

**SAFE SANCTUARIES
CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY
ABINGDON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (AUMC)**

PURPOSE

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety and well-being of all of our children, youth, or other disabled individuals. We understand that "abuse" includes but is not limited to physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and ritual abuse.

POLICY

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist Congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assume the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth, as well as the workers with the children and youth. We will follow reasonable measures in the selection and recruitment of paid or volunteer workers. We will use the following procedures to implement our policy.

PROCEDURES

- **Minimum Age:** Volunteers and staff must be at least 18 years old and must be 4 years older than the age of persons that they will be working to serve. Adults may not leave children alone with persons not meeting this requirement.
- **Six Month Rule:** Volunteers must be active at AUMC for six months before they can serve in the children and youth ministries. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve as assistants to another approved adult. The Safe Sanctuaries Board will consider exceptions to this rule.
- **Background Check:** Paid and volunteer workers will undergo a background check.
- **Two-Adult Rule:** A minimum of two adults is required for all close-quarter programming with children and youth. Other ratios may apply in accordance with the Conference Policy. Where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, we will have an additional adult serve as a floater. The floater will have visual and physical access to all areas (either requiring doors to be open or having prominent windows in the doors).
- **Lodging:** Children or youth will room together without an adult. In situations where adults must room with youth or children in a hotel, cabin, tent, or other similar situation, there must be two adults. The adults must be the same sex as the children or youth. Adults cannot sleep in the same bed with children or youth unless they are the parent or guardian of that child.
- **Transportation for Church-Organized Events:** Two Always have more than one child or one adult in a vehicle. Exceptions are allowed for emergencies.

- **Release of Children:**
 - On-campus daytime activities including Sundays (Sunday school, Children’s Church): Children in 5th grade and younger must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Emergency cases will be determined on an as needed basis. We will release children to brothers, sisters, or other designated persons with written permission from parents.
 - On-campus nighttime activities including Sunday and Wednesday night programs: A parent or guardian must pick up children in the 5th grade or younger. With written permission, we will release children to brothers, sisters, or other designated persons. We will decide exceptions on an as needed basis.
 - Off-campus events: Drivers must adhere to transportation rules. Drivers cannot “drop” children off on the way back to the church from an off-campus event.
- **Open Door Rule:** All counseling sessions with children and youth shall take place in offices with windows or the door shall remain open while the office is in use.
- **Policy Publication:** We will post the Safe Sanctuary Policy in all areas of the church. We will include it in the church’s publications as well.
- **Reporting Abuse:** Volunteers who work with children under the age of 18 must report any type of suspected child according to policy.
 - Workers shall report incidents of child abuse or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, whether allegedly perpetrated by individuals associated with the church or outside of the church, to the Senior Pastor. In the event of the Senior Pastor’s absence or alleged involvement, then report allegations to the Associate Pastor.
- **Scheduled Events or Programs:** Two (2) adults must be present for scheduled events or programs. An adult or guardian at least 18 years of age must accompany children under the age of 12.
- **Unsupervised children and youth:** Any person or group using, attending, or visiting any area of the church cannot leave their children under the age of 12 unsupervised. This includes not leaving a child in a room by themselves or allowing them to roam the church campus, including the playground, unsupervised.
- **Training:** We will provide training opportunities to all paid or volunteer workers in areas such as but not limited to our safe sanctuaries policy, discipline policy, confidentiality policy, media response policy, first aid, and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation.