

Fairmount United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures

A. Purpose and Application

1. Background

“The 1996 General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted (and subsequently readopted) a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The foundation for this is within the Social Principles on the Rights of Children (Book of Discipline, ¶162.C). There were also two related resolutions, “Putting Children and their Families First,” and “Sexual Ethics within Ministerial Relationships,” which is now “Sexual Misconduct Within Ministerial Relationships.” Today, each Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church has a written policy. These policies stress the importance of the Biblical mandate from Matthew 19:14, “Allow the children to come to me, don’t forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children.”

2. Commitment

The Fairmount United Methodist Church (FUMC) is committed to ensuring the well-being of our children and youth as well as our staff who work with our children and youth. FUMC focuses on education, selection, protection, reporting and response. The requirements of any and all Federal and State Laws affecting or relating to employment or child abuse must be complied with and in any case where there is a conflict between such laws and this document, said laws shall prevail and the section of this document shall be modified to the extent necessary to eliminate such conflict.

3. Implementation

The FUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures will be implemented within 60 days of adoption. All required screenings will be completed within 90 days of adoption.

4. Applicable

This document applies to anyone who has supervision or custody of minors at or during any church sponsored events or programs, or anyone who has the opportunity to assist with minors at or during any church sponsored events or programs.

- a. Persons who have been convicted of abuse or neglect of minors or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with minors will not be employed to or volunteer for any role that involves supervision or assistance for minors at or during any church sponsored events or programs.
- b. The following are definitions for the FUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures. These definitions do not necessarily apply to any other policies, procedures or guidelines of the church.
 - ° **Assistant** is anyone who has not met all of the requirements dictated in this document but still qualifies to help work with minors. An assistant must be at least 18 years of age.
 - Adults who have been convicted of abuse or neglect of minors or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with minors do not qualify to be assistants.

- Adults who have not satisfactorily completed any screening or documentation requirements do not qualify to be assistants.
- **Chairperson** refers to the Chairperson of the FUMC Leadership Council.
- **Employee** is anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis. They are hereafter referred to as employees or paid staff.
- **Monitor** is anyone who is an approved staff member who monitors more than one room which has an approved staff member and minors in it when there are not enough approved staff members to have two in each room with the minors.
- **Minor** is anyone under the age of 18 years. Also referred to as children or youth.
- **Staff** refers to any employees or volunteers whether paid or un-paid that are serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors at or during church sponsored events or programs, or who have the opportunity to assist with minors at or during church sponsored events or programs.
- **Staff, Approved** (see definition of Staff) is anyone who has met and fulfilled all the requirements for supervising minors as outlined in this document.
- **Volunteer** is anyone who is not paid by the church and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors at or during church sponsored events or programs, or who have the opportunity to assist with minors at or during church sponsored events and programs. They are hereafter referred to as volunteer, staff or unpaid staff.
- **Volunteer, Youth** is any minor age 12-17 who aids approved staff in working with minors.

B. Education and Training

1. Education is one of the key strategies for ensuring the safety of minors participating in FUMC sponsored events and programs. FUMC shall offer education opportunities during each calendar year to ensure the Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures are upheld and followed. There are several educational requirements that must be met:

- a. All Staff must attend required training before supervising minors.
 - 1. If scheduling opportunities for training do not allow for training before working with minors, a person may assist with the supervision of minors as an assistant until they can complete the next training session. An assistant shall not count towards the minimum number of staff members required, cannot escort minors to the restroom, cannot serve as a monitor and cannot be left alone with any minor at anytime.
- b. All Staff are required to review the FUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures and verify their review by January 20th of each year.
- c. All Staff are required to attend at least one required training session each year.

1. If additional training is deemed necessary by the Leadership Council then each staff member must attend said training. If this additional training is not completed, then the staff member will be moved to assistant status.

C. Selection and Vetting

1. Application and Selection Process

The following requirements must be followed for compliance with the Fairmount United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures. They are not a substitute for any other requirements or guidelines of the FUMC concerning paid or unpaid staff.

- a. All applicants must complete *Appendix A Application to Work with Minors* in its entirety. This document shall be retained in the applicant's FUMC employment or request to work with minors file.
- b. Hiring staff shall use *Appendix B Screening Requirements to Work with Minors* to verify the Fairmount United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures has been followed. This document shall be retained in the applicant's FUMC employment or request to work with minors file.
- c. Hiring staff shall follow as closely as possible *Appendix C Form for Reference Check* to ensure the needed questions are asked. This document shall be retained in the applicant's FUMC employment or request to work with minors file.
- d. Hiring staff shall review *Appendix D Code of Conduct Guidelines* with the applicant and give the document to the applicant after review.
- e. Hiring staff shall review *Appendix E Staff Agreement* with applicant. The signed copy shall be retained in the applicant's FUMC employment or request to work with minors file.

2. Background checks

All potential staff members must be vetted before interacting with supervising or assisting with minors. If a person has applied for and is deemed a worthy candidate to supervise or assist with minors, then a background check shall be completed through an approved company.

- a. The initial check should cover three years prior to service with FUMC with subsequent background checks every three years. Background checks include but are not limited to criminal record checks, sexual predatory list checks, social security number check, address history check, and employment history check.
- b. The sex offender registry shall be checked for all volunteers and all potential employees as long as all applicable state and federal employment laws are followed.

3. Youth Volunteers

All of the requirements dictated in this document for approved staff and assistants at FUMC sponsored events and programs does not apply to Youth Volunteers. The following requirements apply to Youth Volunteers:

- a. There must be approved staff present at the FUMC sponsored event or program at which the youth

volunteer is volunteering. The Youth Volunteer does not count toward the adult to minor ratios.

- b. May not escort minors to the restroom, cannot serve as a monitor and cannot be left alone with any minor at any time.
- c. Attend a Safe Sanctuary training session annually.

D. Protection

1. Assignment

All staff must be members of the church or frequent attenders with active participation for at least 6 months before allowed to apply to supervise minors. If a staff member does not meet this requirement, they may only be an assistant and shall not count towards any of the minimum numbers of staff to minors ratios, cannot escort minors to the restroom, cannot serve as a monitor and cannot be left alone with any minor at anytime.

- a. This requirement does not apply to paid staff members who were specifically hired to work with minors.
- b. The FUMC Leadership Council may grant exceptions to this rule. The exception must be presented at a formal meeting of the Council and voted on by the Council (vote must follow established guidelines for presentation and passage as any other agenda items requiring voting do).

2. Staff to Minor Ratios

There shall be two adults to supervise minors during all church sponsored activities and programs. Staff shall make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where one staff member is alone with less than three minors. It is mandatory to have two staff members present at all times when working in the nursery or with children of preschool age.

- a. If a situation arises when a staff member is alone with minors then they should relocate to a common area unless relocation is not possible.
- b. If a situation arises where two staff members cannot be assigned to each room, a staff member may take the role of a monitor as long as they have visual and physical access to all of the areas where the minors are being supervised.

3. Open Door

The door should be open in all rooms where staff are supervising minors. The door may be closed if two staff are supervising the minors and there is a window in the door which allows clear visual access to all areas of the room the staff and minors are in.

4. Staff and Minor Interactions-Staff and Minor Alone Together

Staff should take every precaution to avoid being alone with fewer than three minors especially in isolated or secluded areas. This includes but is not limited to a room with no windows, a room with locked doors, a restroom, an automobile or their home.

- a. If fewer than three minors are remaining after a FUMC sponsored event or program and only one approved staff member is present, then the staff and minors should wait outside if possible or in a common area in the building until the appropriate person picks up the minors.

- b. An approved staff shall avoid being alone in a vehicle with fewer than three minors.

5. Staff and Minor Interactions-Staff and Minor Behavior Together

Staff should always be judicious, considerate, conscientious and mindful in their interactions with minors.

- a. Staff should never in any way initiate kissing, sitting on a lap (allowance is given to this for nursery and preschool age minors where this behavior is reasonable or needed), lingering hugging, inappropriate touching or being alone with a minor.
- b. Staff shall not employ physical punishment techniques.
- c. Whenever possible approved staff shall escort groups of minors to the restroom instead of an individual minor if the minors are 11 years of age or younger. Staff shall remain outside the restroom while waiting for the minor to finish. Approved staff shall notify another staff member when they are escorting minors to the restroom.

6. Staff and Minor Interactions-Travel

Events or programs that require travel may occur frequently throughout the year. These events or programs add value to interactions with minors and should not be avoided.

- a. All events or programs that require travel shall require a parental waiver (appendix F) for each minor. The designated approved staff member, who must be at least 21 years of age, for the event or program shall keep a copy of all the waivers with them for the duration of the event or program and leave the originals in the church office with the appropriate paid staff member.
- b. A list of staff members, list of drivers' names, vehicle information, staff member contact information, copy of all drivers' valid driver's license, and copy of automobile insurance for each driver must be left in the church office with the appropriate paid staff member.
- c. Each vehicle must have two insured staff members with valid drivers licenses. One of the staff must be an approved staff member.
- d. Each person in the vehicle must wear a seat belt.

7. Staff and Minor Interactions-Overnight Trips

There will be occasions when church sponsored overnight events occur. These events should not be avoided, instead set policies should be followed to ensure the safety and integrity of the staff members and the minors.

- a. If the event is a mixed gender event then both male and female approved staff members shall attend.
- b. The minimum number of approved staff members is two females for every ten female minors and two males for every ten male minors.
 - 1. Additional approved staff members shall be added proportionally as the number of minors increases.
- c. When approved staff will be sharing individual sleeping quarters with minors (such as cabin or hotel room), the minors and staff will be separated by gender and maintain the ratio of two approved staff in each allotted space or room with the minors.

- d. There are situations where having two approved staff members in every individual room with minors is not possible, such as hotel or dormitories with separate sleeping rooms. In these cases, youth of the same gender may stay in a room without a staff member, if they have provided a written consent form signed by their parent or legal guardian and obtained permission from the approved staff. Additionally, the approved staff members must be assigned to rooms located close to the youth or sleep in a common area into which all the sleeping rooms exit.
- e. In all cases of youth in overnight situations, the youth will be assigned sleeping quarters based on the age of the individuals. No more than three years difference in age will be allowed by occupants of the same room if the two approved staff are not assigned to the room.

8. FUMC sponsored Events or Programs with Other Organizations

- 1. There will be FUMC sponsored events or programs that are partnered with other churches or organizations. During these events or programs, FUMC minors must be in a vehicle with at least one FUMC approved staff.

9. Communication

- 1. A Parental Communication Permission form (**Appendix G**) must be completed and filed with the appropriate paid staff member in the church office with the details of how staff may communicate with minors and if a minor's photo may be published.

E. Documentation and Reporting

1. Documentation

All forms, waivers or documents required by the FUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures shall be maintained as confidential and located in a secure and private location in the church office or other location approved by the Council.

2. Reporting

Any suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor must be reported immediately:

- a. Staff members must report any suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor immediately to the FUMC pastor and the FUMC Leadership Council Chairperson. The Chairperson will notify the Staff Pastor Relations representative on the Council.
 - 1. If the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor involves the pastor or chairperson, then the staff member must report their concerns to the pastor or chairperson (whichever is not the person believed to be involved in the suspected inappropriate interaction) and the Staff Pastor Relations representative.
- b. If the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor occurred on church property or by a church member, staff or employee, then the pastor and chairperson must also report the suspected inappropriate interaction to the District Superintendent.
 - 1. If the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor involves the pastor or chairperson, then the pastor or chairperson (whichever is not the person believed to be involved in the

suspected inappropriate interaction) and the Staff Pastor Relations representative must report the suspected inappropriate interaction to the District Superintendent.

- c. An inappropriate interaction or abuse form (**appendix H**) must be submitted to the pastor and chairperson (or Staff Pastor Relations representative when applicable).
- d. The pastor and chairperson must notify Indiana Child Protection Services with the complainant.
 - 1. If the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor involves the pastor or chairperson, then the pastor or chairperson (whichever is not the person believed to be involved in the suspected inappropriate interaction) and the Staff Pastor Relations representative along with the complainant must report the suspected inappropriate interaction to Indiana Child Protection Services.
- e. All actions taken as part of the investigation shall be documented and maintained as confidential and located in a secure and private location in the church office or other approved location by the Council.

F. Investigation and Response

1. Investigation

When a report is made of suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor to the FUMC pastor and Chairperson (or Staff Pastor Relations representative when applicable), they must immediately initiate an investigation by contacting Indiana Child Protection Services and the District Superintendent (where applicable). Any communication coming from the church to the public may only be done through the official spokesperson which is either the pastor or chairperson.

- a. The pastor and chairperson must initiate an investigation into the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse by contacting the Indiana Child Protection Services. The Indiana Child Protection Services must be contacted by the pastor and chairperson along with the person bringing the complaint of suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor.
- b. If the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor occurs during a church sponsored event or program, the pastor and chairperson must contact the minor's parents after contacting Indiana Child Protection Services. The parents are to be notified only if the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse occurred during a church sponsored event or program. In no other situation involving suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse are the pastor, chairperson or staff pastor relations representative to contact the parents.
 - 1. They must let the parents know that Indiana Child Protection Service has been notified.
 - 2. The pastor or chairperson shall not provide the name of any other parties whether adult or minor that were involved to anyone other than law enforcement officials of the Indiana Child Protection Services.
- c. During the investigation, actions should be taken to protect all parties involved from further situations where they would interact.
- d. No one from FUMC is to release any information concerning the case to anyone or any parties other than

Indiana Child Protections Service or the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

- e. To ensure care and safety of all parties involved. Total and complete discretion will be used by the person reporting the suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse, the pastor, the chairperson and the Staff Pastor Relations representative. This case will not be discussed with anyone other than the appropriate law enforcement or child protection agency.

G. Safe Sanctuaries Oversight

1. The FUMC Leadership Council will have the responsibility to implement and uphold the policies and procedures in this document including the training of employees and volunteers, maintaining confidential records and implementing the screening process. The Council is tasked with ensuring compliance with the policy, granting exceptions to the policy as appropriate, assisting with investigations when needed and renewing the policy. The Council may utilize persons, not on the Council, as team members to help with the implementation, monitoring, and reporting aspects of this plan. The Staff Pastor Relations representative on the Council will be assigned the responsibility of coordinating all efforts of this document for the Council.

- a. If a violation of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures is determined to have occurred, then the following action shall be taken unless the violation involves suspected inappropriate interaction or suspected abuse with or to a minor in which case Section E of this document must be followed:
- b. For the first violation, a written warning will be given by the pastor or chairperson. The offending party must review the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures with the pastor or chairperson. Documentation of the written warning, the nature of the violation, and a summary of the meeting must be filed in the church office. The document must be signed by the pastor or chairperson and the offending party. The offending party will have the opportunity to add their own summary to the document.
 - 1. If the offending party is an employee, then a copy of the document must be filed in their personnel record.
- c. For the second violation, termination as an approved staff or assistant will occur. Documentation of the termination, the nature of the violation, and a summary of the meeting must be filed in the church office. The document must be signed by the pastor or chairperson and the offending party. The offending party will have the opportunity to add their own summary to the document.

H. Appendix

Appendix A
Appendix B
Appendix C
Appendix D
Appendix E
Appendix F
Appendix G
Appendix H

The **Fairmount United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures** was approved this _____ day of _____, 2018 by the Leadership Council of Fairmount United Methodist Church.

_____ and _____
Leadership Council Chairperson Print Name and Sign

_____ and _____
Leadership Council Vice-Chairperson Print Name and Sign

_____ and _____
Pastor Print Name and Sign