

Guidelines for Safety of Children and Youth

First United Methodist Church

November 10, 2002

(last modified on July 22, 2008)

The **policy framework** for these guidelines is **The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004** ¶162, Social Principles, (C) “Rights of Children,” p. 106

“Once considered the property of their parents, children are now acknowledged to be full human beings in their own right, but beings to whom adults and society in general have special obligations. Thus we support the development of school systems and innovative methods of education designed to assist every child toward complete fulfillment as an individual person of worth. All children have the right to quality education, including a full sexual education appropriate to their stage of development that utilizes the best educational techniques and insights. Christian parents and guardians and the Church have morality, including faithfulness in marriage and abstinence in singleness. Moreover, children have the rights to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and emotional well being as do adults, and these rights we affirm as theirs regardless of actions or inactions of their parents or guardians. In particular, children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

The **philosophy** undergirding these guidelines is that the church is a sanctuary, a safe place. It is especially important that the church, and all its activities, be a safe place for children and youth, who experience the feeling and the reality of uneven power in every relationship. We must take extra care to protect those who are powerless or have less power to protect and defend themselves.

It is our belief that most adults, and certainly those Christian adults involved in the work of the church, are trustworthy and have the best interest of children in their hearts. We do not wish to create an environment of suspicion, filled with guarded watchfulness. We want children at First UMC to experience the full warmth of loving relationships, and the manifestation of love and care in hugs and held hands as well as in words and attitudes.

To prevent harm to children and youth, whether enrolled in Sunday school, Child Development Ministry, Vacation Bible School, UMYF or participating in any other activities at First UMC or sponsored by First UMC, we can reduce physical and emotional risk in the following ways:

1. Assure the safety of equipment and facilities. (Trustees, Church Administrator, CDM Director)
2. Prepare children and youth by teaching them about their right to feel safe, and when they do not feel safe, they may leave the person or place that feels threatening and tell a trusted adult about the fear. (Education Committee, Minister of Education, CDM Director)
3. Provide age-appropriate education and information to children and youth on ways to recognize, avoid, and respond to situations that may be unsafe for them. (Education Committee, Minister of Education, CDM Director)

4. Provide information on indicators of abuse and appropriate responses to teachers and other adults who work with children and youth. (Minister of Education, CDM Director)
5. Offer opportunities for parents to learn how to manage their own anger and how to discipline without violence. (Committee on Education, Minister of Education)
6. Provide these guidelines to all new members and post on church website.
7. All program ministry should operate under the “2” rule. That is, at least two non-related adults should be present for any children’s or youth activity or event. Careful attention needs to be paid that there is the proper balance of sexes of those in leadership positions. *For the purpose of this policy, “related” means immediate family.*
8. Rosters of those in attendance at any children’s or youth activity should be maintained and filed in the Minister of Education or Youth Director’s office. Adult names are to be recorded, also.
9. Information cards should be maintained on all children and youth with emergency contact names and special medical and allergy information. These are to be readily accessible to activity leader. Copy to be maintained in Minister of Education or Youth Director’s Office.
10. Reports of any accidents or injuries need to be reported to the church administrator as soon as possible.
11. Adults supervising an activity or leading a class should always be identified by nametag.
12. Dismissal of Sunday school for children through 4th grade will occur when the bell is rung and parents/responsible person picks up the child. *Responsible person is someone so designated by a parent to a teacher or leader.* (Teachers)
13. When not within an organized activity, children are the responsibility of parents/responsible adults and should never be allowed to roam the buildings or grounds unsupervised.
14. When situations require physical intimacy, such as examining a child for injury or changing a diaper, have two unrelated adults present.
15. When situations call for privacy, such as counseling, have another adult present in the area.
16. Keep doors open as much as is reasonable.

17. No youth may be in the Youth Center or Sonshine House when there are no adults present.
18. For overnight trip, depending upon the housing, there should be at least one chaperone per room of multiple youth.
19. Chaperones and leaders of activities need to be at least five years older than the participants.
20. If any child or youth becomes a discipline problem, the parents will be contacted and requested to “pick-up” the offender. Corporal punishment is strictly forbidden. Discipline guidelines are to be provided by Education Committee.
21. Transportation – All children/youth are to use seat belts or other approved restraints. Drivers are to be 25 years or older. If using church vehicles, policies concerning drivers and operation are to be followed. Parental permission forms should be completed anytime children/youth are to be transported.
22. All staff members, including paid childcare workers, will have appropriate SLED/FBI checks. (Church administrator)
23. All persons volunteering with youth and children’s activities should be a church member or active participant for at least six months. These persons will be asked to complete a registration form that will include social security number, driver’s license number, birth date and prior experience in such volunteering and will have a national background check. (Minister of Education, Youth Director, Nursery Co-ordinator, Children’s Music Directors)
24. The SLED results will be seen by the Church Administrator only and will be maintained in a locked file. (Church Administrator)
25. An internal self audit will be conducted each year through the employee performance evaluation (Supervisors)
26. The Administrative Board shall name a committee to review these policies every three years. (Administrative Board Chair)
27. All are requested to exercise good judgment so that the preventative measure does not do more damage to relationships and well being, than some remote risk.
28. Exceptions to these guidelines for unusual situations should be approved by the senior minister.

Approved on January 19, 2003. Modified September 19, 2004, July 17, 2007 and July 22, 2008 by Administrative Board.

To be posted in each church building

REPORTING PROCEDURE

In the event of suspected or complaint of child abuse, children, youth, members and/or staff must report the incident directly to Child Protective Services at 915-4766, then report this action to one of the pastors and the church administrator.