

ADULT AND YOUTH/CHILDREN SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Midwest Mission Distribution Center seeks to assure the physical and sexual safety, emotional well being and spiritual health of children, youth and adults. Scripture and our United Methodist tradition inform us in our belief that all of human life is of sacred worth, perhaps children most of all. Hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:5-6: “Whoever welcomes (a) child, welcomes me. If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone was fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” With the Book of Discipline, we affirm that our youth and our children are full human beings in their own right. But, because they are vulnerable, they are our sacred trust to whom we have special responsibility (Paragraph 162.III.C). The church is particularly accountable to provide a safe environment for youth/children (Paragraph 161.III.H). “Children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse” of any kind (Paragraph 162.III.C). Therefore, as a covenanted Christian community of faith, it is the purpose of Midwest Mission Distribution Center to conduct all activities and events relating to children/youth in ways that promote the safety and spiritual growth of all of our youth/children, as well as all of the workers with youth/children who also participate in these events.

SCOPE

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all paid staff and unpaid volunteers, whether lay or clergy, who have any contact with adults or youth/children who participate in any Midwest Mission Distribution Center activities or events.

PURPOSE

Our purpose for establishing this Adult and Youth/Children Safe Sanctuary Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and adults.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct all business and activities at Midwest Mission Distribution Center in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our staff and volunteers. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all activities and events; we will educate all of our staff and volunteers regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

ADULT AND YOUTH/CHILDREN ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

GENERAL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

1. Team leaders and their adult chaperones shall be responsible for the supervision of adults and youth/children on their teams while on the Midwest Mission Distribution Center campus or at off-site work or recreation events.
2. A liability release and medical permission form are required by all volunteers at Midwest Mission Distribution Center. These forms will be turned in to the Warehouse Clerical Assistant prior to the start of any work or activities. In the case of an accident that requires medical attention, the team leader will be notified while ensuring the volunteer receives the proper care.
3. There shall be a first aid kit readily available on the premises and on all off-campus work sites.
4. Team leaders and adult chaperones are responsible for any medicine including supplements that must be administered to a youth/child while at Midwest Mission Distribution Center.
5. All youth/children will consistently remain in groups of four or more people (youth, children and/or adults) unless they are with a family member. Adults will be required to work with at least one other adult.

DRIVING REGULATIONS

1. Only those who are 25 or older may drive a Midwest Mission Distribution Center vehicle. If there are passengers involved, the driver shall be at least 25.
2. Drivers shall possess a valid driver's license, appropriate insurance and the driver's record shall conform to any standards required by the Midwest Mission Distribution Center's insurance company. Drivers shall abide by Illinois state law.

SLEEPING QUARTERS

1. Males and females may not sleep in the same room (unless married).
2. There shall be at least one adult of the same gender in the sleeping quarters but not necessarily the same room when youth/children are present.
3. Two adults are required for each gender if less than three youth/children are present.
4. A minimum of eight consecutive hours of sleep shall be scheduled per night. These hours begin with lights out at 11:00 p.m. and end at 7:00 AM, or one half hour prior to breakfast.

DESIGNATED SAFETY OFFICER

1. Midwest Mission Distribution Center shall have at least one Designated Safety Officer (DSO) whose job it is to see that background clearances are made for all long term volunteers. Midwest Mission Distribution Center is responsible for checking references and backgrounds checks for all paid staff. A DSO will ensure that background checks and other confidential documentation are kept in a safe, locked space. They are also assigned the responsibility of developing, overseeing and reviewing the training of all staff and long-term volunteers. This training may include the following subject areas:
 - ⌚ Appropriate boundary guidelines
 - ⌚ Examples of Vulnerable Adult or Youth/Child Abuse
 - ⌚ Reporting procedures
 - ⌚ What to do when you suspect or discover Vulnerable Adult or Youth/Child abuse
 - ⌚ Media reporting policies
2. All DSOs will be trained accordingly and report to the Executive Director.
3. A DSO will be responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of an abuse incident on the Incident Report Form. This report shall be forwarded immediately to the Executive Director. If the abuse incident involves the DSO or Executive Director the report shall be made to the Chair of the Personnel Committee of the Midwest Mission Distribution Center Board of Directors.
4. All reports of abuse or suspected abuse shall be reported to a DSO. All DSOs will review any reports or suspected abuse and ensure that appropriate procedures are followed.
5. If a person reports they have been abused in another setting, the DSO will consult with the Executive Director and team leader and make a determination of who should be informed; which may include DCFS, law enforcement, etc. In the case of a minor if the parents are not the subject of the abuse, they need to be informed as well.
6. In the event of an incident/investigation, all DSOs will ensure appropriate follow through.
7. All DSOs have the obligation to inform the Executive Director of all persons whose behavior they deem to be inappropriate for working with vulnerable adults and youth/children. A DSO shall maintain a list of these people in conjunction with the County Sheriff. The purpose of this list is to screen those who are working with vulnerable adults and youth/children. Midwest Mission Distribution Center is not under any obligation to report the reason for placement of the list with anyone other than the accused.

POLICY FOR SCREENING PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

1. All paid staff will have a criminal history check prior to employment and updated biannually.
2. All long-term volunteers will provide a current (less than two years old) state criminal history check to the DSO prior to their arrival at Midwest Mission Distribution Center.
3. Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a person from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervising of any activities or programs with minors or vulnerable adults:
Any conviction for:
Criminal homicide
Aggravated assault
Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances
Sexual abuse
Sexual assault (rape)
Aggravated sexual assault
Injury to a child
Incest
Indecency with a child
Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child
Possession or promotion of child pornography
The sale, distribution or display of harmful material to a minor
Employment harmful to children
Kidnapping or unlawful restraint
Public lewdness or indecent exposure
Enticing a child
Embezzlement

If other convictions are found (i.e. DWI) either during voluntary disclosure or security background check, the period of time lapsed from conviction to present (for example, 10 years ago), type of pattern of criminal conduct (for example, no other conviction since that time) will be reviewed. This decision will be made by no fewer than two persons, to include the Executive Director in consultation with the Chair of the Midwest Mission Distribution Center Board of Directors.

CODE OF BEHAVIOR

All paid staff and long term volunteers shall be required to attend an annual orientation and training session that will address the code of behavior, safety guidelines and general policy.

RULES OF GENERAL SUPERVISION FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH VULNERABLE ADULTS AND YOUTH/CHILDREN

1. The behavior of adults working with vulnerable adults and youth/children must reflect the highest standards of Christian maturity; foster trust at all times, and be above reproach. Adults engaged in activities or events with vulnerable adults or youth/children present should never engage in sexually suggestive behavior or inappropriate touching.
2. Any sexual or sexually suggestive behavior by an adult toward any fellow worker or event participant at an event where imbalance of power exists between the acting adult and the other person constitutes an abuse of power. Consent is not a defense to an abuse of power.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance, physical or verbal demand, or sexually suggestive behavior which is perceived as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Prohibited behavior includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual or coercive overtones, including:

- a. Sexually suggestive or coercive communication of any kind such as obscene letters, notes or invitations, comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
 - b. Any bullying or intimidation act whether it is physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, sexually suggestive gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines; or verbal threats, name-calling, or any unwanted gesture.
3. The following guidelines for touching are to be carefully followed by anyone working with vulnerable adults and youth/children:
 - a. Touching should always be initiated by the vulnerable adult or youth/child. The adult should respond to the child's needs for comfort and encouragement and not base touching on their own emotional needs. Appropriate touching by an adult involves holding hands as part of a group activity; touching only the head or shoulders, and/or a side-on hug of the shoulders.
 - b. Touching between an adult and a vulnerable adult or youth/child shall only occur in the presence of other adults.
 - c. A vulnerable adult or youth/child's preference not to be touched should be respected by adults and others. This includes youth to youth and child to child.

4. Anytime an adult thinks that their own or another adult's behavior towards a vulnerable adult or youth/child, either touching or verbal, may have been perceived as inappropriate, that adult shall report the behavior to the leader in charge or the DSO.
5. All adults shall avoid being alone, one-on-one, with vulnerable adults or youth/children unless parental permission has been given in writing previously. Interaction with vulnerable adults or youth/children shall be conducted within the sight/supervision of at least one other adult. In cases where it is impossible to avoid direct, one-on-one interactions, the following guidelines shall be observed:
 - a. If an adult or leader is alone with vulnerable adults or youth/children, two or more vulnerable adults or youth/children shall be present with the adult or leader.
 - b. If interactions are being conducted in a room and there is only one adult available, there shall be a roamer on premises and the room door shall remain open.
 - c. When private consultation is needed between a vulnerable adult or youth/child and an adult, another adult shall be informed of the activity and of the location in which the activity is taking place. The monitoring adult shall strive to ensure that the consultation takes place in a public space within sight of others but not necessarily within hearing range.
6. Adults shall respect the privacy of vulnerable adults or youth/children when changing clothing or showering to the extent safety allows. Adults will not be nude in front of vulnerable adults or youth/children.
7. Vulnerable adults or youth/children shall be supervised at all times by at least one adult who is at least five years older than the oldest youth/child who is attending the event as a participant.
8. When only two adults are required for supervision, the second adult shall not be related, i.e., a spouse, parent, sibling or child to the first adult.
9. There shall be one adult chaperone for every four middle/junior high youth (11 – 14 years old) and one adult for every five high school youth (15 – 17 years old).
10. At least 50% of adult chaperones at an activity or event where middle/junior high youth are present shall be at least 21 years old or older.
11. There will be absolutely no drinking of alcohol or use of illegal drugs at or during any activity or event. Any drinking of alcohol or use of illicit or illegal drugs will lead to immediate suspension and/or the removal from MMDC property.
12. Possession of firearms is forbidden.

RESPONSES TO BEHAVIORS AT AN ACTIVITY OR EVENT

RESPONDING TO BEHAVIORS THAT HINDER OUR MISSION

In addition to the behaviors that are described above, there are other behaviors that are deemed inappropriate for working with vulnerable adults, youth/children and/or hinder the mission and purpose of Midwest Mission Distribution Center.

For the first offense:

1. The Executive Director or a DSO shall encourage the person raising the concern to talk directly with the person whose behavior is considered detrimental.
2. If the person raising the concern is unwilling or unable to talk directly on their own with the person in question or if the initial conversation is unproductive, then the Executive Director or a DSO shall meet with the two individuals to seek resolution (separately or together).
3. If a mutually agreed-upon resolution is not possible, then the Executive Director will prescribe a resolution. The offense and resolution is to be documented and provided to the DSO via an Incident Report.
4. Anonymous complaints or evaluations shall be considered unverifiable and, therefore, will have no foundation for being officially addressed.

For repeat offenses:

1. Any persons whose repetitive negative behavior that hinders the mission and goals of the ministry may face review of their participation in activities or events at Midwest Mission Distribution Center.
2. Offenses and resolutions are to be documented and provided to the DSO via an Incident Report and archived.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS INVOLVING PHYSICAL ACCIDENTS

Incidences that do not require certified medical intervention:

1. Qualified adult renders minor first aid.
2. Notification to parent or guardian as deemed appropriate and documented in the incident log.

Incidences that require certified medical intervention:

1. The person who witnesses the accident shall share this information with a qualified adult and/or staff person.
2. Certified first aid person renders first aid.

3. The Team Leader or a staff member completes an incident report.
4. Notification is sent to parent/guardian.
5. Incident Report is forwarded to the DSO for review of safety concerns and appropriate follow-up and possibly investigation.
6. DSO will inform the Executive Director of incident as needed. The Executive Director will determine the need to contact the insurance company.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

1. All reports of abuse shall be treated with utmost seriousness and confidentiality. The highest priority shall be placed on securing the safety of the victim. IN NO CASE shall the accused be confronted until the safety of the victim is secured. In the case of a youth/child, the parent/guardian shall be notified when it is clear it is safe to do so.
2. The person who receives the report of abuse shall immediately share this information with the DSO unless the person suspected of abuse is the DSO; then the report shall be made to the Executive Director and authorities. The DSO is responsible for documenting and completely filling out the appropriate abuse/incident report form and for reporting the incident to the Executive Director and authorities.
3. Any individual accused of abuse shall be immediately relieved of any duties related to Midwest Mission Distribution Center and shall be isolated from further contact with other volunteers, guests, and others who may be negatively impacted by the individual's presence until the review process is completed. The accused may not return to their duties until the review process is completed. This applies whether or not the alleged act of abuse occurred on Midwest Mission Distribution Center property.
 - a. The DSO will review the incident to determine whether additional action is required.
 - b. The appropriate parties (MMDC, civil authorities, insurance carriers, etc.) shall be notified.
 - c. All information will be held in strict confidence.
4. If the incident becomes a civil matter, the DSO will monitor the investigation until a final outcome is reached. All investigating will be the responsibility of the civil authorities.
5. If there is no civil investigation or once the investigation by civil authorities is completed, the DSO shall review the incident to determine whether any further actions are needed.
6. The DSO will appraise the accused of the process. Only the accusation will be discussed and a mutually agreed-upon witness shall be present (the Executive Director, a local pastor, etc.) in this meeting.

7. After the review process is completed, the DSO will report the findings to the accused. If it is determined that the person has committed an act of abuse:
 - a. Any staff member will have their employment immediately terminated.
 - b. Any volunteer will be asked to leave Midwest Mission Distribution Center immediately and will not be allowed back on the property in the future.
8. All documentation relating to any incident is held in confidentiality and in the DSO's locked files.
9. A list will be maintained in conjunction with the County Sheriff forms at Midwest Mission Distribution Center of those individuals who may not participate in activities involving vulnerable adults and youth/children. This list is held for screening purposes and Midwest Mission Distribution Center is under no obligation to explain the reasoning for placement on this list with anyone other than the accused.
10. Failure to divulge information regarding prior violations of these guidelines and policies will result in the permanent removal of this individual from Midwest Mission Distribution Center property.
11. Midwest Mission Distribution Center's obligations to respond to allegations of abuse go beyond the State's requirements. As Christians, we must also be prepared to respond to others:
 - a. Faithful response to the victim. Take the allegation very seriously, respect the victim's privacy, provide sympathetic concern, do not blame or imply the victim was responsible for the abuse.
 - b. Faithful response to Midwest Mission Distribution Center. MMDC Board of Directors will be notified as soon as allegations are received. They will be kept abreast of actions and the insurance agent will be informed.
 - c. Faithful response to the media: ONE PERSON must be designated as spokesperson in advance and a well thought-out response ready. No other persons shall be permitted to speak to the media about the incident.
 - d. Faithful response to the accused abuser: acknowledge that the person is of sacred worth.

RESPONDING TO ILLEGAL BEHAVIOR

Any volunteer or staff person accused of felonious activity shall be immediately relieved of duties and shall be isolated from further contact with volunteers, guests and others that may be negatively impacted. If the felonious activity was not committed during work hours or on Midwest Mission Distribution Center property, the Executive Director will have discretion as to whether immediate or remedial action is required following the same procedures as listed above in section C. 1-11. The individual accused of felonious activity may not return to duties until a review has been completed by the Executive Director.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

1. A well-thought-out plan of response should be kept on file with the Executive Director and the DSO.
2. The MMDC Board of Directors shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse.
3. The designated spokesperson should be someone who can speak calmly and thoughtfully in the glare of publicity; the person should answer questions honestly without adding extra or unnecessary information. They should be given permission to answer questions by saying, "I (or we) don't know at this time."

NO ONE but the spokesperson is authorized to speak on behalf of Midwest Mission Distribution Center. The spokesperson must be prepared to state Midwest Mission Distribution Center's policy for the prevention of child abuse, the concern for the safety of the victim and all children, and the procedures Midwest Mission Distribution Center has followed to reduce the risk of abuse. The spokesperson will have a prepared statement or written notes and not speak extemporaneously. The spokesperson will never make any statement indicating that Midwest Mission Distribution Center does not take the allegation seriously or in any way blames the victim.