

ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND WESLEY FOUNDATION SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

St. Paul's United Methodist Church and Wesley Foundation
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St. Paul's United Methodist Church and Wesley Foundation welcomes everyone and is committed to helping individuals and families grow in faith. St. Paul's recognizes that Christian service is a necessary and fulfilling part of each person's faith journey and offers many different ministry opportunities. Among these are opportunities to serve with the children and youth of St. Paul's. As much as possible, we want everyone who feels called to be able to serve in ministry with our children and youth.

We also recognize that the church is not immune from the painful reality of child abuse. We understand the devastating damage done to a child's growth when abused within a church setting. As a church, we must take intentional measures to protect our children.

This policy is designed to provide safety and openness: to provide protection for our children and youth while maintaining an atmosphere that welcomes all seekers. By providing many avenues of service with varying levels of supervisory responsibilities and screening requirements, we are striving to meet the spiritual needs of all congregational members. By developing and implementing safety procedures and precautions, we are trying to ensure that the spiritual growth and development of our children and youth is not disrupted by the preventable evil of child abuse. This policy will:

- Establish a procedure for reducing the risk of child abuse which is consistent with scripture, the Social principles of the United Methodist Church and civil law;
- Establish minimum guidelines for educating our members and staff about child abuse through training;
- Establish a procedure for reporting and responding to allegations of abuse
- Do everything reasonable to assure a caring, loving, open environment where everyone can worship, study, serve, and continue his/her spiritual journey.

This comprehensive plan presents procedures for Screening, Supervision, and Response.

These procedures are the minimum necessary precautions for protecting children. St. Paul's UMC, St. Paul's Christian Preschool and Childcare, and the Wesley Foundation will endeavor to monitor updates and recommendations by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, by the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church, by the State of Pennsylvania and may modify these procedures.

DEFINITIONS:

"Adult:" a person 18 years of age or older.

"Child:" any person under the age of 18 (it is important to note that this includes those persons who are normally designated as "Youth" at St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation and hereafter "child" references mean both child and youth).

"Child Abuse:" is defined under Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law, 23 Pa.C.S.A § 6303(b.1), as the act of intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

1. Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.

2. Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
 3. Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
 4. Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
 5. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
 6. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation.
 7. Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
 8. Engaging in any of the following recent acts:
 - i. Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
 - ii. Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
 - iii. Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
 - iv. Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
 - v. Interfering with the breathing of a child.
 - vi. Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 Pa.C.S. § 7508.2 (relating to operation of methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
 - vii. Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:
 - A. Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 97 Subch. H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), where the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 years of age when the crime was committed.
 - B. Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.
 - C. Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.12 (relating to definitions).
9. Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.

Section 6304(a) of the Child Protective Services Law provides that "No child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child's welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care."

Section 6304(b) also provides that, "If, upon investigation, the county agency determines that a child has not been provided needed medical or surgical care because of seriously held religious beliefs of the child's parents or relative within the third degree of consanguinity and with whom the child resides, which beliefs are consistent with those of a bona fide religion, the child shall not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused." In such cases, "the county agency shall closely monitor the child and the child's family and shall seek court-ordered medical intervention when the lack of medical or surgical care threatens the child's life or long-term health."

"Children's Activity:" any activity or program sponsored by St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation in which children are under the supervision of staff persons or volunteers. (It is important to note that this includes those activities that are normally designated as "Youth Activities" at St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation.)

"Children's Activity Coordinator:" any person who coordinates a children's activity. This person has regular and direct contact with children and is counted in the Two-Adult rule. A person who has obtained the background clearances required by Section 6344(b) of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law and has been trained in *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*.

“Crisis Management Team:” a group of individuals to include the Pastors, legal counsel, medical, psychological or counseling representative and others as deemed necessary. This group shall be a standing group appointed by Pastor-In-Charge.

"Helper/Resource/Support Person:" anyone who aids in ministry in an assisting role, including a youth aged 14 thru 17. The youth aged 14 thru 17 shall complete the Youth Contact Information form and sign the Youth Volunteer Participation Covenant. This youth is not counted in the Two-Adult rule and is never alone with children. Any person 18 years or older, who has obtained the background clearances required by Section 6344(b) of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law and has been trained in *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*, is counted in the Two-Adult rule.

“Mandated Reporter:” all clergy, all paid church staff and all volunteers, age 18 years or older, who accept responsibility for a child or have direct contact with children and is required by the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law to make a report of suspected child abuse.

"Mentor:" any adult who assists in conducting children's activities under the supervision of a Staff Person or Children's Activity Coordinator, has regular and direct contact with children and is counted in the Two-Adult rule. A person who has obtained the background clearances required by Section 6344(b) of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law and has been trained in *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*.

“Permissive Reporter:” all persons who are not mandated reporters and who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse are to report the suspected child abuse.

“Staff Person:” any person employed by the St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation, which includes our Christian Preschool. A person who has obtained the background clearances required by Section 6344(b) of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law and has been trained in *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*.

“The Two-Adult Rule:” a standard that requires that at any Children's Activity there will be at least two UNRELATED adults present. It is defined as two individuals 18 years of age or older who are not residing in the same household and who are not related by marriage or other familial ties. Two related people may serve together, but a third person must also be present. This may include the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of rooms.

"Visitor:" A parent or guardian who accompanies a child participating in a children's program or other person approved by the Children's Activity Coordinator. A visitor must sign in/out and is not counted in the Two-Adult rule.

“Volunteer:” a person 18 years of age or older who: provides services in ministry to children and youth without compensation; has obtained the background clearances required by Section 6344(b) of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law and has been trained in *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*.

“We:” St. Paul's United Methodist Church and Wesley Foundation.

“Youth:” a child between the age of 12 and 18. Youth is a colloquial term used in ministries to mean a person who is in a middle or senior high school age group.

SCREENING PROCEDURES

Careful screening is one way to reduce the abuse of children. We recognize that screening of children's workers is a morally complex and controversial issue. St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation requires screening of all paid Staff persons and for all individuals 18 years of age or older who apply for an unpaid position as a volunteer children's worker responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children.

The decision to screen is based on criteria inherent to the position and is not based on the personal qualities of the volunteer. In all cases, screening must be accompanied by careful application of safe operating procedures.

An employer or individual who intentionally fails to require an applicant for employment or volunteer service to submit the required certifications commits a misdemeanor of the 3rd degree.

All visitors and unpaid youth aged 14 thru 17, who participate in children's activities, shall be required to provide:

- Standard contact information
- Signed St. Paul's Volunteer Participation Covenant or signed St. Paul's Youth Volunteer Participation Covenant.

All paid staff persons, 16 years of age or older, must obtain the three following 3 clearances:

- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Report;
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Child Abuse History Clearance (ChildLine);
- FBI Criminal History Report (Fingerprint-based background check).

All persons 18 years of age or older who apply for an unpaid position as a volunteer (persons in positions of Children's Activity Coordinator, Mentor, Helper/Resource/Support Person) will be required:

- A. To complete an application packet that includes:
 - Statement of personal beliefs, gifts and talents.
 - Listing of 3 non-related references. This list shall have complete contact information for all references.
- B. To obtain the three following 3 background clearances:
 - Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Report;
 - Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Child Abuse History Clearance (ChildLine);
 - FBI Criminal History Report (Fingerprint-based background check).

NOTE: The FBI Criminal History Report is not required for incumbent or prospective volunteers: (i) who have resided in Pennsylvania continuously for a period of 10 years prior to becoming a volunteer or applying for volunteer status and who sign a Volunteer Affidavit affirming that they have not committed certain crimes that otherwise would prohibit them from being a volunteer responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children; or (ii) who have received such Report at any time since establishing residency in Pennsylvania and provide a copy of the Report to the person responsible for the selection of volunteers

Failure by employee or volunteer to disclose information that would be a basis for denying employment or volunteer status is a third degree misdemeanor.

Parents and guardians are always welcome to accompany their children in all children's activities. These persons will be considered "visitors." A visitor must sign in/out and is not counted in the Two-Adult rule.

Persons with pending Criminal/Child Abuse Clearance/FBI Criminal History Report or Affidavit applications may serve in Children's Activities when a cleared, non-related adult is present.

An applicant must maintain an active relationship with St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation of at least six months before serving as a Children's Activity Coordinator or Mentor with children.

The three background clearances must be renewed every 60 months, as required by the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL).

The Senior Pastor or his/her designee is responsible for reviewing and following up on each PA criminal, PA child abuse, and FBI fingerprint clearances and for the confidentiality of the process. Each individual's Safe Sanctuary file will be maintained in a locked file cabinet by the Senior Pastor and/or his designee. The Senior Pastor must inform the District Superintendent of the State College District of the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church that a person has been disallowed from working with children. The clearance form of the disallowed person must then be provided to the District Superintendent for retention.

No outside group may use St. Paul's facilities where children will be involved (either as participants or childcare) unless they follow St. Paul's policies, which include background clearances, the Two-Adult rule, etc.

Individuals who have been convicted of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, or ritual) or whose name appears on Megan's List, may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children and youth.

OPERATIONAL/SUPERVISION PROCEDURES

Providing a holy place of safety for children requires conscientious and intentional supervision. These procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse to children and to protect persons from unwarranted accusations. These are minimum standards. Each Children's Activity may adopt more stringent standards as necessary.

1. Training is a requirement for all staff persons and volunteers working with children in Children's Activities.
 - The St. Paul's Safe Sanctuary or Susquehanna Conference Safe Sanctuary training must be taken once. The training includes information about this policy, procedures for supervision, as well as information on how to identify and report child abuse. [Pastors must renew this training every 4 years.]
 - Every year a reminder of Safe Sanctuary procedures, i.e., the Two-Adult rule, no child left alone, etc. will be distributed to St. Paul's staff and volunteers.
 - Mandated Reporter Training (effective December 31, 2014 per Act 31 of 2014) applies only to St. Paul's Christian Preschool and Childcare. All child care facility applicants and staff are required to complete this training. The training is required to be renewed every five years. All St. Paul's staff and volunteers are encouraged to attend the training.
2. Minimum supervisory standards include the "Two-Adult Rule." No matter the size of the group, two non-related adult employees or volunteers shall be present with the ministry or event participants at all times. The "Two-Adult Rule" standard not only helps provide a safe and loving environment for the children, it also provides volunteers with more encouragement, creativity, and flexibility.
3. No child or youth will be left unsupervised while attending a St. Paul's sponsored ministry or event. In the event that child care/supervision services are not provided by the church for a church sponsored ministry or event (i.e. retreats, small groups, worship services, etc.), the parents or legal guardians shall be fully responsible for their children during the ministry or event. In the event that supervised programming for youth is not provided by the church for any church sponsored ministry or event (i.e. retreats, small groups, worship services, etc.), the parents or legal guardians shall be fully responsible for the supervision of their youths during the ministry or event. Said children or youth shall remain in the presence of their parents or legal guardians, and shall at no time be left alone and unsupervised. Should the parents or legal guardians arrange for their own child care/supervision of their children or youth for a church sponsored ministry or event to occur within the event facility, said child care/supervision shall be in compliance with the Safe Sanctuaries Policies. If parents/legal guardians refuse to comply with the Safe Sanctuaries Policies, they and their children and/or youth will be asked to leave the ministry or event.

4. No person shall serve as a Children's Activity Coordinator or a Mentor unless he or she is at least 18 years old and at least 5 years older than the children they will be supervising.
5. Each room or space where children are being cared for shall have a window(s) left uncovered in the door or the door shall be left open. All Children's Activities shall occur in open view.
6. Whenever possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs, but should a child require assistance, the outer bathroom door will remain open while an employee or volunteer assists the child, with an additional employee or volunteer also being present.
7. If the Children's Activity is an outdoor program or in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this Policy, the staff person in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure the setting suits the activity and the children are properly supervised.

RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING PLAN:

All clergy, all church staff (employees), and all volunteers who, as part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child or have direct contact with children, are Mandated Reporters.

As a Mandated Reporter, you must report if you have reasonable cause to suspect a child is a victim of child abuse, a report must be made, without exception. This includes situations where

- i. you come into contact with a child that has been abused,
- ii. an individual makes a specific disclosure to you that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse or
- iii. an individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to you that he/she has committed child abuse.

Further, Section 6312 of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law encourages all persons who are not mandated reporters and who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse to report the suspected child abuse. These individuals are called permissive reporters, and we likewise encourage permissive reporters to report incidents of suspected child abuse.

[See Below Section for reporting of suspected child abuse steps.]

The goals of immediate reporting of incidents of suspected child abuse are to ensure the safety and welfare of the victim, provide protection for children from further abuse and facilitate the prompt involvement of appropriate legal authorities in responding to incidents of suspected abuse.

Once an incident of child abuse occurs or an allegation is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a Children's Activity, the entire staff of that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

Responding to incidents of suspected child abuse or suspected abuse:

In the event that an employee or volunteer suspects that a child is the victim of abuse, the employee or volunteer should reassure the child that their safety and well-being is of paramount concern, following which the suspected abuse should be immediately reported to the appropriate legal authorities, as set forth below.

The child should be calmly moved to another safe place onsite in view of at least two other non-related adults. Someone safe and familiar should stay with the child or at all times.

The employee or volunteer who suspects that a child is the victim of abuse should inform the child victim in an age appropriate manner that a report will be made, or has been made, to the appropriate legal authorities. Should the child be in need of medical attention, appropriate medical professionals or 911 should be contacted for assistance.

Persons, who are suspected to have engaged in abuse, if on site at a ministry or event, will be immediately removed from the ministry or event setting until further direction is given by the Pastor.

Persons who are the objects of the report shall refrain from all children's activities until the incident report is resolved. The Pastors will take responsibility for informing the person they are to be removed from Children's Activities and inform them of steps to be taken in the investigation. In any removal of a person from any Children's Activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

The parents/legal guardians of any alleged victim of child abuse or should be immediately notified by the Pastors, although it is not appropriate to contact the parents/legal guardians immediately if they are the alleged perpetrators of the child abuse. In such circumstances, guidance should be sought from appropriate Pastors on who should contact the parents/legal guardians and when this should occur.

Reporting of suspected child abuse:

A mandated reporter having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse shall immediately:

1. obtain the information needed for the filing of report(s) of suspected child abuse, including but not limited to, the child's name, age and address, the names and address of the child's parents or legal guardians, where the suspected abuse occurred, the nature and extent of the suspected child abuse, the name and relationship of each individual who allegedly engaged in the suspected child abuse, the source of the report of suspected child abuse, and the name, telephone number and e-mail address of the person making the report of suspected child abuse.
2. report the suspected child abuse to ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313, make the required report or immediately submit an electronic report of the suspected child abuse in accordance with procedures established by the Department of Human Services. You must personally make the report, and you cannot rely on someone else (for example, a supervisor or pastor) to make the report. In addition, a written report on CY-47 Form must be made to the county Children and Youth Agency within 48 hours of your oral report to Childline. [Permissive reporters should follow the foregoing reporting procedures if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.]
3. notify your immediate supervisor/coordinator of the children's activity and the staff person within the church organization and inform the Pastors. The pastor(s) will mobilize the St. Paul's Crisis Management Team. The Pastor(s) shall inform the District Superintendent of the State College District of the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church and these Susquehanna Conference individuals: the Director of Communications, the Legal Council and the Insurance Representative.

Depending on the nature of the suspected child abuse, it may also be necessary to contact law enforcement officials, in addition to ChildLine, to report the suspected child abuse.

If the allegation is against a St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation staff person or volunteer or if it occurred in the course of a St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation children's activity, the staff person in charge of the children's activity will contact the Pastors who will mobilize the Crisis

Management Team. The pastor will contact the Child's parents or guardian(s) immediately and an in-person meeting arranged as soon as practical. (A 24-hour time frame suggested for reporting).

If the allegation concerns activities or persons outside any relationship to a St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation related event or activity, the staff person will contact the pastors who will mobilize the Crisis Management Team. An example of this would be a child telling a teacher about abuse by a relative during the prior year.

In all cases, pastoral support will be available to ALL persons involved with the incident as indicated.

When in doubt always report, report, report. Mandated Reporters and permissive reporters are immune from civil liability for good faith reporting of child abuse. Make NO public statements about the report, as this may give rise to a defamation claim.

The criminal penalty and civil liability for noncompliance with statutory requirements are: Mandated Reporters' Failure to Report Suspected Child Abuse: Criminal penalties range from second degree misdemeanor to second degree felony, depending on the facts.

Confidentiality.

Allegations of suspected child abuse or are strictly confidential and should be discussed only on a need-to-know basis. Once the allegations of suspected abuse have been reported to the appropriate legal authorities, the person making the report should NOT discuss the matter with other persons except authorized St. Paul's pastors and Susquehanna Conference personnel and legal authorities investigating the allegations.

Media.

The Susquehanna Conference Director of Communications or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All media requests for information or statements that are received by employees or volunteers shall be directed to the Conference Director of Communications. Training in how to handle media requests should be a regular part of staff training. A spirit of cooperation, in helping the media locate the "official spokesperson" (the Conference Director of Communications) is often helpful.

If a representative of the media – newspaper, TV station, Radio station, magazine – calls or approaches an employee or volunteer and seeks comments or asks questions about an incident of suspected child abuse, the employee or volunteer should NOT provide any comments or answer any questions about the incident. Instead, the employee or volunteer should get the media representative's name, business title, phone number and e-mail address and respectfully tell him/her that the Director of Communications will contact him/her as soon as possible. The following response to the media representative should be used: "The Susquehanna Conference's Director of Communications can best respond to your inquiry regarding this matter. If you give me your name, business title, phone number and e-mail address, I will ask the Director of Communications to contact you as soon as possible."