

# Chapin United Methodist Church

## Administrative Policy

401

Revision 2

## Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Originated By: Safe Sanctuaries Committee Date: May 8, 2008

Approved by Administrative Board Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman of Administrative Board Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**401.1** **Purpose:** To prevent child abuse at Chapin United Methodist Church.

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me.” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6) Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principals of the United Methodist Church state that “...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.” (para.162C)

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (from the *Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*. P. 384-386)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Chapin United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of abuse and to ensure the safety of all children, youth, and vulnerable persons in our congregation.

Chapin United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our

procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with South Carolina state law.

## 401.2

**Policy:** All volunteers to work with children/youth/vulnerable persons will undergo a thorough screening process (including application materials and background check) prior to being utilized to work with the children.  
(Effective October 31, 2004)

### 401.2.1 Age

In recruiting and hiring volunteers and paid staff to work with children and youth in any position of authority, they must be at least 15 years of age and at least 5 years older than the age of the persons they are working to serve. No primary worker with children or youth shall be under the age of 21. (Revised 2/04)

### 401.2.2 Six Month Rule

All volunteers to work with children and/or youth must be actively involved at CUMC for at least six (6) months. In the case of paid staff workers, the applicant may have been a member of another church at least six (6) months prior to employment. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for youth work. In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived on basis of probation. If the six-month rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the applicant at their own discretion.

### 401.2.3 Application

All volunteers to work with children and/or youth will complete a *Volunteer Application Form*. The application form will be submitted to either the Children's Ministry Coordinator or the Youth Minister for review and acceptance. Volunteers who work with children/youth will be required to sign a *Volunteer Covenant Statement*. Covenant statements will be renewed annually.

### 401.2.4 Reference Checks

References provided by the applicant will be checked by either the Children's Ministry Coordinator or the Youth Minister as appropriate. The *Reference Check Form* will be used for documenting the results of these checks.

### 401.2.5 Background Checks

Volunteers to work with children/youth will be required to submit to a criminal background check through the **IntelliCorp Records, Inc.**

**401.2.5.1** Applicants will complete a *Consent to Criminal Background Check Form* prior to CUMC requesting the report from **IntelliCorp Records, Inc.** These reports are requested and received through use of the website: [www.intellicorp.net](http://www.intellicorp.net). CUMC has an account set up with IntelliCorp for billing of the charges for these reports.

**401.2.5.2** All background reports will be received and reviewed by only the Senior Minister and/or his delegate. Acceptance or denial of the volunteer applicant based on the information contained in these reports will be made by the Senior Minister and/or his delegate. These background checks will be conducted on all volunteers every five years.

#### **401.2.6 Prior Convictions**

Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

#### **401.2.7 Child Abuse Survivor Applicants**

Adults survivors of childhood physical or sexual abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. A person's experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their suitability as youth and children's ministry workers. Applicants who are survivors of abuse should discuss this in confidence with a pastor.

When evaluating candidates, the following factors will be considered is an applicant is a survivor of child abuse:

- 1) Whether the applicant has previously committed an act of child abuse or molestation (anyone who has maltreated children may not serve in children's or youth ministry)
- 2) The extent of professional counseling the applicant has received
- 3) The opinion of references, especially professional counselors who have served the applicant
- 4) The opinion of leader in other churches or youth organizations in which the applicant has been involved
- 5) How closely the church is able to supervise and monitor the position for which the applicant is applying.

#### **401.2.8 Privacy**

All documents pertaining to the volunteer applicant will be kept confidential and only accessible by the Senior Minister, Coordinator of Children's Ministries, and the Youth Minister. (The exception to this is the background check reports which are filed separately and available only to the Senior Minister and/or his delegate)

**401.2.9** A *Record of Training Form* will be kept on each volunteer that will list the date of training, type of training received, and instructor.

### **401.3**

**Policy:** Basic procedures are set forth to guide the day-to-day children's and youth ministries at CUMC. These procedures will demonstrate to members and visitors alike CUMC's commitment to being a safe and holy place where children and youth can grow in the faith.

#### **401.3.1 Two Adult Rule**

CUMC abides by the "Two Adult Rule" which requires that no fewer than two non-related persons in authority (one must be at least age 21, the other at least age 15) be present during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children/youth. (*Effective October 31, 2004*)

#### **401.3.2 Sign-in/out Procedure**

All children 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Level will be required to be signed in and out of activities by their parent or guardian or to another individual only with advance and written permission.

### **401.3.3 Open Door Policy**

Classrooms or childcare rooms may be visited at anytime by parents, church staff, or volunteers.

### **401.3.4 Doors and Windows**

Every room specifically designated for activities involving children and youth shall have a door with a window in it or have a half-door. Counseling rooms shall have windows on the doors. **Windows will be kept free from adornment and kept locked at all times.**

### **401.3.5 Outside Access**

**There must be access to a parent/guardians' phone, cell phone or pager when groups are at or away from the church facility. The church office or authorized church representative will be given this number prior to the group's departure from church property.** Parents will always be given advance notice and full information regarding the events in which their children will be participating. For activities held away from the CUMC campus, a *Permission for Participation* form will be required.

### **401.3.6 Individual Counseling**

**One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. If at all possible, another adult is to have knowledge of staff member's whereabouts and with whom they are meeting. Children and youth receiving individual counseling should be told they are free to discuss any aspects of the counseling process with a parent or other adult, especially if they are uncomfortable about anything that occurs in counseling. All incidents of suspected abuse and neglect revealed during the session will be reported in accordance with the "Reporting of Suspected Abuse" section of this policy.**

### **401.3.7 Outings Away From Church Property**

**All children and youth participating in out-of-town and overnight outings must have written consent and a notarized medical release form. (Medical release and consent forms may be completed for a one-year period and must be reviewed annually). In no circumstance is one adult (other than a parent) to take a child or children on an overnight outing alone. On youth overnight outings, there will be a 1:7 staff:youth supervision ratio observed. Female staff will supervise female youth in their sleeping quarters and male staff will supervise male youth. Married couples will not stay together but will observe the female/female and male/male sleeping arrangements. With the exception of a parent/child combination, a staff and youth will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag.**

### **401.3.8 Discipline Procedures**

**Appropriate discipline procedures which focus on the behavior and not the child will always be used.**

**401.3.8.1** If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child the specific behavior that is unacceptable and state what the acceptable behavior is. For example, "We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building". (Use of verbal direction)

**401.3.8.2** If this measure is not effective the child will be guided to another activity. (Redirection of activity)

**401.3.8.3** If the inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at the table to work alone away from the other students.

**401.3.8.4** If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child's parent will be located to sign the child out of the activity.

**401.3.8.5** Physical punishment or verbal abuse will never be used at any time.

**401.3.9 CPR/First Aid**

Annual First Aid/CPR training is encouraged and will be provided for all church workers with children and youth. The Nursery Coordinator, Children's Ministry Coordinator, and Youth Minister will be required to complete First Aid/CPR training and remain certified. **Each church sponsored event held on and off campus shall have at least one adult present who is certified in first aid and CPR from a nationally recognized body.** First Aid kits will be available in each children and youth Sunday School classroom.

**401.3.10 Continuing Education**

Family education events on child abuse will be held at least annually at CUMC. The **Coordinator of Children's Ministries** will be responsible for planning these events.

**401.3.11 Records**

A record will be kept listing the names of volunteers who work with children, area volunteering in, and the date. This information will be kept on the *Volunteer Work Record* form and will be maintained by the Nursery Coordinator, Sunday School Superintendent, or Children's Ministry Coordinator as appropriate depending on the activity.

**401.3.12 Training**

All volunteers to work with children/youth will attend an orientation training session prior to beginning to serve as volunteers with children/youth. (*Effective October 31, 2004*)

**401.3.12.1** Training sessions will be held at least quarterly and be led by a member of the Child Protection Taskforce.

**401.3.12.2** At the training session all volunteers will be given a copy of the Safe Sanctuary policy.

**401.3.12.3** Every volunteer will receive an informational packet including definitions of abuse, signs of abuse, and appropriate behaviors for adults working with children/youth.

**401.3.12.4** All pertinent documents required including application, consent to criminal background check, and covenant statement will be completed at the training session and submitted to the training leader. (If the documents have not been previously turned in to the Children's Coordinator or Youth Minister.)

**401.4 Policy:** A plan for responding to known incidents of child abuse and allegations of child abuse is in place to properly respond to such a situation. **If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the Senior Pastor, Coordinator of Children's Ministries, or Youth Minister. To report abuse is to**

witness to the world of the love and justice of God. Reporting is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. If abuse occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. According to South Carolina state law (Section 20-7-560), a person who knowingly fails to report such abuse is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction must be fined not more than five hundred dollars or imprisoned not more than six months, or both.

**401.4.1** Notification of the parents of the victim/alleged victim and ensuring the victim's safety until the parents arrive will be the first step. The safety of the victim shall be CUMC's primary concern.

**401.4.2** The accused abuser shall not be confronted with anger or hostility. He or she will be treated with dignity but immediately removed from further involvement with the children and youth until the individual is cleared of wrongdoing.

**401.4.3** The Senior Minister will notify the proper law enforcement or child protective services agency immediately.

**401.4.4** The Senior Minister will notify the district superintendent and annual conference authorities.

**401.4.5** The Senior Minister will notify the church's insurance agent.

**401.4.6** The Senior Minister will notify the church's attorney.

**401.4.7** The Senior Minister will keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response to the allegation.

**401.4.8** The Senior Minister will call upon a designated conference spokesperson to make any necessary statement or responses to the news media.

**401.4.9** The Senior Minister will prepare a brief statement that can be made to the congregation without giving any unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.

**401.4.10** Church officials will be prepared to cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protection services.

**401.4.11** Any allegation will be taken seriously and needed pastoral resources will be extended.