Introduction

The Davidsonville United Methodist Church and the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church is committed to ensuring that all children and youth involved in church and conference ministries may participate in an environment of safety and security.

The youth/children’s ministry of DUMC presents tremendous opportunities for the Church. Employees and volunteers (referred to as Staff) who work with our young people have great potential for providing a positive, Christian example for youth facing the challenge of growing up in an increasingly complicated world. We deeply appreciate those adults who find time and are committed to teaching, leading and providing support in our Sunday School, nursery, youth/children’s programs and Youth Group Fellowship.

One of the goals of our youth/children’s ministry is to provide an environment for our young people that promote the development of strong Christian values and morals. Accordingly, we expect all persons involved in our youth/children’s programs to adhere to the highest standards of morality and conduct. Moreover, we expect and trust that all youth/children’s ministry workers will conduct themselves, when working with young people, in an appropriate, safe and caring manner.

Because we are committed to fostering the healthy growth and development of our young people, and are mindful that there are individuals who might become involved in our youth/children’s ministry programs to have access to and engage in inappropriate activities with our young people, we have instituted a program for promoting a safe environment for our youth/children’s ministries. This program consists of three components:

A. Policy and Procedures for Working with Young People;
B. Screening Process for Employees and Volunteers (Staff); and
C. Training Program

We realize that carrying out these three components may involve some additional burden for adults involved in our youth/children’s ministry. We know and trust, however, that those involved in our programs appreciate that the sole motivation for this program is to protect and provide for the healthy development of our young people. We believe that our youth/children’s ministry workers will find the burden slight when compared to the benefit it provides our Church and young people.
RESPONSE PLAN: 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 suspected abuse in a children’s or youth activity, the entire staff of the activity shall be at the service of all official investigative agencies. The Pastor 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 Pastor. If the allegation is against a Church staff person or volunteer or if it occurred in the course of a Church children’s activity, the staff person or volunteer in charge of the children’s activity, the Pastor, Chair of Staff Parish and the Chair of the DUMC Safe Sanctuary Task Force shall be contacted immediately. The Pastor or Chair of the Board of Trustees shall advise the Church’s insurance carrier. If the allegation is against a Church staff person who would normally be responsible for reporting an incident under, and responding in accordance to, this Policy, the responsibility for reporting and responding in accordance with this Policy shall be immediately assumed by another Church staff person who is not the subject of a report. In the case of an allegation against the Pastor, the Chair of Staff Parish and the Chair of the DUMC Safe Sanctuary Task Force shall be contacted immediately and they shall immediately contact the District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church. In any case, pastoral support will be available to all persons involved with the incident as indicated.
A. Policies and Procedures for Working with Young People

Employees and volunteers involved in our youth/children's ministry programs are expected to display the highest Christian values and morals in all formal and informal activities with young people. Employees and volunteers are expected to provide a good example and not engage in any behavior or conversation that could lead young people into inappropriate conduct themselves.

Under no circumstances shall employees or volunteers engage in any sexual or dating relationships or activities with young people involved in the ministry. Employees and volunteers are expected to use language and speech that is free of comments or jokes that may have a sexual meaning, that are suggestive, off-color or lewd or that are otherwise inappropriate in the presence of young people. Employees and volunteers are expected to avoid using literature or videos in youth/children’s ministry programs or activities that have lewd or sexual content. Employees and volunteers are expected to avoid any physical touching or activity that might produce and appearance of impropriety.

The following procedures will be followed in youth/children’s ministry activities:

1. Youth and Children’s activities conducted away from the church require a permission form completed by the Youth or Child’s parent or guardian.
2. Two adult leadership for overnight outings and all away from church activities with young people; one-on-one away from church activities are not authorized (this includes counseling sessions unless approved by the Pastor). Minors may help lead activities, but only under the supervision of an adult. Further, minors should not be counted toward meeting the two-adult rule.
3. Where away from church outings or activities are co-ed, there shall be co-ed staff leadership, at least one male and one female adult.
4. When young people are involved in overnight activities, at least two adults should participate and supervise the activity. If the group is co-ed, the staff leadership should be co-ed. Males and females will have separate sleeping facilities as well as separate bathroom facilities.
5. When a young person requests counseling, this should be done with two adults. One-on-one counseling is not authorized unless approved by the Pastor. Avoid counseling in a secluded place. Counseling should ordinarily be short-term. Young people requiring extended counseling (especially if this involves special needs outside the young person’s spiritual development) should be referred to the pastoral staff, who will evaluate whether a referral to a professional is needed, and/or whether parents should be contacted.
6. Secret activities, clubs and organizations are not authorized.
7. Youth/children’s ministry leaders are generally not allowed to transport young people to and from youth/children’s program activities. This is the responsibility of the young person's parent(s)/guardian(s). Exceptions may be made for special group car-pooling arrangements approved by the Church and parents, and in emergencies or special circumstances, where parents are informed and approve in advance, and/or the employee or volunteer notifies another youth/children’s ministry leader in advance.
8. Where children’s ministry leaders must provide transportation as part of an activity, follow the two-adult rule.
9. No hazing or initiations are allowed in any formal or informal activities of the youth/children’s program.
10. No corporal punishment and other forms of punishment involving physical contact are allowed, even if parents have approved or suggested them. Discipline problems should be discussed with program leaders or the pastoral staff, and with parents, if necessary.
11. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and young people can often help development and are generally acceptable in our church setting. Physical contact should be appropriate to the age of the young person. For example, it is generally appropriate for a two-year-old to sit on a nursery worker’s lap and give the worker a kiss. It is not appropriate for a teenager to behave in this way. A nursery worker may need to change an infant’s diaper or help a young child with removing his/her clothes to use the restroom. It is almost never appropriate for a youth leader to touch or remove an older child’s undergarments. Hugs and other physical affection should generally be a response to a young person’s need for encouragement or comforting. Hugs should generally be side-to-side hugs (one arm around the young person’s shoulders). In games and recreational activities involving physical contact, or when giving reassurance or “job well done” pats, leaders should avoid touching the buttocks, chest or genital areas. In general, physical contact with young people should occur in the presence of other church staff. If a young person prefers not to be touched, this preference should generally be respected (although restraining a two-year old threatening to bite other children is an appropriate course of action). If inappropriate touching by a staff member is observed, this should be promptly discussed with the senior pastor.
12. Adults must respect the privacy of children and youth in showers, bathrooms, changing areas, during camp-outs or over-night trips, etc., and intrude only when health and safety require.
13. Adults should also take care to preserve their own privacy in showers, bathrooms, changing areas, during camp-outs or over-night trips, etc.
14. Alcoholic beverages, drugs and pornographic materials are never appropriate.
15. Parents should be kept informed about the specific activities planned and should be welcome to drop in or participate in any youth/children’s activity.
16. Parents are expected to ensure adult supervisors are present prior to checking in children at scheduled activities, or allowing youth to report to scheduled activities. Parents should know the start and end time of activities and be responsible for transportation.
17. Young people should not be pressured or forced to participate in any activities, especially strenuous recreational activities.
18. Youth/children’s leaders generally should not give personal gifts or money to youth.
19. All youth/children’s ministry staff, including employees and volunteers are required to complete the youth/children’s ministry application form and attend training sessions as scheduled.
20. Staff should be prepared for young people who disclose abuse or inappropriate conduct by other staff members, relatives or others, and should report the matter(s) immediately to a person within the Church designated to take such reports. Staff also should report immediately to the Pastor any instance where a young person indicates that he or she has had suicidal thoughts, seems to be suffering from deep unhappiness or depression, is pregnant, is suffering from a sexually-transmitted disease, or has disclosed any actual or planned involvement in unlawful activities or the abuse of alcohol and/or drugs.

21. Staff should be watchful and should report any concerns, misgivings or knowledge of possible abuse or inappropriate conduct, activities or relationships to a person within the Church designated to take such reports.

22. If a staff member has any questions about these procedures or any other related matter(s), these should be directed to the Pastor.

23. Each staff member will receive a copy of our Safe Sanctuary Program materials. Current and new staff members will be asked to review and sign a copy of our Policy and Procedures for Working with Young People.

24. All fundraising activities shall be in accordance with DUMC policies including a payment of 10% of funds raised to the DUMC operating fund.
B. **Screening Process for Employees and Volunteers (Staff)**

A Confidential Screening Committee will consist of the Pastor, the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the Chair of the Safe Sanctuary Task Force and one other person chosen by the Lay Leadership for their familiarity and sensitivity to the issues and ability to maintain information strictly confidential. A quorum shall be the Pastor and two of the other three members. There shall be an eligibility requirement for all volunteers with children and youth to complete an application (copy attached) which includes consent to conduct a criminal background check. National criminal background checks shall be conducted for all Church staff paid or volunteer that work with children or youth activities. Applications, including background checks, shall be confidential and maintained in accordance with the Church’s privacy policy. Motor Vehicle records checks shall be obtained for all drivers of children and youth to Church-sponsored children and youth events.

C. **Training**

1. The Youth Minister or another Youth Ministry Team Leader shall attend annual training related to protecting children/youth and providing a Safe Sanctuary of children/youth. Updates will be provided to volunteers and staff.

2. Appropriate training workshops shall be conducted by the Safe Sanctuary Task Force or its designee.

Please note: Our Youth/Children’s Ministry Safe Sanctuary Program is not intended to be interpreted as a contract for any purpose, including an employment contract.

I have carefully read and agree to follow and comply with the Policy and Procedures for Working with Young People.

Signature: ___________________  Print Name: ___________________ Date: ___________

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**REFERENCES:**
Extensive internet research and at the direction of the Baltimore/Washington Conference the following book was also used:
Safe Sanctuaries For Youth: Reducing The Risk Of Abuse In Youth Ministries by Joy Thornburg Melton