

Safe Sanctuaries

Minimum Standards

Minimum Standards established by the Upper New York Annual Conference for all ministries. They are mandatory. They are not inspirational, but set minimum standards to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation. Without exception, these standards apply to all local churches/charges, district and annual conference ministries, and those who serve within.

A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 and over who, due to age, illness, or a mental or physical condition, is less able to take care of himself/herself or less able to protect himself/herself against harm or exploitation; including but not limited to physical and sexual abuse, neglect by self or other, financial or material exploitation, emotional or psychological mistreatment. Vulnerable adults are also those adults who work with children and youth who can be in a position where accusations of abuse could mistakenly arise; or adults who have been abused either as a child or an adult.

Procedures for Conducting Ministry Programs and Events for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

1. Adult staff and volunteers and clergy shall observe the **"Two-Adult Rule"** at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth or vulnerable adults at a church/charge, district or conference sponsored event or activity. The two-adult rule requires that regardless of the size of the group, there shall always be two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms/ministry activities. No child, youth, or vulnerable adult shall be left unsupervised while attending a ministry program or event.
2. Adult staff and volunteers are those who are at least 18 years old and who are at least five years older than the oldest minor present, whom they are leading, ministering to or supervising. Youth (those ages 13-17) are invited to assist adult volunteers but are not to be considered an adult for the two-adult rule.
3. All adult staff and volunteers and clergy shall be observant for unusual behaviors and signs of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse and shall report them immediately to the appropriate supervisor.
4. All adult staff and volunteers and clergy working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall receive a copy of the applicable local church/charge, district or conference ministry or program Safe Sanctuaries Policy before starting their service and shall agree to covenant with the (local) United Methodist Church, District or Conference ministry or program to fully cooperate with these abuse prevention strategies.
5. **All ministry activities shall occur in open view. Each room or space where ministry events occur must be open to public view. This may require enclosed spaces such as classrooms having a viewing window, a glass panel in door, a half door configuration or an open door.**
6. Attendance records shall be kept for all ministry events/activities involving children and youth. These records shall include at a minimum, the date and names of all participants and shall be kept until Jesus returns (perpetuity).
7. Ministry activities involving transportation shall require a written permission slip/form and signed by a parent/guardian. Drivers of children, youth and vulnerable adults must be 21 years of age. The ministry supervisor shall be required to keep a copy of their current license and proof of insurance card on file with the appropriate ministry program (i.e., church/charge, district, conference ministry).
8. Facilities shall be free from conditions that pose a safety or health hazard to the participants.
9. Every clergy in any active status or relationship with the Conference whose appointment is set or approved by the Bishop, every person serving as a supply pastor (assigned by district superintendent) and retired clergy performing ministerial functions shall regularly review and be familiar with public sex offenders registries maintained by New York State law enforcement agencies. This is done by accessing: <http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/SomsSUBDirectory/search> index.isp
10. "Social media are tools whereby effective and fruitful ministry may grow and be nurtured. Although these tools can aid us and increase the scope of contact and connection as well as the breadth of people who may be touched by our ministry offerings, social media cannot be the source or foundation of ministry. Our foundation is Jesus Christ. Social media are creations of human ingenuity that provide for us one more way to express and proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called to use social media with care, consideration, intentionality, and a Christ-like spirit.

Any concerns, contact:

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or

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