

Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures

FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND ADULTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

First United Methodist Church
Magnolia, Arkansas

ADOPTED BY
ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 22, 2009

Purpose

The purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all children, youth, and adults with special needs God has entrusted to our care.

Scope

First United Methodist Church affirms that all children, youth, and adults with special needs have the right to safe sanctuary. Therefore, First United Methodist Church is determined to provide an environment in which these persons are safe from neglect or abuse. The scope of this policy and its provisions will apply to all volunteer leaders and laity, who are in supervisory positions with children, youth, and adults with special needs in events sponsored by First United Methodist Church.

Covenant Statement

First United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and adults with special needs as well as all leaders. We will follow specific guidelines when recruiting and selecting volunteer leaders, and we will train our leaders of children, youth, and adults with special needs about our policy and procedures.

I. First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee

- A. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee (committee) will be composed of members based on job duties within the church. The committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor, Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair, Board of Trustees Chair, Lay Leader, Youth Director, Director of Children & Family Ministries, Child Development Center Director, The Caring Place Director, Youth Ministries Representative, Children's Ministry Representative, Child Development Center Board Chair, and The Caring Place Board President. From this committee, a chairperson shall be selected.
- B. The Committee will be responsible for reviewing and updating procedures for the final approval by the Senior Pastor and Administrative Council. Said procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- C. Program staff members will be responsible for overseeing that all volunteers in their program have completed the necessary forms. All paperwork will then be turned over to the chairperson of this committee for review. The chairperson of this committee will maintain and keep all reports and/or forms in a secure and locked location.
- D. If any reports raise questions about the suitability of the prospective leader, the chairperson will notify the Senior Pastor and confer with the applicant. If it is then determined that the person may be unsuitable to serve due to prior criminal convictions or unfavorable reference checks, the application will be disapproved and the applicant will be notified.

II. Leader Selection Guidelines (Recruiting/Screening/Hiring)

Leader selection guidelines are one way to provide for the safety of participants. This will include but not be limited to background checks, reference checks and training.

A. Standards for Leaders

In order to be approved as a leader, persons must:

1. Be 18 years of age or older at the time of the event;
2. Submit Volunteer Leader Application Packet (*Volunteer Leader Application Form-with references, Authorization and Request for a Criminal Records Check, and Safe Sanctuary Covenant*);
3. Undergo background checks;

4. Have satisfactory references and no unresolved record from previous activities indicating that the person is unfit to be a leader;
 5. Be at least four years older than the participants with whom they work. This does not apply to paid staff.
 6. Be a member or active attendee of First United Methodist Church for a minimum of six months prior to the event/program. This does not apply to paid staff.
- B. **Volunteer Leader Application Packet.** Prior to acceptance as a leader for a First United Methodist Church event/program, the program staff person in charge of the event/program will direct each prospective leader to complete a Volunteer Leader Application Packet. By completing these forms, the applicant will give First United Methodist Church staff and/or Safe Sanctuaries Committee permission to perform the necessary investigations to complete the review of the applicant. This procedure will also apply to persons currently serving as leaders.
- C. **Criminal Background Check.** Prior to acceptance as a leader, the program staff person in charge of an event/program will direct each prospective leader to submit a completed *Authorization and Request for a Criminal Records Check* form, as a part of the Leader Application Packet.
- D. **Reference Checks.** Prior to acceptance as a leader, the program staff person in charge of an event/program will direct each prospective leader to provide completed reference information from three (3) different persons on the *Volunteer Leader Application Form*. The three references will include a reference from the applicant's minister or program staff member, a personal reference, and a reference from a non-related person who has known the applicant for more than two (2) years.
- E. **Six-month Attendance Rule.** Persons who desire to lead children, youth or adults with special needs will be required to be a member or actively attend First United Methodist Church at least six months prior to submitting a Leader Application Packet requesting "Leader Certification." Those who have attended for less than six months may serve as a "helper" alongside a certified leader. This does not apply to paid staff.
- F. **Approval Period.** Upon completion of the paperwork, favorable background and reference checks, and training, a leader will be certified to serve in First United Methodist Church events for children, youth or adults with special needs. Certification is for a period of three (3) years unless complaints determined to have merit are filed against the leader, in which case certification will be revoked. The First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee will keep a current list of certified leaders.
- G. **Confidentiality of Records.** Access to these records will be limited to the First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee, First Clergy, the involved program staff person and any other persons at the Senior Pastor's discretion. This screening will be valid for three (3) years. If a person has already completed this screening for conference or district, that screening report will be accepted by the First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee; however, the First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee reserves the right to request a more recent or more comprehensive background check.

III. Leader Training

Upon certification, leaders will participate in required training programs as developed by the First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee.

IV. Operating Procedures and Best Practices

First United Methodist Church volunteers should strive to follow these procedures and best practices:

- A. **Two-Adult Rule.** There should be at least two unrelated adults present at all times during an event/program sponsored by First United Methodist Church, in which children, youth or adults with special needs are present. At times when it may be impossible to adhere to the two-adult rule, a "floater" may be used to move in and out of rooms, alternating time in each classroom with only one adult.

- B. **Open-Door Counseling.** During counseling of children, youth or adults with special needs, doors may be closed if there is an unobstructed window viewing into the room. If there is no window, the door should remain open for the entire counseling session unless a second adult is present.
- C. **Classroom Doors.** If only one adult is present in a room and the second adult is observing from the hallway, then the classroom door must be left open at all times. Classroom doors may only be closed when two unrelated adults are present or when doors have an unobstructed window viewing into the room.
- D. **Check-in/out Procedures.** A check-in/checkout procedure is required for all events involving children, youth, and adults with special needs.
- E. **Outings Away From Church Property.** All children, youth or adults with special needs participating in out-of-town and over-night outings must have written consent and a notarized medical release form. (Medical release and consent forms may be completed for a one-year period and must be renewed annually).

There must be access to a phone, cell phone or pager when groups are away from the church property. If the outing involves water activities such as swimming, a certified lifeguard or additional adult volunteers will accompany the group.

In no circumstance is one adult (other than the parent) to take a child or children on an overnight outing alone. On youth overnight outings, there will be a 1:7 staff: youth supervision ratio observed. Female staff will supervise female youth in their sleeping quarters and male staff will supervise male youth. Married couples will not stay together but observe the female/female and male/male sleeping arrangements. With the exception of a parent/child combination, a staff and youth will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag.

- F. **Classroom Discipline.** All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures:
 1. If a person is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the person specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building."
 2. If this measure is not effective, the person will be guided to another activity.
 3. If inappropriate behavior continues, the person may be placed to work alone away from the other students.
 4. If the person's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, a teacher will notify the program staff person in charge who will talk with the person and work with the person's parent or guardian.
 5. **No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time.** If isolating the person within the classroom or removal of the person from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the person's parent or guardian as soon as possible.

V. RESPONSE BY VOLUNTEERS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the Senior Pastor or designee. Be prepared to do the following:

- A. Ensure the protection of and tend to the immediate needs of the child, youth, or adult as the situation requires.
- B. Immediately contact the Senior Pastor and program staff member over the area (Children & Family Ministries Director, Youth Director, Child Development Center Director, The Caring Place Director).
- C. Complete the *Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse/Neglect* form.
- D. Contact proper authorities.

VOLUNTEER LEADER APPLICATION FORM

*First United Methodist Church
320 West Main
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753*

NAME: _____ M F BIRTHDATE: ____/____/____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____

ZIP: _____ HOME PHONE: _____ WORK PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

AREA OF CHURCH WHERE I WOULD LIKE TO SERVE (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):

- Youth Ministry Children's Ministry Child Development Center The Caring Place

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children, youth, or adults with special needs?

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

Have you ever been exposed to an incident of child abuse or neglect? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

SIGNATURE

DATE

REFERENCES

All references must be 18 years of age or older.

No reference may be a member of your immediate family (parents, siblings, spouse, stepparents, grandparents etc).

1. This reference **SHOULD** be the pastor or a member of the program staff of the church in which you are or were formerly a church member. ** If this reference is not from a pastor or member of the program staff of the church, please explain why.*

NAME: _____ RELATIONSHIP: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

2. This reference should be someone who has known you for **TWO YEARS** or more, He/She may be a teacher, employer, classmate, etc.

NAME: _____ RELATIONSHIP: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

3. This reference should be someone who has known you for **TWO YEARS** or more, He/She may be a teacher, employer, classmate, etc.

NAME: _____ RELATIONSHIP: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR A CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

*First United Methodist Church
320 West Main
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753*

I am an employee, an applicant for employment, or volunteer of First United Methodist Church (Church). As a part of the application process I have been advised that the Church conducts a criminal history check including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law. I do hereby consent to the use of any and all information provided to the Church in the application process to be used in the criminal history/background check. I hereby certify that all information provided in this consent form is true, correct and complete. If any information proves to be incorrect or incomplete, I understand that can lead to my immediate termination as a paid employee or volunteer. I release the Church and Background Information System of America, Inc. from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT _____ **DATE** _____

PRINT APPLICANT'S FULL NAME: _____

PRINT ALL OTHER NAMES USED BY APPLICANT (MAIDEN) _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ **PLACE OF BIRTH** _____

DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER _____ **STATE ISSUING LICENSE:** _____

LICENSE EXPIRATION DATE: _____ **TELEPHONE #:** (_____) _____

SEX: MALE _____ FEMALE _____

ADDRESSES WHERE RESIDED FOR PAST 10 YEARS...CURRENT LOCAL ADDRESS LISTED FIRST:

(CITY) _____ **(STATE)** _____ **(DATE FROM)** _____ **(DATE To)** _____

(CITY) _____ **(STATE)** _____ **(DATE FROM)** _____ **(DATE To)** _____

PLEASE USE BACK FOR ADDITIONAL ADDRESSES:

Staff Use Only: _____
PERSON MAKING REQUEST _____ **TITLE/POSITION** _____

AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR A CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

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First United Methodist Church

PRINT APPLICANT'S FULL NAME: _____

...ADDRESSES WHERE RESIDED FOR PAST 10 YEARS:

(CITY) **(STATE)** **(DATE FROM)** **(DATE To)**

SAFE SANCTUARY COVENANT
First United Methodist Church
320 West Main
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753

The congregation at First United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, adults with special needs and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) shall be allowed to work with children, youth, or adults with special needs in any church-sponsored activity.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor, who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth, is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with the Senior Pastor before accepting an assignment.
3. All adult volunteers involved with children, youth, or adults with special needs of our church must have been members of the congregation or active attendees for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
4. Adult volunteers with children, youth, or adults with special needs shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children, youth, or adults with special needs.
5. Adult volunteers with children, youth, and adults with special needs should participate in trainings and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding abuse.
6. Adult volunteer shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to:

1. Observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children, youth, and adults with special needs? Yes No
2. Abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment? Yes No
3. Observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times? Yes No
4. Participate in training and educational events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment? Yes No
5. Promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? Yes No
6. Discuss with the minister of this congregation your experience, if any, as a survivor of child abuse?
 Yes No N/A
7. Inform a minister of this congregation if you've ever been convicted of child abuse?
 Yes No N/A

I certify that I have read the First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy and I agree to abide by the policies set forth. I understand that a violation on any of these guidelines can lead to my immediate termination as a volunteer leader.

SIGNATURE

DATE