

Safe Sanctuaries
Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church
For Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults
Waterloo First United Methodist Church
Waterloo, IA

Waterloo First United Methodist Church is committed to the wellbeing of every person entrusted to its care.

Scope

Waterloo First United Methodist Church affirms that all children, youth and vulnerable adults (see definition below) have the right to safe sanctuary. Therefore, Waterloo First United Methodist Church is determined to provide an environment in which these persons are safe from neglect or abuse. The scope of this policy and its provisions shall apply to all staff and volunteers, clergy or lay, who have direct or indirect contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults in church sponsored events and activities. The Administrative Team, in consultation with the Safe Sanctuaries Committee, shall be responsible for reviewing and revising this policy as needed. Each ministry within the church involving children, youth or vulnerable adults shall adopt procedures to implement this policy.

Definitions

1. **Participants** are children and youth under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by the church.
2. **Vulnerable Adults** are persons over 18 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities that make them more susceptible to physical, sexual, emotional or ritual abuse or neglect.
3. **Physical Abuse** is any deliberate act that inflicts bodily harm to a person, including, but not limited to, physically striking, hitting or spanking.
4. **Sexual Abuse** is any sexual of the following acts performed by any Staff, Volunteer, or Helper:
 - a. Any sex act or sexual contact done by force or against the will of another or with anyone who cannot give their consent because of their minority or mental or physical disability. This would include any sex act or sexual contact with a Participant including fondling, kissing or unwelcome physical contact, touching, and tickling in an inappropriate or sexual manner.
 - b. The exposure of one's genitals, public area, or private areas to a Participant for the purpose of arousing or satisfying the sexual desire of either person.
 - c. The disrobing or partial disrobing of a Participant for purposes of arousing or satisfying the sexual desire of either person.
 - d. Any sexually explicit language or gestures directed towards a Participant.
 - e. Any sexually explicit images displayed toward or in the presence of a Participant.
 - f. The performance of any sex act in the present of a Participant.
 - g. The solicitation of any sex act or sexual contact from or with a Participant.
5. **Neglect** is failure to provide nutrition, medical attention, affection, education or any other care necessary for the wellbeing of a Participant.
6. **Emotional Abuse** is spoken and/or unspoken emotional cruelty or the threat of violence, sexual contact or offensive contact towards another, including inappropriate or intimidating actions or body language.
7. **Ritual Abuse** is physical, sexual or psychological violence inflicted intentionally and in a stylized way, by someone (or multiple people) with responsibility for the victim's welfare.
8. **Staff** includes any person employed by the church or programs using the church facilities who is responsible for the care/supervision of a Participant at an event.

9. **Volunteer** is any non-clergy, lay worker who has the care/supervision of a Participant at an event.
10. **Helper** is anyone who aids in ministry and is under the age of 18.

Application and Screening Procedures

Careful **screening** is one way to prevent the abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults. Careful screening helps the church in obtaining the most reliable, committed, and experienced staff and volunteers for every program to protect Participants and the church. It is the responsibility of the Waterloo First United Methodist Church to strive to give all Participants safe sanctuary by utilizing the following screening process.

1. Applicant/Volunteer completes an application form, including references and a signed statement the Applicant/Volunteer has read the guidelines.
2. Applicant/Volunteer signs a Waiver and Consent form permitting the church to conduct reference checks, talk with representatives of a former church and conduct criminal background checks.
3. Applicant/Volunteer signs an acceptance of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and agrees to abide by its terms.
4. If Applicant/Volunteer is not already known by the supervising person or recommended by someone whose judgment is trusted by the supervising person, an in-person interview is conducted.
5. Adults or Youth who have been identified as having committed abuse or neglect (see definitions 3-7) or having a criminal record involving a violent crime to another person will not knowingly be employed by the church or accepted as a volunteer with programs or activities for Participants.
6. References may be checked and documented.
7. The following background records may be checked and documented: criminal records, sex offender registry, child abuse registry and DOT, if applicable.
8. Helpers must submit a signed Parental Permission form.
9. Applicant/Volunteer is cleared for contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults by the supervising committee (Staff Parish Relations Committee) or the supervising staff member, Christian Educator or equivalent.
10. Applicant/Volunteer may be asked to resubmit the Application and related materials after 1 year.
11. All forms and referenced reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on the church premise. Detailed notes on a designated form shall be for all reference checks, which shall also be included in the personnel file. All applications and related forms must be completed. The Senior Pastor and the Christian Educator or equivalent will be the only persons with access to these files.
12. Non-church programs shall maintain their own personnel files. The Church reserves the right to obtain an explanation of the non-church's record-keeping process and, upon written request of the Lead Pastor, to be given copies of documents applicable to programs conducted at the Church.
13. The staff person in charge of each ministry is responsible for reviewing this policy with each applicant during an interview prior to service.