

**The
Safe Sanctuaries Policy
of the
First United Methodist Church**

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SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

For

First United Methodist Church

Jacksonville, Alabama

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. PURPOSE.** It is the purpose and intent of First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville, Alabama, to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children and students of our faith family.
- B. GOALS.** Our goals are to protect children from sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect by employees or volunteers in this church; to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations; and to ensure proper reporting and handling of allegations of sexual abuse.
- C. DEFINITIONS.**

1. ABUSE: Mistreatment of a minor, as defined below:

- a. *Physical abuse* is physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death), inflicted by hitting, punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, or other harmful contact. Although physical abuse injuries ARE NOT accidents, parents or caretakers may not have intended to hurt the child so severely. Many of these injuries result from discipline or physical punishment that is excessive and/or inappropriate.
- b. *Emotional abuse* is any pattern of behavior that attacks children's psychological development and sense of self worth. It includes teasing, criticizing or insulting children. Emotional abuse is the most difficult form of abuse to identify and often accompanies physical or sexual abuse.
- c. *Neglect* is negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, or supervision.
- d. *Sexual abuse* is any sexual act with a child performed by an adult or an older child. It involves the use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct. These sexual behaviors are often intended to erotically arouse the older person, generally without consideration for the effects of the behavior upon the child.

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It can often be criminal behavior. This policy, however, addresses all inappropriate sexual activity, whether criminal or not. Such activity can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, or anal areas; intercourse, and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic or sexually explicit materials inappropriate Internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse further notes that such abusive conduct can take place in a home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, or in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away. The key purpose of this policy is to ensure that such conduct does not occur in any activity sponsored or conducted by JFUMC.

- e. *Ritual Abuse* is an abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violence is inflicted on a youth, intentionally and in a stylized way, by someone (or multiple people) with responsibility for the victim's welfare. It involves repeated threats of sexual or physical violence to the child victim or to people related to the child.
 - 2. **EMPLOYEE:** anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with preschoolers, children and students
 - 3. **MINOR:** A minor is any individual under the age of 19 years.
 - 4. **VOLUNTEER:** anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors. Examples: Nursery, childcare, preschool, grade school, middle school, high school, and college workers, bus drivers, teachers, chaperones, scout leaders, others as designated by the Church Administrator.
- D. OVERVIEW.** The policy and procedure set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities whether clergy, paid staff, or volunteer.

This policy will address four (4) areas that are critical for the protection of the children, our employees and our church: selection process, protection policy, reporting procedures, and responses to allegations.

II. SELECTION PROCESS

- A. Current employee.** The following will be initiated for all current employees upon adoption of this Policy.
 - . Complete a confidential application form
 - . Complete a consent to release confidential information. Criminal records check
 - . Received letter from Single Source Services stating "meets the suitability" criteria under State statute
 - . Received appropriate clearances of all checks to work with minors. Recommendation Report completed by the Office Administrator
- B. New employee** (effective May 1, 2004). No new employee will be hired until all of the following are satisfactorily completed.
 - . Complete a confidential application form
 - . Complete a consent to release confidential information . Criminal records check
 - . Interview by Senior Pastor (for employees of Kids First, the interview will be conducted by the Kid's 1st Director and a Kids 1st Board member). References checked and verified
 - . Received letter from Single Source Services "meets the suitability" criteria under State statute
 - . Received appropriate clearances on all checks to work with minors . Recommendation Report completed by the Office Administrator

NOTE 1: The information collected in this process will be maintained in the employee's personnel file, and it will only be disclosed to those parties who have a demonstrated official need for the information or in response to valid requests by law enforcement authorities.

C. Current volunteer. The following will be initiated for all current volunteers upon adoption of this Policy.

- . Complete a confidential application form
- . Complete a consent to release confidential information. Criminal records check
- . Received letter from Single Source Services stating "meets the suitability" criteria under State statute
- . Received appropriate clearances on all checks to work with minors . Recommendation Report completed by Office Administrator

D. New Volunteer (effective May 1,2004). No new volunteer will be permitted to supervise or participate as a volunteer in programs involving a minor until all of the following are satisfactorily completed.

- . Complete a confidential application form
- . Complete a consent to release confidential information . References checked and verified .
DHR
records check
- . Criminal records check
Received letter from Single Source Services stating "meets the suitability" criteria under State statute
Received appropriate clearances on all checks to work with minors, as determined by the Office Administrator.

NOTE 2: Criminal records checks for volunteers will be limited to any criminal activity involving the following: (1) a crime that involves a minor; (2) child molestation, (3) any type of sexual offense; (4) any type of pornographic or obscene material; (5) any type of physical violence; (6) suspected child abuse, (7) crimes of violence, (8) possession of paraphernalia and/or unlawful activity involving drugs or alcohol.

NOTE 3: In addition to the above requirements, a volunteer must be a member of First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville, or regular attendee, for at least six (6) months. A volunteer who does not meet these membership requirements may serve only upon approval of the Director of Children's Ministry or the Director of Youth Ministry.

NOTE 4: For volunteers who work with minors, the volunteer must be at least five (5) years older than the group s/he is supervising.

NOTE 5: Employees and Volunteers are subject to an update background check at least once every five (5) years.

NOTE 6: The information collected in this process will be maintained in a file in the Church Office, and it **will** only be disclosed to those parties who have a demonstrated official need for the information or in response to valid requests by law enforcement authorities.

- E. **Volunteers who are also Minors.** In addition to the above requirements, an employee or volunteer who is a minor must also submit a separate certification from his or her parent or guardian that the parent or guardian "knows no reason why the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other minors." **Minors should NEVER be allowed to supervise children without constant adult supervision.** The same "5 year rule" as set out in Note 4 above will apply.

II. PROTECTION POLICY

- A. **Two Adults.** Age-group ministers, division directors, hall monitors, greeters and/or program directors will be present, or nearby, and available on each floor and in the hallways where minors are present. There will be two (2) adult workers present, or nearby, with preschoolers, children and youth during church activities. No one adult is to be left alone with one minor. A husband and wife working the same room will typically be considered as one adult for purposes of this policy. A roaming teacher will be given the responsibility to check-in on Sunday School Classrooms with windows available in the doors to assure the presence of the (2) adult rule during this time..
- B. **View Windows/Open Doors.** All preschoolers, children and youth will be in rooms with view windows or open doors for all activities.
- C. **Over-Night Activities.** All Employees and Volunteers will be required to comply with all of the Child Protection Policy during First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville sponsored over-night activities.
- D. **Within Town Activities and Out-of- Town Activities.** All participants should have written parental consent and a notarized medical release form. Consent forms may be completed for a quadrennial period and should be renewed every four years. All consent forms will be considered valid until renewed. Kids 1st Day Care will require Pre-school Application and Parental Field Trip Permission Slip. All Employees and Volunteers shall be required to comply with all of First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville's policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in Safe Sanctuaries Policy during First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville sponsored out-of-town activities.
- E. **Preschool/After School Care Security Policies and Age-Specific Guidelines.** First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville has a detailed, working preschool policy (preschool Policies and Procedures for First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville) that should be conscientiously followed and all Employees and Volunteers shall abide by the preschool security policy as well as any other applicable age-specific guidelines in the Child Protection Policy. Please contact the Director of Youth Ministry, Director of Children's Ministry or Director of Kids 1st Day Care relative to questions about these policies.
- F. **Weekday Programs.** Due to the professional relationship of the teacher and student, parents understand that only one teacher may be present in certain learning or artistic performance programs. Anytime there is to 1 teacher and 1 student present, regular monitoring of the room shall take place.

IV. REPORTING PROCEDURES

- A. Observed or reported physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, or ritual abuse should be reported immediately. In order for the JFUMC to take appropriate action a report must be made to either Director of Children's Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, Church

Administrator, or Pastor. Persons who make a report must follow this procedure, and failure to do so may result in some or all of the allegations not being addressed. For example, if a communication is made to an ordained minister, there may be legal claims of privilege that might prevent further action. The persons identified above have authority and responsibility to follow through on allegations of abuse

- B. Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not solely for malicious purposes. There are resources at the library or on the Internet that can aid in identifying abuse situations included in the Appendix to this Plan. At the same time, failing to report suspected abuse can have severe consequences to the child involved. If you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, report the matter to the Director of Children's Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, Kids 151 Director, Church Administrator or Pastor to be looked into.

V. RESPONSES TO ALLEGATIONS

- A. The church staff will at all times support an orderly investigation of all complaints of abuse, and no complaint will be minimized and no person involved will be blamed in the process. The Senior Pastor or his designee will be the only one authorized to make public comment regarding the allegations.
- B. The church staff will document (in writing, with date and signature) all efforts in the handling of any incident.
- C. The church staff will not minimize or blame any individual involved in allegations. All allegations will be investigated, and the person making the allegation will be informed of the general nature of the investigation to the extent permitted by law. First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville staff will minister to all involved, as well as cooperate with authorities.

VI. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville believes that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Therefore, any civil claim or dispute arising from or related to allegations by or against workers, employees, volunteers, church members or their families, will be submitted to biblically based conciliation in accordance with the Rules *of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries. That forum provides the best opportunity for resolving issues in a fair manner while seeking to preserve or restore the relationships fractured by the dispute and allowing the Church to continue its ministry to all people. This process is voluntary for all parties. (A complete text of the Rules is available at <http://www.hispeace.org/html/geticrul.htm>.)

VII. AMENDMENT OF POLICY

The Administrative Board of First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville may amend these policies upon 30 days notice to the Church.