



# PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

## *Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines - Revised 5/27/13*

### SCOPE

These guidelines and provisions shall apply to all paid and unpaid staff, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with youth/children who participate in any Conference or District activities or events. Safe behavior described in this document is not dependent on the medium whether online, in person, or in social media etc. Regardless of the context, you should use the same practices to ensure everyone's safety. For example: in person we use a "rule of 3" as a way to keep everyone safe. This can be extended to online behavior as well. A third person should be included in the conversation and copied or be a part of the dialogue.

For the purposes of this document, young children refer to those preschool and under, children are those in kindergarten through grade 5, junior high are grades 6 through 8, and senior high are grades 9 through 12. During the summer, the grade level of the child is defined as the grade that they will be entering in the fall.

## I. Risk Management

### A. General Safety Requirements

1. Guardians shall be given advance notice and full information regarding Conference events and meetings to which their children are invited and will include:
  - Medical permission forms which shall accompany the adult coordinator of the event and have a waiver of liability in favor of the Annual Conference.
  - All leaders, participants, and guardians/guardians of participants at a Conference event shall sign a Conference event covenant
2. All water sports require the presence of a lifeguard and shall conform to American Camping Association guidelines. All water sports also require the presence of a lookout to assist the lifeguard as someone who watches to make sure that there are no signs of distress or inappropriate behavior in the water.
3. The following activities require the presence of an experienced and/or certified guide or instructor: river rafting, rock climbing and, challenge course. If the activity is contracted to an outside party, then the contractor shall also be properly insured with a certificate of liability insurance providing a minimum of one million dollars liability coverage limits.

### FIRST AID & HEALTH

There shall be a first aid kit accompanying a qualified adult at all Conference events.

Every Conference event shall have, at the least, first aid staff certified in first aid and CPR who can:

- administer minor first aid
- dispense medicine as needed, and who are capable of determining whether additional medical attention is necessary.
- Keep records of emergent medicine dispensed and treatments administered
- be responsible for reporting all incidences to event and Conference leadership using the appropriate Accident Report Form.

For all events that primarily target minors, all medicine including supplements will be given to the first aid staff or responsible adult at the beginning of the event and it will then be distributed as appropriate by first aid staff.

4. Conference events shall be designed in such a way that participants consistently remain in groups of three or more.

### **Immediate Response to Incidents Involving Physical Accidents:**

1. Witnesses to the accident shall share this information with the event's first aid staff.
2. The first aid staff and/or the event coordinator is responsible for:
  - Carefully documenting the incident using the Accident Report Form
  - Notifying guardians of those involved if needed
  - Forwarding the Report Form to the appropriate Conference staff person and the insurance liaison in the Treasure's office.

### **B. Driving Regulations**

1. Drivers during an event or on event business shall:
  - Be 18 or older and if there are passengers involved shall be at least 23.
  - Possess a valid driver's license and appropriate insurance.
  - Drive a legally licensed and insured vehicle.
2. If an adult other than a guardian provides rides to or from a Conference event or meeting for youth/children, the guardian must provide written permission to the chaperone who is driving.
3. Youth are discouraged from driving themselves to Conference events. If a youth needs to drive to a Conference event:
  - Keys for the car will be held by the event coordinator during the event.
  - Shall carry written permission to drive to the event from his/her guardians.
  - There shall be no "in and out" privileges for youth/children.

### **C. Overnight Events**

1. Boys and girls may not sleep in the same room unless there is no other option as a result of shortages of chaperones or because of the nature of the space. If they are in the same room and there is a divider available, it shall be used to separate the genders. If there is no divider available, individuals, at a minimum must be three feet apart. *See sidebar.*
2. There shall be at least one adult of the same gender in the sleeping quarters, two adults for each gender if less than three youth/children are present.

#### **AFFIRMATION**

The Pacific Northwest Conference sees all persons as individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, race, ability, marital status, or sexual orientation are entitled to be protected against intimidation or abuse.

We respect the rights of all participants to self-identify their place in gender alignment and roles. Under certain circumstances, reasonable efforts to create appropriate personal, overnight accommodations should be made for the safety and comfort of all participants.

3. At overnight events, a minimum of eight consecutive hours of sleep shall be scheduled per night. These hours begin with lights out and quiet time and end at least one half hour prior to breakfast.

#### **D. Safety Advocates**

1. Every Conference event shall be staffed with a Safety Advocate who is not the event coordinator. The Safety Advocate is responsible for promoting and maintaining Conference event policies/guidelines. The Conference staff person(s) assigned to oversee youth ministry and camping shall ensure that a task force is assigned the responsibility of developing, overseeing and reviewing the training of Safety Advocates. This training may include the following subject areas:
  - Appropriate boundary guidelines
  - Types of abuse, the relationship between imbalances of power and abuse
  - Causes and indicators of abuse
  - Reporting, mandatory and otherwise
  - What to do when you suspect or discover child abuse
  - Understanding the victim and the abuser
  - Working with abuse victims
  - Conference youth event policies
  - Media reporting policies

This task force shall also develop, oversee and review more generalized training for use in the local church and among Conference and camping staff and volunteers.

2. This Safety Advocate is responsible for communicating and maintaining Conference guidelines relating to abuse at every Conference event involving youth/children, informing youth/children of these Conference policies, serving as the resource person on these issues, and assisting the participants of the event in understanding appropriate boundaries and appropriate guidelines concerning issues of touch, etc. Youth/children shall be encouraged to report to this person in cases of abuse but it shall be made clear that all staff members are capable of receiving reports of abuse. This person will be introduced to the event participants during the opening of the event and their role will be made clear.
3. The Safety Advocate is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of an abuse incident on the Abuse Incident Report Form. This report shall be forwarded immediately to the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping.
4. If a person reports that they have been abused in another setting, the Safety Advocate shall consult with the event coordinators or other oversight staff and they shall make a determination of who should be informed; which may include the local pastor, the District Superintendent, CPS, law enforcement, etc.

#### **E. Guidelines for Screening Paid and Volunteer Staff:**

1. All leaders shall pre-register at least 72 hours prior to the event. The registration shall include:
  - National Background Check consent form

- Pastoral reference (suggested for new volunteers)
  - Event covenant
  - Medical waiver/ history
2. Prior to the beginning of each event/meeting, the relevant Conference staff person shall:
    - Review of the above forms.
    - The pastoral reference is an informal inquiry into the maturity and appropriateness of the volunteer for the ministry they are applying with. All background checks shall be kept strictly confidential.
    - Check with Conference resources for prior reviews.
    - Ensure that the adult fits the appropriate age requirements.
    - Ensure that at least the minimum standards of supervision as outlined in the Code of Behavior (Section II) are followed.
  3. Approval for adults to serve as paid or volunteer staff is at the sole discretion of the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping. A criminal conviction for a sexual offense disqualifies an applicant from working with youth/children. Other automatic disqualifiers usually are convictions for incest, rape, assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, domestic violence to the other guardian and physical abuse.

## II. Code of Behavior

### A. Rules of general supervision for adults working with youth/children:

1. Adults engaged in Conference events or activities with youth/children present should never engage in sexually suggestive behavior or inappropriate touching.
2. Any sexual or sexually suggestive or aggressive behavior by an adult toward any fellow worker or event participant at a Conference event where an 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 any written, verbal, physical, or visual contact.

3. The following guidelines for touching are to be carefully followed by anyone working with youth/children:
  - Touching should always be initiated by the youth/child. The adult should respond to the child's need for comfort and encouragement and not base touching on their own emotional needs. Appropriate touching by an adult is limited to holding hands as part of a group activity; touching only the head or shoulders, and/or a side-on hug of the shoulders.
  - Touching between an adult and a youth/child shall only occur in the presence of other adults.

- A youth's or 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 youth/child, either touching or verbal, may have been perceived as inappropriate, that adult shall report the behavior to their Safety Advocate.
  5. All adults shall avoid being alone, one-on-one, with youth/children. Whenever possible, interaction with youth/children shall be conducted within the sight/supervision of at least one other adult. In cases where it is impossible to directly avoid one-on-one interactions, the following guidelines shall be observed:
    - If an adult or leader is alone with youth/children, two or more youth/children shall be present with the adult or leader.
    - If interactions are being conducted in a classroom and there is only one adult available, there shall be a roamer on premises and the classroom door shall remain open.
    - When private consultation is needed between a 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 youth/children when changing clothing or showering to the extent safety allows.
  7. Youth/children shall be supervised at all times by at least one adult who is at least four 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 to the first adult in any way.
  9. **Ratios:** The following ratios will be in place for age-level Conference events
    - Younger Children (preschool & under) 1 adult to four children
    - Children (Kindergarten - Grade 5) 1 adult to six children
    - Jr. High (Grade 6 - Grade 8) 1 adult to six youth
    - Sr. High (Grade 9 - Grade 12) 1 adult to eight youth
    - Ratios for eighth or ninth graders will be the ratio of the prevalent age group at the event.
  10. At least 50% of adults at an event where junior high are present shall be at least 21 or older.
  11. Those adults who participate in an event shall initiate no personal interaction with youth children via e-mail or otherwise, with the exception of simply informational communication, without informing the guardian.
  12. Anyone not registered for an event is required to check in and out with the event director.
  13. There will be absolutely no drinking of alcohol or use of illegal drugs at or during Conference events. Any drinking of alcohol or use of a unprescribed controlled substance will lead to immediate suspension and removal from the event.

14. Possession of firearms is forbidden.
15. All adults working with youth/children shall abide by all laws and regulations applicable to the location of the event.
16. Provisional Youth Worker – A provisional youth worker is a youth worker, either paid or volunteer, whose role is defined by a local church as central to youth ministry but whose age does not conform to the four year rule in Conference event guidelines. At the discretion of Conference staff person relating to the program area, this can be allowed. The following conditions shall apply:
  - The local church pastor is required to give consent and explanation of the need.
  - The provisional youth worker shall not be a part of the adult to youth ratios and shall not be defined as an adult chaperone when it comes to guidelines such as sleeping.
  - Their status and limited responsibility at the event should be clear to other adults and youth.
  - They should have Safe Sanctuaries training and a recent background check.
  - The Conference staff persons reserves the right to add other conditions as they deem necessary.

## **B. Rules of general supervision for 'Interactive' Youth & Young Adult Events**

There are occasions when it is important and desirable for youth and young adults to meet jointly and to have opportunities for interaction. In these instances the Youth and Children Event Guidelines remain the primary guidelines for the event and apply to all the ages participating in the event with the following amendments:

1. Whenever youth and young adults are together as participants at events, there shall always be more youth than young adults in situations of isolation from the larger group.
2. Young adults shall enter into the same covenant as youth participants. Any distinctions should be clearly and publicly stated.
3. The 23-year old driver limit set in the youth event policy section does not apply if all passengers are young adults.
4. In/out privileges for young adults are at the discretion of the event coordinator.
5. At overnight events youth and young adults may not sleep in the same quarters.
6. Adults may not serve jointly as chaperones to the event and participants at the event.
7. The standard ratios that apply to youth also apply to youth at interactive events. These ratios apply only to participating youth, not young adults. At least 25% of adults at a mixed event where both youth and young adults are present shall be at least 25 or older.
8. All young adults participants shall submit a background check prior to the event.

9. These events are specifically designated as “Interactive youth and young adult events.” When an event is designated as anything other than an interactive youth and young adult event, young adults are not permitted to participate.

### **III. Responses to Code Infractions at an Event**

#### **A. Responding to Behaviors that Hinder Our Mission:**

In addition to the behaviors that are described above, there are other behaviors that may hinder our mission. Examples of these incidents include a chaperone who continually undermines program objectives or an event planner who neglects staff training or health and safety concerns, etc. When serious concerns arise:

1. The event coordinator 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 with that person or if the initial conversation is unproductive, then the event coordinator shall meet with the two individuals to seek resolution.
3. If a mutually agreed-upon resolution is not possible, then the event coordinator shall have the authority to prescribe a resolution.
4. Anonymous complaints or evaluations shall be considered unverifiable, and therefore, will have no foundation for being officially addressed.
5. Persons whose behavior hinders the goals of the ministry may face review of their participation in leadership for that behavior.
6. If the person who is perceived to be hindering the mission is the event coordinator then the person who is raising the concern may report to the Conference staff person relating to that program or to the Safety Advocate if the former are not readily available.

#### **B. Responding to Allegations of Abuse:**

1. All reports of abuse shall be treated with utmost seriousness and confidentiality.
2. 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.
3. The person who receives the report of abuse shall immediately share this information with the Safety Advocate or with the event coordinator who shall then:
  - Carefully document all aspects of the incident using the Abuse Incident Report Form.
  - Forward the report immediately to the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping.

4. The person who first hears the allegation of abuse, in partnership with the Safety Advocate, is responsible for reporting to the Child Protective Services or to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
5. The Safety Advocate or event coordinator will notify the guardians when and if it is clear that it is safe to do so.
6. Any volunteer or hired staff person accused of abuse shall be immediately relieved of duties related to this or any Conference-sponsored event and shall be isolated from further contact with participants, 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 duties until Conference staff has completed a review. This applies whether or not the alleged act of abuse occurred during a Conference-sponsored event.

#### **D. Responding to Illegal Behavior**

Any volunteer or hired staff person accused of felonious activity shall be immediately relieved of duties related to this or any other Conference-sponsored event and shall be isolated from further contact with participants, guests and others who may be negatively impacted by their presence until a review process is completed. If the felonious activity was not committed during a Conference-sponsored event, then the Conference staff person relating to the program area shall have discretion as to whether immediate or remedial action is required. The accused may not return to duties until the Conference staff person has completed a review.

### **IV. Conference Responses to Code Infractions**

#### **A. Responding to accusations of abuse, illegal activity & behaviors which hinder our mission:**

1. The Conference staff person relating to the program area is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of the incident.
2. Whether or not the alleged act occurred during a Conference-related event, the Conference staff person shall jointly review the incident with the Conference insurance liaison to determine whether any additional actions are required. They shall also report the incident to appropriate parties (i.e. civil authorities, the Conference insurance company, the chancellor, etc.). All information concerning the incident shall be held in strict confidence by all parties involved.
3. If the incident is put under investigation by appropriate civil authorities, the investigation will be monitored by the Conference staff relating to the program until there is an outcome.
4. If there is no civil investigation or once the investigation by civil authorities is completed, the Conference staff person and Conference insurance liaison shall jointly investigate the incident to determine whether any further actions are needed.
5. The Conference staff person relating to the program area is responsible for contacting the accused and informing the accused of the nature of the process. The purpose of this meeting is not to interrogate the accused but to discuss the accusation. During meetings with the accused, one other mutually agreed-upon witness shall be present (e.g. a local pastor, district superintendent, the other coordinator, etc.).



6. After conducting a thorough investigation, the Conference staff person relating to the program area shall report the findings to the accused. If they determine that the person has committed an act of abuse, engaged in an illegal activity or a behavior which hindered the Conference's mission, the final goal of this process is to establish a future covenant with the offender that regulates their behavior at all levels of involvement with The United Methodist Church. This covenant shall include both an agreed-upon record of what offending actions were committed and agreed-upon solutions about what should be done in the future.
7. If no covenant is established, the accused shall remain suspended from working with youth/children at the Conference level until mediation is complete. The accused may pick one mediator and the coordinator another mediator. These two mediators will then pick a third mediator and these three people, combined with the accused and the coordinator will come to a decision. The mutually-agreed upon mediator will serve as the facilitator for this group.
8. The covenant that governs participation in Conference-related youth events shall clearly state that failure to abide by the provisions of the investigative process shall result in permanent suspension from working with youth/children at the Conference level.
9. All documentation relating to the incident will be confidentially filed in the Conference treasurer's office.
10. A list will be maintained in conjunction with the background checks at the Conference office of those who may not participate in Conference-related events involving youth/children. The purpose of this list is to screen those who are requesting to work with youth/children. The Conference is not under obligation to report the reason for placement on the list with anyone other than the accused.
11. If a person is under some form of suspension due to violation of any of these policies/guidelines and fails to report the same to a local church when initiating a desire to work with youth/children, that person shall be permanently suspended from working with youth/children at the Conference level.
12. The Bishop and Director of Connectional Ministries shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. All public communication shall be coordinated by the Bishop's Office or the Director of Connectional Ministries.

## **B. Responding to Incidents Involving Physical Accidents**

1. The Conference staff relating to the program area is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of the incident.
2. The appropriate Conference staff person shall make contacts as needed with the Conference insurance company, the chancellor, the director of the council and the other coordinator. This coordinator shall also determine whether there is need for an investigation or additional follow-up.