rule must be followed. The 2 adult leaders present must have previously completed Salado United Methodist Church's application and screening process.
2. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Youth Minister prior to the activity.
3. As long as any youth are awake, one of the leaders must also be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
4. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.
5. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
6. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
7. Staff and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
8. Whenever possible, at least one staff or volunteer will sleep in the same room as students or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.

9. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

### **TOBACCO**

Salado United Methodist Church requires staff and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility, and while in the presence of students or their parents. Salado United Methodist Church is a tobacco-free facility.

### **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and students should be positive and uplifting. Salado United Methodist Church staff and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and be ever mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to students in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of students.

**Policies and Procedures**  
**Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Salado United Methodist Church's Student Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Salado United Methodist Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Salado United Methodist Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my ministry position description. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the full term specified in the position description, I understand that my service is volunteer and that I can choose to end this relationship at any time (if possible, by providing two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between Salado United Methodist Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours that I have worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the volunteer policies and procedures manual.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to remain attached to the Salado United Methodist Church Safety Policies]

**Policies and Procedures**  
**Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to be signed, detached and delivered to the Salado United Methodist Church Administrator]

