

**Safe Sanctuaries**  
**Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church**  
**For Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults**  
**Waterloo First United Methodist Church**  
**Waterloo, Iowa**

Waterloo First United Methodist Church is committed to the well being of every person entrusted to its care.

**Scope**

Waterloo First United Methodist Church affirms that all children, youth, and vulnerable adults (see definition below) have the right to safe sanctuary. Therefore, Waterloo 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 shall apply to all staff and volunteers, clergy or lay, who have contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in church sponsored events and activities. The Administrative Team, in consultation with the Safe Sanctuaries Committee, shall be responsible for reviewing and revising this policy as needed. Each ministry within the church involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall adopt procedures to implement this policy.

**Definitions**

1. **Participants** are children and youth under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by the church.
2. **Vulnerable adults** are persons over 18 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities that make them more susceptible to physical, sexual, emotional or ritual abuse or neglect.
3. **Physical Abuse** is any deliberate act that inflicts bodily harm to a person, including, but not limited to, physically striking, hitting or spanking.
4. **Sexual Abuse** is any sexual of the following acts performed by any Staff, Volunteer, or Helper:
  - a. Any sex act or sexual contact done by force or against the will of another or with anyone who cannot give their consent because of their minority or mental or physical disability. This would include any sex act or sexual contact with a Participant including fondling, kissing or unwelcome physical contact, touching, and tickling in an inappropriate or sexual manner.
  - b. The exposure of one's genitals, pubic area, or private areas to a Participant for the purpose of arousing or satisfying the sexual desire of either person.

- c. The disrobing or partial disrobing of a Participant for purposes of arousing or satisfying the sexual desire of either person.
  - d. Any sexually explicit language or gestures directed towards a Participant.
  - e. Any sexually explicit images displayed toward or in the presence of a Participant.
  - f. The performance of a sex act in the presence of a Participant.
  - g. The solicitation of any sex act or sexual contact from or with a Participant.
5. **Neglect** is failure to provide nutrition, medical attention, affection, education or any other care necessary for the well being of a Participant.
6. **Emotional Abuse** is spoken and/or unspoken emotional cruelty or the threat of violence, sexual contact or offensive contact towards another, including inappropriate or intimidating actions or body language.
7. **Ritual Abuse** is physical, sexual or psychological violence inflicted intentionally and in a stylized way, by someone (or multiple people) with responsibility for the victim's welfare.
8. **Staff** includes any person employed by the church or by programs using the church facilities who is responsible for the care/supervision of a Participant at an event.
9. **Volunteer** is any non-clergy lay worker who has the care/supervision of a Participant at an event.
10. **Helper** is anyone who aids in ministry and is under the age of 18.

## **Application and Screening Procedures**

Careful **screening** is one way to prevent the abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Careful screening helps the church in obtaining the most reliable, committed, and experienced staff and volunteers for every program to protect Participants and the church. It is the responsibility of the Waterloo First United Methodist Church to strive to give all Participants safe sanctuary by utilizing the following screening process.

1. Applicant/Volunteer completes an application form, including references and a signed statement that the Applicant/Volunteer has read the guidelines.
2. Applicant/Volunteer signs a Waiver and Consent form permitting the church to conduct reference checks, talk with representatives of a former church, and conduct criminal background checks.
3. Applicant/Volunteer signs an acceptance of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and agrees to abide by its terms.
4. If Applicant/Volunteer is not already known by the supervising person or recommended by someone whose judgment is trusted by the supervising person, an in-person interview should be conducted.
5. Adults or Youth who have been identified as having committed abuse or neglect (See definitions 3-7) or having a criminal record involving a violent crime to another person will not knowingly be employed by the church or accepted as a volunteer or helper with programs or activities for Participants.
6. References may be checked and documented.
7. The following background records may be checked and documented: criminal records, sex offender registry, child abuse registry and DOT, if applicable
8. Helpers must submit a signed Parental Permission form.
9. Applicant/Volunteer is cleared for contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults by the supervising committee (Staff Parish Relations Committee) or the supervising staff member, Christian Educator or equivalent
10. Applicant/Volunteer may be asked to resubmit the Application and related materials after 5 years.
11. All forms and referenced 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. Detailed notes on a designated form shall be for all reference checks, which shall also be included in the personnel file. All applications and related

forms must be completed. The Senior Pastor and the Christian Educator or equivalent will be the only persons with access to these files.

12. Non-church programs shall maintain their own personnel files. The Church reserves the right to obtain an explanation of the non-church's record-keeping process and, upon written request of the Lead Pastor, to be given copies of documents applicable to programs conducted at the Church
13. The staff person in charge of each ministry is responsible for reviewing this policy with each applicant during an interview prior to service

## **Basic Guidelines for Supervision**

**Supervision** guidelines and procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of neglect or abuse to the children, youth, or vulnerable adults and to protect staff persons, volunteers, and helpers from unwarranted accusations. These are MINIMUM standards and each activity may adopt more stringent requirements as necessary.

1. Training/orientation is a requirement for all staff persons, volunteers, and helpers working with Participants in church activities. Initial training should include information regarding this Policy, procedures for supervision, as well as information on how to identify and report suspected abuse or neglect. Additional training will be provided as necessary. Training will be provided by the Christian Educator or equivalent and approved by the Senior Pastor.
2. To the extent it is reasonably possible, at least two adults will be present in all settings involving Participants. Exceptions may be made with the written consent of a parent or guardian of each Participant.
3. All persons with any significant contact with participants should be cleared by the supervising staff person in accordance with the Application and Screening procedures described in this policy.
4. No person shall supervise children or youth under the age of 18 unless he/she is at least 18 years of age and is a minimum of 5 years older than the children or youth being supervised.
5. Prohibited behaviors for all staff, volunteers, and helpers include but are not limited to any physical, sexual, emotional or ritual abuse or neglect as defined by this document.
6. A record and report shall be kept of any incident resulting in injury or complaint of injury to a Participant, or of any treatment of any ailment or health condition. The Senior Pastor and the Christian Educator or equivalent will be the only persons with access to these files.
7. Each room or space where Participants are being cared for shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open. All activities shall occur in open view.
8. Advance notice and full information will be provided to parents/guardians for activities in which children/youth are outside of their direct supervision. Signed written parental/guardian permission forms shall be required.
9. All Participants who can understand a covenant and parents/guardians of all Participants shall sign a participation covenant. This covenant can be in the

form of clear, posted or printed rules that are explained to the Participants and parents/guardians of the Participants at the outset of the program.

10. Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all ministries. At a minimum, these records should list the date and hours of the related activities, its location, the names of the Participants (including whether any were dismissed early and the times of such dismissals), and the names of the adults involved directly in the activity and other supervisors on site the day of the activity.

## **Response Guidelines in Case of Allegations of Abuse**

Once an incident of abuse occurs or allegation of an incident 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 abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse or neglect in a church activity, the entire staff of that activity shall cooperate with all official investigating agencies.

1. The Staff Person, Ministry Team Leader, Volunteer, or Helper who observes an alleged incident of abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported is required to report the incident immediately to the staff person in charge of the activity.
2. The staff person in charge of the activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately fill out a Report of Suspected Abuse.
3. If the allegation is against a Church Staff Person, Ministry Team Leader, Volunteer, or Helper or if it occurred in the course of a church sponsored activity, the staff person in charge of the activity and the church Response Team shall be contacted immediately. The church Response Team will be activated.
4. The Response Team will consist of the Lead Pastor, the Christian Educator or equivalent, and 4 members of the following: Lay Leader, member of Staff/Parish Relations Committee, and a member of the Trustees, and member of our congregation to form a committee with a gender balance.
5. Upon receiving such information, the staff person in charge of the activity may call Iowa's Central Abuse Hotline (800-362-2178) to make a report. The staff person in charge of the activity shall then send the completed form to the local Department of Human Services.
6. The Lead Pastor is to be informed immediately before or subsequent to the making of a report.
7. In the case that the alleged perpetrator of abuse is the supervising person/pastor or a family member of the supervising person/pastor, a report will be made to the Staff/Parish Relations Committee.
8. In the case of an allegation of abuse the church shall consult with legal counsel for purposes of guiding Waterloo First United Methodist Church in the appropriate handling of the allegations.
9. If the allegation is made against a Staff Person, Ministry Team Leader, Volunteer, or Helper by or on behalf of a Participant, the custodial parent or guardian of the Participant will be notified immediately and a face-to-face meeting with the parent will be scheduled.

10. In either case, Pastoral support will be made available to all persons involved with the incident as indicated.
11. Any person who is the object of the report will be required to refrain from all activities until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.
12. In the case of an allegation of abuse or neglect, whether by a paid staff person or a volunteer, the Northeast District Office of the UMC will be informed as soon as possible.
13. All requests for media statements should be directed to the Lead Pastor.
14. Guidelines for handling media requests will be a part of training/orientation

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the First United Methodist Church of Waterloo, Iowa on this \_\_\_ day of November 2007.

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Chairman, Board of Trustees of First United  
Methodist Church of Waterloo, Iowa

Approved by the Administrative Team of First United Methodist Church of Waterloo, Iowa on this \_\_\_ day of November 2007.

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Chairman, Administrative Team of First United  
Methodist Church of Waterloo, Iowa

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Senior Pastor, First United Methodist Church of  
Waterloo, Iowa