

St. Andrew's United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Administrative Council, staff and members of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church are committed to maintaining a safe environment in which children, youth and at risk individuals are protected from abuse and neglect. Our goals are to protect children, youth, and at risk individuals involved in church programs, to educate workers and caregivers concerning abuse issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the community of St. Andrew's UMC, from potential allegations of abuse and neglect.

Implementation includes:

- Selection of staff, teachers, caregivers and others involved in activities with children and youth
 - Training of these individuals
 - Supervision of these individuals

- Reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect

- Responding to incidents or allegations of abuse and neglect

- Monitoring the policy and procedures to insure compliance

We recognize that children/youth/at risk individuals are entrusted to the care of adults in church programs and activities, both on and organized off-site programs. They will be free to participate in these programs and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. This general policy is applicable to all persons whether compensated staff or volunteers, who conduct programs and activities, run by St. Andrew's United Methodist Church. This policy also applies to any organization utilizing the facilities of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church.

Hereinafter, the use of the term "**Minister**" shall refer to persons ordained and lay staff persons, who are employed to work with specific work area ministries of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church. "**Ministry**" shall refer to specific work areas with children/youth and/or at risk individuals at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church. "**Ministry Leader**" shall refer to the

staff person who has direct supervision of a particular work area or work area event. **“Lead Ministry Position”** refers to the volunteer leader of a ministry area or event. **“Worker”** refers to any volunteer that serves in a ministry area but not in a leadership capacity. **“At risk individual”** refers to any adult that due to physical or mental disability is at risk for potential abuse by another individual. Children are defined as Infants through grade 5 and youth are defined as 6th – 12th grade, including those of legal age but in High School.

Guidelines for Employees and Volunteers

Who Direct or Control Activities for Children/ Youth and At Risk Individuals

At St. Andrew’s United Methodist Church

1. Volunteer Screening Procedures

- a. Prior to consideration for a position, any candidate who may be working with children, youth or at risk individuals shall complete and return a Covenant Statement and Volunteer Application. (Form attached)
- b. A criminal background check will be performed through an appropriate agency approved by the Administrative Council. All volunteers will have a background check every year.
- c. The Covenant and Application & background check shall be carefully reviewed and held in confidence.
- d. If the applicant has cleared the background check and is approved for the ministry work, then references will be checked to confirm the information provided on the application.
- e. Should St. Andrew’s UMC have sufficient reason to believe that an applicant poses a threat to children, youth or at risk individuals and/or has any prior history or conviction of

physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, then such applicant will not be approved.

2. **Employee Screening Procedures**

a. All persons applying for an employee position with St. Andrews UMC will submit an employment application including a covenant statement. Employee screening, hiring and employment practices will be managed through the Staff Parish Committee.

3. **Waiting Period**

No volunteer worker will be considered for any **lead ministry position** involving contact with children or youth unless the candidate has attended St. Andrew's UMC regularly for at least six (6) months. Someone known by the ministry leader and with staff discretion may volunteer if they meet the screening criteria above.

4. **Supervision On site**

a. At least two unrelated adults (over 18, at least 4 years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised, and who meet the 4 yr. rule) should be present during children/youth activities.

b. Supervising adults should be at least 4 years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised.

c. During services or events, two unrelated adults shall be in each classroom. In addition, an adult will be available to roam in order to monitor activity inside and outside the room(s).

d. If there is not a glass panel in the door, then the door to the room will be left open. If the classroom has a Dutch door, then the top portion may be left open.

e. Children are to be released to (5th grade and under) parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized by parent or guardian to pick up the child.

f. **Buddy System:** Youth shall have a buddy close to their age accompany them- no youth is ever alone while on the premises or at an outside activity.

g. **Restroom policy:** Volunteers/staff accompanying children needing assistance to the restroom should leave the hallway door open and the stall door ajar.

5. Offsite supervision

Travel

a. Any off-site church sponsored activity that requires transportation of youth and children must have written permission and medical insurance information from the parent or guardian of each child/youth. The permission/medical forms must travel with the group for the entire trip.

b. Before any approved safe sanctuary volunteer can transport a youth/child, they must pass a driving check according to the guidelines set forth by our trustees and insurance company. These driving checks must be done once a year.

c. Before a volunteer can transport a youth/child in their personal vehicle they must show proof of insurance.

d. When transporting youth/children in personal vehicles, there will never be a case where one adult has just one child/youth in the car. If there is just one adult in each personal vehicle, that vehicle must travel in a caravan with a maximum of 3 vehicles.

e. When transporting youth/children in a rented vehicle, 2 unrelated-adults must be in each vehicle.

Housing

a. If rooms are hotel style rooms, youth/children and adults will sleep in separate rooms. There must always be an adult room beside each youth/child room.

b. In bunk style housing, when adults are sharing rooms with youth/children, there must be a minimum of 2 unrelated-adults sleeping in the room.

Supervision

a. At least 2 unrelated-adults will be present during all activities, meetings, and programs.

b. No youth or adult can leave the camp/program location without the trip leader/staff members permission.

c. The following adult to youth/child ratios shall be used for all offsite activities:

4 and under: Only travelling with parents

Kindergarten-5th grade: A minimum of 2 adults per 8 children

6th-12th grade: A minimum of 2 adults per 12 youth

Note: For overnight offsite activities, there shall be a minimum of 2 adults of each gender on the trip, in addition to the above ratios

5. **Notice of Injury, Abuse or Molestation**

a. A written incident/notice of non-minor injury report shall be prepared by workers whenever a non-minor injury occurs during a ministry function/event. The **Accident Report Form** shall be forwarded to the worker's coordinator/supervisor and a copy provided to the Office Manager or Facility Manager and Trustee Chair. (*Accident Report Form Attached*)

b. Any person who becomes aware of any non-minor injury, any abuse or molestation or any allegation of abuse or molestation connected with any ministry activity is legally bound to inform their staff ministry leader of such matter. The staff ministry leader shall immediately inform the Senior Pastor and shall complete the **Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse** form (*Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse Form Attached*)

c. The Senior Pastor and the Staff Parish Chair shall be responsible for determining the appropriate action to be taken with the approval of the District Superintendent. In the event of a conflict, the District Superintendent shall have the final local authority in the matter.

d. In the event that the Senior Pastor is implicated, the chairperson of the Staff-Parish Committee shall be notified and he/she shall notify within 24 hours the District Superintendent.

e. Notwithstanding the above, any person who has cause to suspect abuse or neglect (physical, sexual or otherwise) shall report the said suspicions to the Director of the Department of Social Services in the appropriate county pursuant to North Carolina Law(North Carolinas General Statute Section 7B-301). **Suspect** means you have seen signs of abuse or neglect or the child has made statements to you.

- f. If any complaint comes to the attention of the media, only the Staff-Parish (Pastor) Chairperson, District Superintendent, or their designee will be authorized to make releases of information to the media. This person will be the only person authorized to convey information on behalf of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church concerning the situation, so as to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation, and shall convey only such information as is deemed necessary under the circumstances.
- g. ***Confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded.***

6. Violation of Policy or Procedures

- a. Workers shall promptly notify their coordinator/supervisor of any activity undertaken on their own behalf or by others which violates this policy or procedure.
- b. Any coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church who becomes aware of a violation of the policy or procedures shall take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with the policy and procedures by all workers; and shall remove workers from their position if such removal is warranted, or if the workers pose a potential threat to others.
- c. Any employee of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church who is the subject of an investigation shall be removed from his or her position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. However, if the employee admits to the abuse or molestation, then he or she shall be immediately terminated in accordance with St. Andrew's United Methodist Church employment practices.
- d. Any volunteer worker who is the subject of an investigation shall be removed from his or her position pending completion of the investigation.
- e. Any person who is not found innocent of alleged abuse or molestation shall be removed from work with children, youth and at risk individuals at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church.

7. Annual Employee/Volunteer Worker Review

- a. This policy and these procedures shall be conveyed to all applicable workers, employees, coordinators, supervisors, and pastors for initial training and annual review thereafter.

b. An **Applicant Recommitment Statement** will be completed annually.(Applicant Recommitment Statement Attached)

c. In the event any yearly information update suggests or indicates that any employee or volunteer worker has become unsuitable for working with children, youth, or at risk individuals, he or she shall be immediately removed from his or her current position(s) and shall not be considered for other positions involving work with children, youth, or at risk individuals.

8. ***Policy/Procedure Revision***

*This document shall be regularly reviewed and modified accordingly by action of the Administrative Council in accordance with the **Book of Discipline**.*