

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY



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Section 1: Safe Sanctuary Policy Overview

In all of our ministries with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons Dyersburg First United Methodist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be “...surrounded by steadfast love, established in faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (*Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal, p.44*). Our Safe Sanctuary Policy demonstrates our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and other vulnerable persons.

As a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect to children, youth, and other vulnerable persons, and to protect children, youth, and other vulnerable persons, as well as adult workers (either paid or volunteer) who interact with those children, youth, and other vulnerable persons in any church activity.

1. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers.
2. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.
3. We will educate all of our workers with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods.
4. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirement of state law.

Section 2: Recruitment, Screening, and Selection

The following forms are included in Dyersburg First’s recruitment, screening, and selection process for volunteer and paid workers with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons:

- Volunteer Application Form
- Consent to “Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check” Form
- Participant Covenant Statement
- References
- Raining Compliance Form

All current and future volunteer and paid workers with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons are required to complete the Volunteer Application Form and Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check Form.

When a volunteer or worker is selected, they must sign and submit the Participation Covenant Statement. These forms and records will be maintained by the designated staff person and kept in a locked file cabinet. Any information from the criminal background check that raises concerns by the designated staff person will be discussed with the Senior Pastor and the Youth and/or Children's Director and appropriate action will be taken. It is the intent of this Policy and Procedure that any actions will err on the side of protecting our children, youth, and other vulnerable persons. The Background checks will be repeated every five years.

Prior to beginning work as a volunteer or paid worker with our children, youth, or other vulnerable persons, each volunteer or staff member must complete appropriate Safe Sanctuary training as designated by the appropriate staff person. The training will be documented and records of the training will be kept by the designated staff person.

Also prior to beginning work as a volunteer or paid worker with our children, youth, or other vulnerable persons, each volunteer or staff member must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the designated staff person.

Section 3: Definitions

Child: In the United States, this term is commonly used to identify anyone age eleven or younger.

Youth: Anyone not a “child” and under the age of eighteen (age of legal majority).

Adult: Anyone who has reached the age of legal majority and has finished high school.

Vulnerable person: A person whose ability to protect himself/herself from violence, abuse, or neglect is significantly impaired through social, physical, or mental disability or illness.

Paid staff person: Someone paid by the church, overseen by the staff/pastor parish relations committee, and screened according to the church’s Safe Sanctuary policy and any additional required personnel screening.

Unscreened adult: Someone who has not been screened. The individual may work in a room with a screened adult or screened paid staff person. He or she should never be alone with children, youth, or other vulnerable people. Unscreened adults may or may not be church members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church for at least six months. Use of unscreened adults should be exceptions rather than normal practice. Rare exceptions may be made in consultation with the pastor in charge in special situations.

Screened adult: A volunteer who has gone through the screening process involving a criminal background check, reference check, interview, and risk reduction training. These people may or may not be members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church for at least six months.

Youth helpers: People under the age of eighteen who are assisting with child or youth activities. They can assist with activities but should not be considered adult volunteers and should always be supervised. Youth helpers should be at least three years older than the children or youth they are helping. A youth helper will normally be considered “unscreened.”

Roamer: A Safe Sanctuaries trained/screened adult leader who meets the minimum age requirements as defined in this policy and moves throughout the facility to provide additional oversight and supervision during activities.

Physical abuse: Violent, non-accidental contact that results in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

Sexual abuse: Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth/other vulnerable person, whether at the church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult or another minor.

Emotional abuse: A pattern of intentional conduct that crushes a child’s/youth’s/other vulnerable person’s spirit and attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

Neglect: When a person with responsibility for a child, youth, or other vulnerable person fails to care for that individual’s physical and/or emotional needs.

Section 4: Rules/Guidance

The following rules shall be part of the Safe Sanctuary Policy for Dyersburg First United Methodist Church.

The Two-Adult Rule

As a matter of safety for both the children and adults it is required that no fewer than two adults be present at all times for any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable persons. This is inclusive of the nursery area. For the purpose of this rule married couples working with the same age group are considered as one adult. If only one adult is present in a classroom the door must remain open and an approved worker must be present in the hallway.

The Eighteen-Age Limit Rule

Persons hired to work with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons must be at least eighteen years of age. Any person serving as a helper, who is under the age of eighteen, must be supervised by adult staff at all times.

The Five-Year Rule

It is required that any volunteer or paid worker be at least five years older than the group with which they are to supervise. For example, if a high school senior is recruited to supervise children as a “leader,” he/she must be at least five years older than the group they are to lead. So an 18 year old can help supervise a group of 15 year olds and under.

Off-Site Advance Notice Rule

Parents or guardians shall be given advance notice of and full information regarding any off site ministry involving their child. Parents or guardians must give written permission for their child’s participation.

State Reporting Rule

All workers with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons are required by law to report any suspected cases of abuse to the proper authorities. Dyersburg First will use the Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse Form (Appendix H) to capture the necessary information regarding allegations of abuse. This procedure will be covered in more detail in Section 8: Incident Reporting.

The Six-Month Rule

Persons supervising children, youth, or other vulnerable persons must have attended Dyersburg First UMC for at least six months prior to serving.

Sign-in/out Procedures

Adults responsible for children who are infants through toddlers should sign their children in and indicate the names of authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed out. Adults responsible for children age 5 through 5th grade should sign their children in and out of Sunday School and other KidMin activities. Avoid unauthorized adults picking up children. Older siblings, parents, and other adults may be authorized to pick up children when they are identified on a child's care and information records. This record of authorized adults with pick up privileges should be updated annually.

Time Following Group Events

Following group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's/ or other vulnerable person's transportation arrives after all other participants have departed. Two screened leaders should be scheduled to be present until all participants have been picked up. In some circumstances, a child/youth/other vulnerable person may unavoidably be supervised by one screened adult. When this occurs, the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well-being as well as his/her own. *Example-Have the parents on the phone with you until they arrive.*

Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers, or staff of the church will be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

Anti-Bullying (Appendix G)

All Youth and Children's ministry staff and volunteers will adhere to the church's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Section 5: Transportation

General Rules

Transporting children, youth, and other vulnerable persons is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating. This policy indicates both requirements and guidelines.

Requirements

1. Drivers must be known to the designated screened adult leader of the event.
2. When a child/youth/other vulnerable persons is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child's/youth's/other vulnerable person's parent/guardian, a screened adult, or a paid staff person who is at least 21 years old.
3. When a child/youth/other vulnerable person is transported in a church-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 25 years of age; an exception is made when the driver is a paid staff member, for whom a motor vehicle record search has been made and the record has been found to be satisfactory by the Senior Pastor or his/her designee.
4. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated.
5. Drivers must require that passengers wear seat belts; the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
6. Drivers should be advised of a designated route and should not deviate from it except in cases of emergency or road detours.
7. Drivers should not use cell phones while driving. It is best practice to have the second adult to maintain contact with other drivers and help with navigation. Any use should be hands-free and in accordance with state law. Drivers should not text/message while driving.
8. Parental permission must be given for transporting children/youth/other vulnerable persons for events to/from Dyersburg First UMC events and activities.
9. All drivers are expected to obey all traffic laws. Failure to do so may disqualify them from driving for church-related activities. This includes having the proper insurance coverage, valid driver's license, and proper registration of vehicles in use.

Section 6: Trips & Retreat

Trip and retreat settings can call for different child/youth/other vulnerable people protection requirements, depending on the circumstances. What follows are requirements and guidelines of this policy. The requirements should always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc; some or all of the guidelines should be implemented as needed. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both requirements and guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of the given occasion.

Requirements

1. There will be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats, and other events where the children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
2. There will be at least one screened adult for each gender present at coed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present shall be of the same gender as the children/youth/other vulnerable people who are present.
3. The person in charge of youth/children/other vulnerable people for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry parental; permission forms, including permission for emergency medical care. (See Appendix I)

Guidelines - Hotel Type Setting

1. Separate rooms for adults and child/youth/other vulnerable people (where applicable) should be assigned with at least two participants per room except where specific situations dictate a different arrangement.
2. Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children's/youth's/other vulnerable person's rooms.
3. Adults should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night. This should be done by two adults of the same gender as those being checked.
4. A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e. do not open to the outside).

Guideline - Cabin Type Setting

1. The rooms shall be assigned as single gender rooms. Men share with men and women share with women.

2. When feasible, two adults of the same gender as the residents should be assigned to each room.
3. There should be a private changing area and/or separate bathroom area for each room.
4. Adults should not be alone with a child/youth/other vulnerable person in a room.

Section 7: Implementation

1. Staff persons will conduct an orientation on Safe Sanctuary policies for paid workers and volunteers prior to their first day of work. In addition, parents of youth and children shall receive a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
2. When there is an accident of any type that involves a child, youth, or other vulnerable person, the Witness shall complete the Accident Report Form (See Appendix J). An accident review shall be convened by the designated staff person, or staff supervisor, as soon after the accident as possible. If an incident involves a staff person, that individual will be removed from ministry until a review has been completed and the staff person has the approval of the Senior Pastor. The review will focus on developing steps that would prevent the accident from reoccurring. The Accident Report Form and the minutes from the Accident Review meeting shall be filled with the designated staff person.
3. There shall be windows on all classroom doors where children, youth, or other vulnerable people are present. If the door does not have a window the door shall remain open while the room is in use. In the event of a meeting with one, child, youth, or other vulnerable person and a worker, there shall be an “open door” policy. There should also be another staff or volunteer in the vicinity even if they are not within actual listening distance.
4. The Safe Sanctuary Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. Any changes or updates will be approved by the Church Council or Charge Conference.
5. All those who participate in the life of this congregation and use its facilities—individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside this congregation—are expected to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.

Section 8: Incident Reporting

Tennessee law requires individuals who work with children, under the age of eighteen, to report any type of suspected abuse to the proper authorities. Anyone who makes such a report in “good faith” is protected by law from any form of liability. However, failure to make such a report can give rise to criminal and/or civil liability. You may report in “good faith” anonymously.

Reporting Steps

1. If suspected child abuse has occurred, contact one of the agencies listed below:
 - a. State of Tennessee Department of Children Services: Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-877-237-0004 (24-hour service)
 - b. Dyersburg Police Department: 731-285-1212
2. If immediate danger exists to a child, ensure the child’s safety and then contact the Police, Sheriff, or Highway Patrol immediately and await their arrival or follow their instructions.
3. Incidents of child abuse or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, whether allegedly perpetrated by individuals associated with the church or outside the church, shall be reported to the director of the appropriate program after the call to the above agencies has been made.
4. The director of the appropriate program will then follow these guidelines:
 - a. The Senior Pastor shall be informed immediately.
 - b. In the event the victim feels uncomfortable reporting to the Senior Pastor or if the suspected abuse involves the Senior Pastor, reports are required to be made to the Staff Parish Relations Chairperson (SPRC).
 - c. All facts and circumstances of the incident shall be documented with the cooperation of the reporting person.
 - d. All steps taken in handling of the incident and/or report shall be documented.
 - e. An additional report shall be made with Child Protective Services.
 - f. The Senior Pastor shall file a report to the church’s legal counsel, who will notify the liability insurer for the church.
 - g. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim shall be notified immediately unless the parents/guardians are suspected to be involved in the abuse.
 - h. In-depth investigation shall be carried out by the civil authorities rather than by the church personnel.
5. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee shall be the sole spokesperson for the church, insofar as media inquiries are concerned.

Forms

Appendix A: Volunteer Application

CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Name:

Birth Date:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Daytime Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

BACKGROUND & VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Occupation:

Employer:

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable persons?

Previous experience with Children/Youth/Other vulnerable people?

Special Interest, Hobbies, and Skills:

Availability to Work? ☐ Days ☐ Evenings ☐ Weekends

Can you make a one-year commitment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What gifts, education, training, or interests do you have that would contribute to our Dyersburg First's work with children/youth/other vulnerable people?

What are your views on appropriate ways to discipline?

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or plead guilty to a crime, wither a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, or other crimes of violence, theft, or serious motor vehicle violations)?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, Please explain below.

Have you ever had to deal with a child abuse situation in any way, including being abused, being accuse of abuse, knowing someone who was abused, etc.?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please explain below.

Have you read and do you agree to abide by the requirements of the Dyersburg First United Methodist Church's Child, Youth, and Vulnerable People Protection Policy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

_____ Print Your Name

_____ Signature

____/____/____ Today's Date

Appendix A2: Under 18 Years – Volunteer Application

CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Name:

Birth Date:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Daytime Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Age:

Current Grade:

School:

Church:

Pastor's Name:

Pastor's Phone:

Emergency Contact Name:

Phone Number:

INTEREST & EXPERIENCE

List the church program(s) that interest you:

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable persons?

Previous experience with Children/Youth/Other vulnerable people?

Special Interest, Hobbies, and Skills:

Have you read and do you agree to abide by the requirements of the Dyersburg First United Methodist Church's Child, Youth, and Vulnerable People Protection Policy?

___ Yes ___ No

_____ Print Your Name

_____ Signature

____/____/____ Today's Date

Appendix B: References

Please list three personal references (i.e., people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address, phone number and/or email for each.

Personal Reference

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Personal Reference

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Personal Reference

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Do we have your permission to contact these references as well as anyone else in order to obtain information about you for the purpose of considering you for a position of one who would work with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people? ☐Yes ☐No

Do we have your permission to share this information with those people who will participate in acting on this application? ☐Yes ☐No

Do you have a valid driver's license? ☐Yes ☐No If Yes, please provide your license number below?

Initial here that we have your permission to check and obtain a report of your driving record and to share that information with those people who will act on this application? ☐Yes ☐No

Initials: _____ Date Initialed: _____

Signature of Applicant

Date

Appendix C: Criminal Records Request

I, _____, hereby authorize **DYERSBURG FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH** to request any local, state, or federal law enforcement department or agency to release information regarding any record of any investigations, charges, or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed, against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by local, state, and federal law. I release any and all law enforcement departments, agencies, and their employees from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request. I also give my permission for this information to be shared with those people who will participate in making decisions with respect to my application.

You are authorized to rely upon a photocopy, digital, or fax copy of this document.

Print applicant's Full Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Driver's License Number: _____

State in which license was issued: _____ License Expiration Date: _____

IN OFFICE USE ONLY

Request sent to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Participant Covenant

The congregation of Dyersburg First United Methodist Church (Dyersburg FUMC) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable people and persons who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by Dyersburg FUMC. The following policy statement reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving Dyersburg FUMC as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through the relationships with others.

1. Any adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) may not work with children or youth in any Dyersburg FUMC - sponsored activity.
2. All adult supervisors involved with children, youth, or vulnerable people of Dyersburg FUMC must have been attending Dyersburg First for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
3. Adult volunteers and staff with children, youth and vulnerable people shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children, youth, or vulnerable people.
4. Adult volunteers with children, youth, and vulnerable people shall attend regular training and educational events provided by Dyersburg FUMC to keep volunteers informed of Dyersburg FUMC policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Adult volunteers shall immediately report any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate to the appropriate authorities, and Children's or Youth Director, the Senior Pastor, or the designated staff person.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all Dyersburg FUMC Policies and Procedures regarding working in ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable people? ☐Yes ☐No
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times? ☐Yes ☐No
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment? ☐Yes ☐No
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by Dyersburg FUMC related to your volunteer assignment? ☐Yes ☐No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to the area supervisor or other appropriate person? ☐Yes ☐No
6. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform a minister of this congregation if you have ever been charged with child abuse? ☐Yes ☐No

I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Print Full Name: _____

Appendix E: Training Compliance Form

I, the undersigned, attended a Safe SAncuary training session for the prevention of child abuse at Dyersburg First United Methodist Church. I understand the policy and procedures for the prevention of child abuse set forth at the training and agree to abide by those policies in order to protect the health and safety of the children, youth, and other other vulnerable people of Dyersburg First United Methodist Church.

Trainee Name: _____

Signature

Date

Trainer's Name & Title: _____

Signature

Date

Appendix F: Emergency Procedures

In all of the situations below, we believe that our screened volunteers and paid staff are capable of making wise and safe decisions based on their understanding of the situations happening around them. We trust them to keep the safety of the participants at the forefront of their actions and motives.

Tornado Warning Guideline

In the case of our local area being given a **Tornado Warning** and the siren begins to sound, children/youth/other vulnerable people will be escorted to the nearest safe zone. Teachers should refer to the maps located in their classrooms for the nearest safe space. For safety purposes parents are urged to wait until the emergency is over before picking up their child/youth/other vulnerable people in the designated/specified location.

Fire/Bomb/Hazardous Material

In the case of a **Fire/Bomb/Hazardous Material** event, children/youth/other vulnerable people will be evacuated via the evacuation route posted in all classrooms. Teachers should ensure they have all their participants before leaving their classrooms. We urge parents to not seek their child/youth/other vulnerable person inside the building, but to wait for contact from the teacher regarding the safe location to meet. Do not re-enter the building until all clear has been given by the proper authorities.

Intruder/Missing Participant

In the case of a **Missing Participant** or **Intruder** (a person who is in the building with the intent to cause harm), we will go into “Lock-Down Mode.” All children/youth/other vulnerable people will remain in their designated classrooms with the doors locked. It is best practice to stay out of the line of sight of the window in the door. Doors are to stay closed until the teachers receive an “All Clear” from the proper authorities. For safety purposes, parents are urged to wait until the emergent situation is cleared before attempting to pick up their child/youth/other vulnerable person.

Appendix G: Anti-Bullying Policy

Definitions:

“Bullying,” including “cyberbullying,” means any severe or pervasive (repeated over time) physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically (i.e., cyberbullying), directed toward a student or students, that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the following effects:

- Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s person or property;
- Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health;
- substantially interfering with the students academic performance;
- substantially interfering with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the church.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation, one or more of the following: cyberbullying, harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, ostracism, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting, opposing or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Cyberbullying means bullying through the use of technology or electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo-electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this section. Cyberbullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of communication to more than one person of the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this section.

Anti-Bullying

Dyersburg First United Methodist Church believes that all students have the right to a safe and healthy environment. We believe that bullying, as defined above, is inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus. Therefore, any behavior that infringes on the safety of any student should not be tolerated. A student shall not intimidate, harass, or bully another student through words or actions.

Reporting

Dyersburg First United Methodist Church expects students and/or staff to immediately report incidents of bullying to the staff person in charge of whichever ministry the incident occurred in or the Senior Pastor or designee. Staff who witness such acts should take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. Each complaint of bullying should be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on church grounds, while traveling to and from church for a church-sponsored activity, or during any church-sponsored activity.

Prevention Steps

In an effort to prevent bullying from occurring during church-sponsored events and activities the church will provide staff development training in bullying prevention. This training will include, but is not limited to:

- What qualifies as bullying and how to spot it.
- The development of a “Student Code of Conduct” or “Conduct Covenant” document.
- Procedures for when an incident of bullying does occur.

Leaders /Teachers should discuss this policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying. Students who bully are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Student Covenant of Conduct

Each ministry will adopt a Student Code of Conduct to be followed by every student while on church grounds, or when traveling to and from church, and church-sponsored activities.

The Student Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Any student who engages in bullying may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.
- Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to the leader of whichever ministry the incident takes place in (KidMin, Youth, Confirmation, etc.)
- Students can rely on staff to promptly investigate each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.
- If the complainant student or the parent of the student feels the appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached, the student or the parent of the student should contact the Senior Pastor or designee, The church prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complaint or any participant in the complaint process.

Intervention Procedures

The procedures for intervening in bullying behavior include, but are not limited, to the following:

- A summary of this policy prohibiting intimidation and bullying will be made available to all staff, students, and parents at the beginning of the school year, as part of the student registration and/or information packet, and as part of the church’s system of notification to parents.
- The church will make reasonable efforts to keep a report of bullying and the results of the investigation confidential.
- Staff who witness acts of bullying shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. People witnessing or experiencing bullying are strongly encouraged to report the incident; such reporting will not reflect on the target or witnesses in any way.

Appendix H: Children's Ministry Behavior Policy

Purpose:

The Children's Ministry of [Church Name] is committed to providing a **safe, respectful, and nurturing environment** where all children can grow, learn, and experience God's love.

This policy establishes **clear expectations and procedures** for behavior guidance that support:

- Physical and emotional safety
- Learning and participation
- Respect for others
- Consistency across classrooms and leaders

Behavior expectations are **age-appropriate** and are applied **fairly and consistently** to all children.

General Principles (All Ages):

- Children are treated with **dignity, patience, and respect**.
- **Leaders** guide behavior using **developmentally appropriate practices**.
- Safety concerns are addressed immediately.
- Leaders do **not** use yelling, shaming, threats, or physical discipline.
- Behavior expectations apply **equally to all children**, regardless of family role or church position.

Section 1: Preschool & Under

Developmental Understanding

Children in this age group are still learning:

- Emotional regulation
- Language for expressing needs
- Social interaction
- Body awareness

Behavior is guided through **redirection, modeling, repetition, and routine**.

Behavior Expectations

Children are expected to:

- Use **gentle hands**
- Stay with the group and assigned leaders
- Follow simple, age-appropriate directions
- Participate safely in activities
- Treat toys and materials respectfully

Behavior Guidance Practices

Leaders will use:

- Clear and simple instructions
- Modeling appropriate behavior
- Redirection to safe activities

- Comfort and reassurance
 - Consistent routines and transitions
-

Unsafe or Disruptive Behavior

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Hitting, biting, kicking, or pushing
 - Throwing objects
 - Running away from the group
 - Repeatedly disrupting activities in a way that causes safety concerns
-

Response Steps

1. Immediate redirection and support
2. Removal from activity with adult supervision\
3. Calm reset before rejoining the group

If unsafe behavior continues:

- Ministry leadership will be notified
 - A parent or caregiver may be contacted
 - The child may be removed from the classroom for the remainder of the session
-

Parent Communication

Parents may be contacted the same day if:

- There is a safety concern
 - A child cannot safely remain in the classroom
 - A pattern of behavior is observed
-

SECTION II: KINDERGARTEN–5TH GRADE

Core Behavioral Expectation

Children are taught and expected to follow this guiding principle:

If what you are doing interferes with learning, hurts someone physically or emotionally, or prevents you or others from being their best selves, you are expected to make a better choice.

Behavior Expectations

Children are expected to:

- Follow adult instructions the **first time given**
- Use respectful language and tone
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to themselves
- Participate appropriately in activities
- Respect peers, leaders, and church property
- Remain with their assigned group and leaders

Unacceptable Behaviors

Behaviors that are not permitted include, but are not limited to:

- Physical aggression or rough play
- Repeated refusal to follow instructions
- Disruptive behavior that interferes with learning
- Verbal disrespect, arguing, or inappropriate language
- Attempting to assume adult authority or leadership roles
- Leaving designated areas without permission

Behavior Guidance Process

Leaders will follow a clear, consistent process:

1. **Verbal reminder and redirection**
2. **Clear warning with expectation stated**
3. **Temporary removal from activity with adult supervision**

If behavior continues or escalates:

- Ministry leadership will intervene
- A parent or caregiver will be contacted
- The child may be removed from the activity or program for the remainder of the session

Ongoing or Severe Behavior Concerns

If a pattern of unsafe or disruptive behavior continues:

- A meeting with parents may be requested
- A behavior support plan may be developed
- Continued participation may require parent partnership or adjusted placement

Parent Partnership

We believe behavior guidance is most effective when families and leaders work together. Parents are expected to support ministry expectations and work collaboratively with leadership when concerns arise.

Our Commitment

The Children's Ministry commits to:

- Consistent application of expectations
- Clear communication with families
- A safe and supportive learning environment
- Age-appropriate, respectful behavior guidance

Appendix I: Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

Quick Guide

24-Hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-877-237-0004

Dyersburg Police Department: 731-285-1212

For reporting suspected incident of child abuse/neglect, contact the 24-Hour Hotline. With any incident at Dyersburg FUMC contact the Dyersburg Police Department, and/or the Tennessee Department of Children Services Hotline. See Contact information above.

BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Name of person observing/receiving disclosure of child abuse:

Victim's Name:

Victim's Age/D.o.B.:

Date/Place of initial observation/conversation with/report from victim:

Name of person accused:

Relationship of accused to victim (Paid Staff, Volunteer, Family Member, other):

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Record of call to 24-Hour Hotline:

Date:_____ Time:_____ Spoke with: _____

Summary of Conversation:

Record of call to Dyersburg Police Department:

Date:_____ Time:_____ Spoke with: _____

Summary of Conversation:

Your immediate supervisor and/or Senior Pastor:

Date:_____ Time:_____ Spoke with: _____

Summary of Conversation:

Name of person filling out this report:

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Note: It is imperative that the person filling out this report be familiar with the Tennessee law reporting requirements before taking any action or completing this report.

Appendix J: Emergency Medical Consent Form

Please print all information.

Parental Consent and Medical Authorization

Name of child/youth: _____

Grade(if applicable): _____ Age: _____

Address:

Name of parent/legal guardian: _____

Daytime Phone:

Cell Phone:

As the parent (or legal guardian) of: _____ I understand that my child/youth will be participating in a number of activities for the school calendar year 2026-2027, which carry with them a certain degree of risk. Some of the activities are swimming, boating, hiking, field trips, sports, and other activities that the church may offer. I consent for my child to participate in these activities.

__ I represent that my child/youth is physically fit and has the necessary skills to safely participate in the activities listed above.

__ I represent that my child/youth has restrictions on the following particular activities:

__ I understand and give consent for my child/youth to travel to and from these events in transportation provided by volunteer drivers.

Medical Treatment Authorization

It is my understanding that the church will attempt to notify me in case of a medical emergency involving my child/youth. If the church cannot reach me, then I authorize the church to hire a doctor or health-care professional, and I give my permission to the doctor or other health-care professionals, to provide the medical services deemed necessary. I will pay for any medical expenses so incurred. I will notify the church if I feel there are health considerations that would prevent my child's/youth's participation in any of the activities listed above.

Allergies/Other health considerations:

Insurance Company: _____

Policy/Group #: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Notary Stamp/Seal

Date

Signature

Appendix K: Accident/Incident Report Form

Please print all information.

General Information

Date of Incident:

Time of Incident:

Name of child/youth involved:

Address of child/youth:

Location of incident:

Parent or Guardian:

Witnesses

Name of person(s) who witnessed the accident:

Name:

Phone:

Name:

Phone:

Name:

Phone:

Name:

Phone:

Description of Incident: