

EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Safe sanctuaries is the name commonly given by United Methodist Annual Conferences and local churches to their individual efforts to make conferences, districts, and local church programs welcoming and safe for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

PURPOSE

Epworth United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth, and vulnerable adults 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 all 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, youth, and vulnerable adults.

1. Screening and recruiting
 - a. All workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will have completed the VOLUNTEER COVENANT STATEMENT before being considered to supervise in ministry.
 - b. All workers will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least 6 months before being allowed to supervise children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
 - c. All workers will be asked to provide a Criminal Background Check. These background checks will be updated every three (3) to four (4) years. 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 premises under supervision of the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator and Church Administrator.

2. SUPERVISION
 - a. The 2-Adult Rule: there will be at least two unrelated adults in each classroom. If this is not possible, there will be a roving teacher who moves amid the classrooms during the program period.

- b. No person shall supervise children/youth 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 for activities within the church.
 - d. No person under 18 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults for activities away from the church.
 - e. Each children's classroom will have a window in the door or the door will be left open at all times.
3. TRAINING - shall occur at least once a year and teachers shall be trained to recognize the signs of abuse, as well as our policies around Supervision and Reporting.
4. REPORTING
- a. Upon receiving information of alleged abuse, the teacher will report immediately to the pastor, supervising staff person, or Staff Parish Relations Chair who will call the Georgia CPS Central Intake Center at 1-855-422-4453. An oral report must be made within 24 hours by phone to the Georgia Centralized Intake.
 - b. Centralized intake: 1-855-GACHILD or 1-855-422-4453. If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident reported has been resolved.
5. RESPONDING
- a. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.
 - b. The pastor is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the pastor, who will work with the South Georgia Conference Director of Communications.
 - c. If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the SPR Chair will be contacted immediately.
 - d. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident.
 - e. The Church will contact the Northwest District Superintendent and Allison Lindsey, Office of Connectional Ministries, Safe Sanctuaries Consultant (912-393-5524) or Kelly Roberson, Director of Communications (912-270-6172).

Activities in which children are outside direct supervision of their parents/guardians and away from the Epworth Church property shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate. If participants are old enough to understand, they shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for all trips, overnights, etc.

VOLUNTEER COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of Epworth U.M. Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter; as a place where all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity. A person who has been so convicted by law, will be welcomed into the redemptive fellowship of the congregation, and may serve in other areas, but should not volunteer to be with children or youth.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse are offered the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity of work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with our church's Senior Pastor.
3. All adult volunteers supervising children or youth of our church need to be active in the life of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. "Active involvement" will be determined by the Senior Pastor.
4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "two-adult rule" at all times so that no adult is alone with children or youth.
5. Adult volunteers supervising children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep- volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
6. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "two-adult rule" at all times? ___Yes ___No
2. As a volunteer supervising children and youth in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the "six-month rule" before beginning a volunteer assignment that involves leadership or contact with children or youth? ___Yes ___No
3. As a volunteer supervising children and youth in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?
___Yes ___No
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? ___Yes ___No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform the Senior Pastor of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? ___Yes ___No

I have read this Volunteer Covenant Statement, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above:

Print full name _____
Signature of Volunteer Applicant _____
Date _____

DISCLOSURE

[IMPORTANT -- PLEASE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING AUTHORIZATION]
DISCLOSURE REGARDING BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

Epworth United Methodist Church of Columbus, INC, may obtain information about you for volunteering purposes from a third party consumer reporting agency. Thus, you may be the subject of a “consumer report” and/or an “investigative consumer report” which may include information about your character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and/or mode of living, and which can involve personal interviews with sources such as your neighbors, friends, or associates. These reports may contain information regarding your credit history, criminal history, social security verification, motor vehicle records (“driving records”), verification of your education or employment history, or other background checks. Credit history will only be requested where such information is related to the duties and responsibilities of the position for which you are applying. You have the right, upon written request made within a reasonable time after receipt of this notice, to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report and a copy of any report about you. Please be advised that the nature and scope of the most common form of investigative consumer report obtained with regard to applicants for employment is an investigation into your education and/or employment history conducted by First Advantage Background Services Corp. (“First Advantage”), P.O. Box 105292, Atlanta, GA 30348, 1-800-845-6004. The scope of this notice and authorization is all-encompassing, however, allowing the Company to obtain from any outside organization all manner of consumer reports and investigative consumer reports now and throughout the course of your employment to the extent permitted by law. As a result, you should carefully consider whether to exercise your right to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AUTHORIZATION

I acknowledge receipt of the DISCLOSURE REGARDING BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION and A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE FAIR CREDIT REPORTING ACT and certify that I have read and understand both of those documents. I hereby authorize the obtaining of "consumer reports" and/or "investigative consumer reports" by the Company at any time after receipt of this authorization and throughout my employment, if applicable. To this end, I hereby authorize, without reservation, any law enforcement agency, administrator, state or federal agency, institution, school or university (public or private), information service bureau, employer, or insurance company to furnish any and all background information requested by First Advantage P.O. Box 105292 Atlanta, GA 30348, 1-800-845-6004, another outside organization acting on behalf of the Company, and/or the Company itself. Their Privacy Policy can be reviewed at http://www.fadv.com/privacy-policy/. I agree that a facsimile ("fax"), electronic or photographic copy of this Authorization shall be as valid as the original.

New York applicants or employees only: By signing below, you also acknowledge receipt of Article 23-A of the New York Correction Law.

Minnesota and Oklahoma applicants or employees only: Please check this box if you would like to receive a copy of a consumer report at no charge if one is obtained by the Company.

California applicants or employees only: By signing below, you also acknowledge receipt of the NOTICE REGARDING BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION PURSUANT TO CALIFORNIA LAW. Please check this box if you would like to receive a copy of an investigative consumer report or consumer credit report at no charge if one is obtained by the Company whenever you have a right to receive such a copy under California law.

Washington State applicants or employees only:

You also have the right to request from the consumer reporting agency a written summary of your rights and remedies under the Washington Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Last Name _____ First _____ Middle _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

** If you will be requesting driving records, we recommend that you have this form notarized.

New York and Maine applicants or employees only: You have the right to inspect and receive a copy of any investigative consumer report requested by the Company by contacting the consumer reporting agency identified above directly. You may also contact the Company to request the name, address and telephone number of the nearest unit of the consumer reporting agency designated to handle inquiries, which the Company shall provide within 5 days.

Consumer Information

Last Name _____ First _____ Middle _____ Other _____

Names/Alias _____ Social Security* # _____

Date of Birth* _____ Driver's License # _____ State of Driver's License* _____

Present Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Former Employer _____

Position Dates of Employment _____

*This information will be used for background screening purposes only and will not be used as hiring criteria.

Para informacion en espanol, visite www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore o escribe a la Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 1700 G Street N.W., Washington, DC 20552.

A Summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act

The federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness, and privacy of information in the files of consumer reporting agencies. There are many types of consumer reporting agencies, including credit bureaus and specialty agencies (such as agencies that sell information about check writing histories, medical records, and rental history records). Here is a summary of your major rights under the FCRA. **For more information, including information about additional rights, go to www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore or write to: Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 1700 G Street N.W., Washington, DC 20552.**

- **You must be told if information in your file has been used against you.** Anyone who uses a credit report or another type of consumer report to deny your application for credit, insurance, or employment – or to take another adverse action against you – must tell you, and must give you the name, address, and phone number of the agency that provided the information.

- **You have the right to know what is in your file.** You may request and obtain all the information about you in the files of a consumer reporting agency (your “file disclosure”). You will be required to provide proper identification, which may include your Social Security number. In many cases, the disclosure will be free. You are entitled to a free file disclosure if:

- a person has taken adverse action against you because of information in your credit report;
- you are the victim of identity theft and place a fraud alert in your file;
- your file contains inaccurate information as a result of fraud;
- you are on public assistance;
- you are unemployed but expect to apply for employment within 60 days.

In addition, all consumers are entitled to one free disclosure every 12 months upon request from each nationwide credit bureau and from nationwide specialty consumer reporting agencies. See www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore for additional information.

- **You have the right to ask for a credit score.** Credit scores are numerical summaries of your credit-worthiness based on information from credit bureaus. You may request a credit score from consumer reporting agencies that create scores or distribute scores used in residential real property loans, but you will have to pay for it. In some mortgage transactions, you will receive credit score information for free from the mortgage lender.

- **You have the right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information.** If you identify information in your file that is incomplete or inaccurate, and report it to the consumer reporting agency, the agency must investigate unless your dispute is frivolous. See www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore for an explanation of dispute procedures.
- **Consumer reporting agencies must correct or delete inaccurate, incomplete, or unverifiable information.** Inaccurate, incomplete or unverifiable information must be removed or corrected, usually within 30 days. However, a consumer reporting agency may continue to report information it has verified as accurate.
- **Consumer reporting agencies may not report outdated negative information.** In most cases, a consumer reporting agency may not report negative information that is more than seven years old, or bankruptcies that are more than 10 years old.
- **Access to your file is limited.** A consumer reporting agency may provide information about you only to people with a valid need – usually to consider an application with a creditor, insurer, employer, landlord, or other business. The FCRA specifies those with a valid need for access.
- **You must give your consent for reports to be provided to employers.** A consumer reporting agency may not give out information about you to your employer, or a potential employer, without your written consent given to the employer. Written consent generally is not required in the trucking industry. For more information, go to www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore.
- **You may limit “prescreened” offers of credit and insurance you get based on information in your credit report.** Unsolicited “prescreened” offers for credit and insurance must include a toll-free phone number you can call if you choose to remove your name and address from the lists these offers are based on. You may opt-out with the nationwide credit bureaus at 1-888-567-8688.
- **You may seek damages from violators.** If a consumer reporting agency, or, in some cases, a user of consumer reports or a furnisher of information to a consumer reporting agency violates the FCRA, you may be able to sue in state or federal court.
- **Identity theft victims and active duty military personnel have additional rights.** For more information, visit www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore.

States may enforce the FCRA, and many states have their own consumer reporting laws. In some cases, you may have more rights under state law. For more information, contact your state or local consumer protection agency or your state Attorney General. For information about your federal rights, contact: