



Safe Gatherings began in 2012 as a project to assist the Kansas East UMC Conference (now part of the Great Plains UMC Conference) in taking advantage of technology to automate their paper-intensive protection program.

Fueled by a passion for protecting vulnerable populations, we created an online tool to streamline the process and make it easier for the Conference and the churches they serve - and in doing so launched Safe Gatherings. After a year of enhancing the original system, Safe Gatherings began expanding to other United Methodist churches and conferences, and then to additional denominations - now serving more than 2,700 churches and organizations across 23 states.

The Safe Gatherings system was adopted as the Great Plains Conference approved method of training and certification at the 2014 Great Plains Annual Conference, replacing the former Kansas East Conference Safe and Sacred protection program, the former Kansas West Conference Boundary Awareness protection program and the former Nebraska Conference Safe Sanctuaries protection program.

The policy applies to all staff members, volunteer or paid, lay or clergy, who have any direct contact with children and/or youth and/or adults from vulnerable populations who participate in any activities or events sponsored by the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church including its districts and programming agencies.

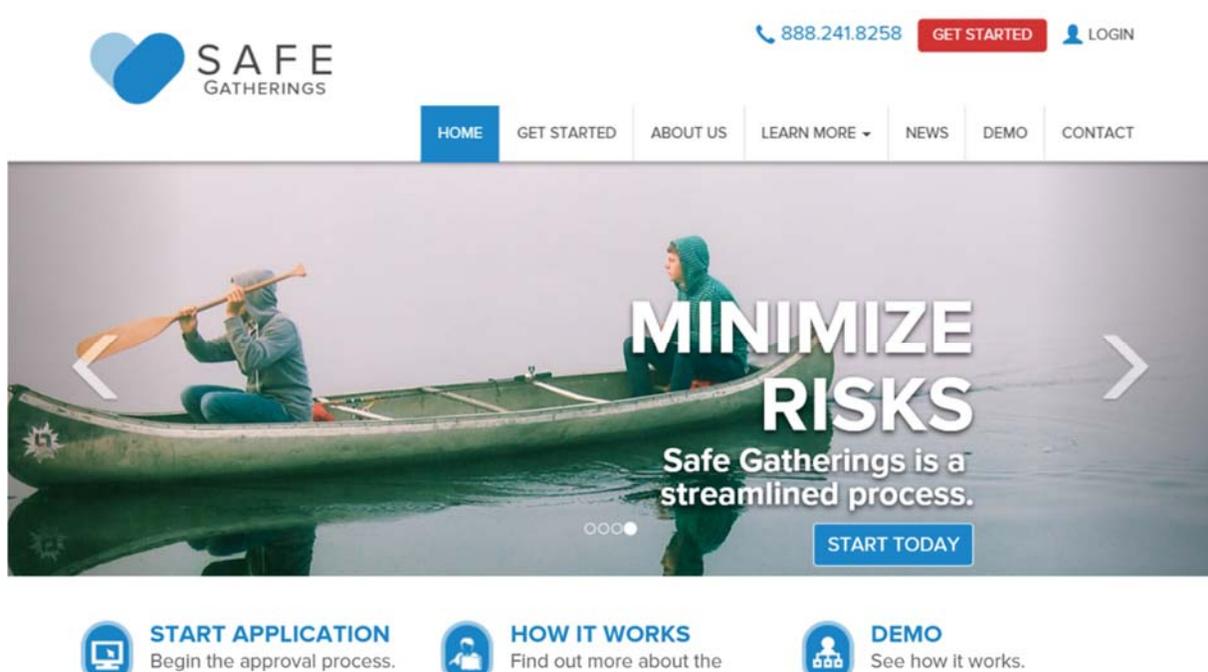
Applying for Safe Gatherings certification

Steps to Certification



To get started, go to: safegatherings.com and click on “Get Started”

The page will look like this:



Applicants will be taken to the first registration page which will look like this:

SAFE GATHERINGS

Home Login Contact

Register

Find your organization from the list below to begin your registration process. If you do not see your organization below, [contact us](#) or your parent organization, as you may be working with a group that has a private log in page.

Language Preference:

What denomination does your church or congregation belong to?

Select the country for your organization:

Select the state/province for your organization:

Select the city for your organization:

Select the name of your organization:

If you do not see your organization listed above, please enter the name of your organization here:

First Name

Last Name

Email None

Username
Username can include uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters. You may use your email as your Username.

Password

Confirm Password

Please click box to verify your security:

I'm not a robot 
reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

Note: Please make a note of your username and password so you may log back into your Safe Gatherings account.

[Next](#)

If applicants experience difficulty, contact Safe Gatherings Coordinator,
Kathie Monroe at:
kmonroe@greatplainsumc.org
or 316-684-0266

The following tips will help applicants get certified in a timely manner.

✓ **Release of Information Form –**

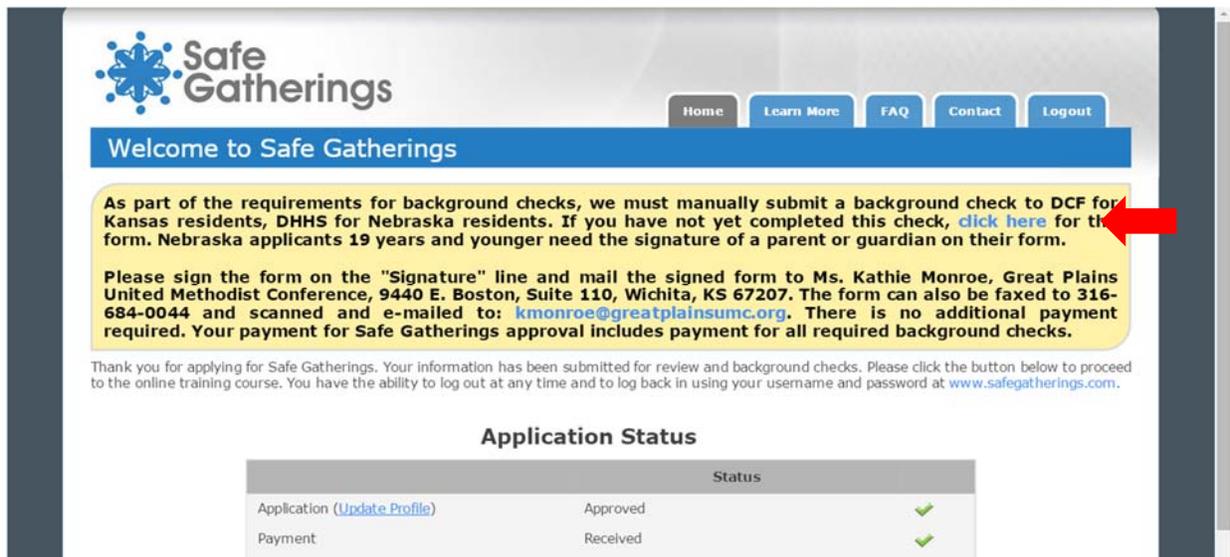
This is the only non-electronic step of the certification process. Instructions are found on Page 3 of the Introduction to the Training module.

Kansas Release of Information Form Instructions

The Release of Information form must be printed and sent to the Wichita conference office. Certification is delayed while waiting for receipt of the completed form.

If the applicant misses that step while going through the training module they can:

- Log back in to safegatherings.com to access the form.



- *Print the form and fill in the social security number if it doesn't show.*
 - *The State requires a social security number and signature on the form; if it's not there, applicants will be contacted to provide that information.*
- *Make sure to sign the form on the signature line next to where the applicant name is printed. Unsigned forms are returned for signature.*

Mail, fax or e-mail the form to Wichita. Please send to Kathie Monroe at the Wichita conference office and not to the Topeka addresses.

Mail: 9440 E. Boston, Wichita KS 67207

E-mail: kmonroe@greatplainsumc.org

Fax: 316-684-0044

Nebraska Applicants Release of Information form instructions.

The DHHS (Department of Health & Human Services) has revised the Authorization Release of Information form. *Verification of Identity is now required by DHHS.* This is a requirement of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (not Safe Gatherings or the Great Plains Conference).

An Organization employee (the pastor or a local church or camp employee) can provide this certification after examining the applicant's identification documents. The Organization employee will need to sign **Section B – Verification of Identity of Application** on the second page of the Release of Information form.

If the applicant does not have an organization employee sign in Section B, **they will have to have the form notarized and Section A completed.** Notaries can be found in most banks, photocopy shops, and parcel services shops. Applicants may want to call ahead to confirm appointment times, if required.

Nebraska applicants 18 and under are required to have a parent or legal guardian signature on their Release of Information form. The parent/legal guardian's signature **must** be notarized for those applicants.

Applicants can fax the completed form directly to DHHS at 402-742-2344. Fax request forms in order with the barcoded page first. Do not fax any type of cover sheet or additional pages.

If you prefer, send the completed Release of Information form to Kathie Monroe, Safe Gatherings Coordinator using the contact information below:

Kathie Monroe
Great Plains Safe Gatherings Coordinator
kmonroe@greatplainsumc.org
9440 E. Boston
Wichita KS 67207
316-684-0266
800-745-2350
316-684-0044 (fax)

- All fields must be completed
- Incomplete, illegible, or forms with conflicting information will not be processed by DHHS
- Electronic signatures are not allowed

- Any request for an individual less than 19 years of age requires the signature of the individuals' legal guardian
- The guardian's signature must be notarized
- Applicant may fax the completed form directly to DHHS at 402-742-2344
- Fax request forms in order with the barcoded page first.
- Do not fax any type of cover sheet or additional pages.

✓ **On-Line Training –**

Applicants sometimes think completing the application is all that needs to be done. Complete the on-line training portion. Do all ten modules at one time or complete as many modules at a time as is convenient for the applicant's schedule

✓ **References**

Make sure the e-mail address for references is accurate and is an individual that will respond in a timely manner. Communicate with references that the reference request will be coming by e-mail. The request is sent at the same time as the application is submitted. Some e-mail systems may see the request as junk or spam mail - school systems are especially tight on security settings. If the reference does not see the request, it may have been sent to junk or spam mail. *Remember - no family members and applicants must have known your reference at least two years.*

If an applicant has not known the current pastor or director at the camp or organization they are applying for certification through

- two years
- if the applicant attends a church of another denomination
- does not attend church
- the current pastor is a family member

The applicant may use:

- a former pastor
- a church staff member (choir director, youth leader, church administrator) or church officer (administrative council chair or lay leader) or an organization staff member
- the pastor of the church the applicant does attend
- an employer or volunteer supervisor
- former employer
- a coach or school counselor

The current pastor or director of the church or organization the applicant is applying for certification through will receive a request from Safe Gatherings asking for affirmation of the applicant's request for certification.

Applicants can go to the Safe Gatherings website - safegatherings.com to check on the status of their application. Log in with the username and password. If applicants need help with log-in information, contact me. *Applications not complete after one year will expire.*

Applicants should be certified within 30 days of submitting your application. Delay in certification may be a slow or lack of response by references or slow response by the state agencies. When an applicants is certified, the applicant and the church that the applicant is applying for certification through, will receive notification by e-mail at the e-mail address provided on the Safe Gatherings application. The e-mail will show certification number, date of certification and expiration dates. A certification card is not issued.

Applicants have one year to complete the certification process. After one year, applicants will need to re-start the certification process if your application is still pending.

“Like” Safe Gatherings on Facebook to receive timely tips and information on keeping the vulnerable safe.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

- ✓ Applicants must be 16 years old to be certified. Youth under the age of 16 may serve alongside a Safe Gatherings certified adult (21 years or older). Youth may submit an application and take the training; however, they will not be certified before they turn 16.
- ✓ A non-certified individual may serve alongside a Safe Gatherings certified individual.
- ✓ Always works as a team – remember the rule of three! The “rule of three” specifies that there should always be at least three people present.
- ✓ Certification is good for four (4) years
- ✓ An individual who has been convicted as a sex offender will not be certified
- ✓ An affirmative response to one of the following questions relating to crimes will prompt a review of an application –
 - Against children
 - Rape, sexual or physical assault
 - Possession or use of drugs
 - Suspension of a driver’s license within the last three years
- ✓ Boy Scout Troop leaders need to be Safe Gatherings certified because of the relationship between the troop and the church. Boy Scouts meeting in a United Methodist Church have been chartered by the church. They are considered a ministry within the church and must comply with the same certification policies as any other ministry. A pastor must sign a document annually approving the list of leaders for the program by name. With this relationship, participation in the program becomes mandatory.
- ✓ Unless the church is providing childcare, other groups using the church building do not have to have Safe Gatherings certification (i.e. Girl Scouts, civic organizations, family reunions)