

SAMPLE POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April, 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls all churches to welcome the children and also to make our churches safe places for children to grow and learn. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and also to protect those volunteers from false accusations. It is also our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children.

PURPOSE

_____ (INSERT CHURCH NAME) purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

PROCEDURES: We adopt these **minimum** standards for our ministries with children and youth.

1. Screening and recruiting
 - a. All workers with children and youth will have completed an application listing standard contact information, their gifts for that ministry, & 3 unrelated references.
 - b. All workers will be interviewed by the pastor, education chair, or children's coordinator before they begin teaching. References will be contacted.
 - c. All workers will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least 6 months before being allowed to supervise children.
 - d. All new workers will be asked to complete a PA request for Criminal Background Check & Child Abuse History Clearance.
 - e. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on the church premise.
2. Supervision

- a. 2 adult rule. There will be 2 unrelated adults in each classroom. If this is not possible, there will be a roving teacher who moves amid the classroom during the program period.
 - b. No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the oldest student.
 - c. No person under 16 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults.
 - d. Each room will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.
 - e. Training shall occur at least once a year and teachers shall be trained to recognize the signs of abuse.
 - f. Registration materials for activities in which children are outside direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate.
 - g. If the participants are old enough to understand, they shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for all trips, overnights, ect.
3. Reporting
- a. Upon receiving information of abuse, the teacher will report immediately to the pastor or Education Chairman who call Childline & Abuse Registry 1-800-932-0313.
 - b. If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner & they shall not be banned from other church ministries.
4. Responding
- a. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously, nothing will be covered up.
 - b. The Media Director of the Central Pennsylvania Conference or his/her designee, is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Lead Pastor.
 - c. If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the District Superintendent will be contacted immediately.
 - d. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.