# Safe Sanctuaries Policy Guide

## Reducing the Risk of Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse in Church




First United Methodist Church
2416 West Cloverdale Park
Montgomery, Alabama 36106
(2025)

# *Statement of Purpose*

*As mandated by the United Methodist Church, the congregation of First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, Alabama establishes this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Training Guide to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all who enter. This policy is designed to give clear boundaries and guidelines that will provide for the safety and protection of all children, youth, vulnerable adults, volunteers and employees of First United Methodist Church.*

# *Table of Contents*


Our Mandate……..3
Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church……..4
What is Abuse.....5
Indicators of Abuse……..6-7
Abuse FAQs……..8
Definitions……9
Bullying Prevention……10-11
Accidents……12
Volunteer Standards, Screening, Training……13
Employee Standards, Screening, Training……14
Unfavorable Background Check……15
Staffing Ratios……16
Special Setting Guidelines……17-18
Overnight, Day Trips, Mentoring, Specialized Services, Home Visitation, Counseling
Digital Safety……19-20
Transportation……21
General Supervision Guidelines……22-23
Reporting Abuse……24
Additional Resource Contact List……25
Principles of Responding to Abuse……26
Response to Persons Accused of Abuse……27
Training Criteria……28
Training Session Overview……29
Educating the Congregation……30
Implementation and Keys to Success……31
Review and Amendment Process……32
Resources……33
Forms Section

# *Our Mandate*

## *from the AWF Conference Policy Statement Concerning Safe Sanctuaries*

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, beginning in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

*Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes (a) child… welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.*

*Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones…,it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6) Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that "…children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse." (Paragraph 162C)*

*Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.*

*Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.*

*God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from all abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.*

(From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2012, page 240)

Therefore, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, First United Methodist Church of Montgomery, Alabama, adopts this policy and its accompanying procedures to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, senior citizens, and at-risk adults. Every congregation within the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference is expected to uphold the Conference policy as its minimum standard in establishing safe sanctuaries for all God's children.

**Statement of Covenant:** In all our ministries with children, youth, and adults, we are committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be "…surrounded by steadfast love, …established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (*United Methodist Hymnal, page 44).*

# *Reducing the Risk of Physical and Sexual Abuse in Church*

***Based on the AWF Conference Policy Statement Concerning Safe Sanctuaries 2023 Trustee Report***

**The church at risk:**
Any organization involved with young people or vulnerable adults is a place where abuse could occur. Several factors make local congregations, districts, and annual conferences more susceptible to risk:

- Churches behave as relatively trusting organizations, relying upon their members and their leaders to conduct themselves appropriately. Sometimes this trusting attitude persists even in the face of questions or reports of misconduct.
- Churches routinely provide opportunities for close contact and for close personal relationships with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Indeed, these are nurtured and encouraged as we try to live out the gospel message.
- In the past, churches have been notoriously inactive in screening volunteers and/or employees who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Often, no investigation was done at all before total strangers were welcomed aboard. FUMC does not accept this approach.

**Consequences of abuse:**

- When one person is abused within a church or Christian program, many victims are created, including the victim, the congregation, the victim's family, and often the family of the abuser.
- The congregation becomes a victim after abuse is revealed and relationships are fractured. It may also suffer for a long time when civil or criminal litigation ensues as a result of the abuse.
- Of foremost importance is the person who has been harmed and for whom care must be provided.
- In addition, paragraph 2702 article 3 of the *2016 Book of Discipline* names child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment as chargeable offenses for clergy and lay members.

**Statement of Policy:**
No congregation or annual conference can afford, either financially, ethically, or morally, to fail to implement strategies for the reduction and prevention of any and every kind of abuse. Therefore, it shall be the policy and covenant of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church to do everything in our power to prevent physical, emotional or sexual abuse against children, youth, and vulnerable adults involved in any ministry sponsored by the Annual Conference or in any of our local congregations.

Further, we are called to minister to those persons who are experiencing abuse and to those who have been victims of abuse in the past. The lifelong damage caused by abuse is devastating. Those working in ministry have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to protect children. Therefore, it is critical that training and adherence to the Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines are taken seriously.
To that end we covenant to be aware of our legal responsibilities and to comply with those responsibilities and go beyond those responsibilities when necessary to act justly in the best interest of those who are most vulnerable to abuse.

Careful screening is the best way to reduce the risk of abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults. It may be time consuming and expensive, but well worth the effort and peace of mind that comes with having the most reliable, committed and experienced staff and volunteers in place for every program that involves children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Although it is our fervent hope and prayer that abuse does not occur in our programs, we must put into place sufficient mechanisms to protect children, youth, vulnerable adults and those who work with them. For that purpose, our ministers shall implement the following procedures for First United Methodist Church Montgomery. These policies meet or exceed the minimum standards set by the conference.

# *What is Abuse?*

The depth and breadth of the problem of abuse is far greater than can be effectively addressed within this resource. For our purposes, we will limit our focus to the prevention of abuse in the church and its

ministries. Be mindful that most abuse victims are under the age of 14 and roughly 90% of abuse cases involve someone known to the victim.

## Types of Abuse

Generally, abuse is categorized in five primary forms: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and ritual abuse. We also include abuse of vulnerable adults.

1. **Physical Abuse.** Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child, youth or vulnerable adult. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, and so forth), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, hitting with fists, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries.

2. **Emotional Abuse.** Abuse in which a person exposes a child, youth or vulnerable adult to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Those exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental or care-giver affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove but can be devastating to the victim.

3. **Neglect.** Abuse in which a person endangers a person's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of self-worth. This is perhaps the most common form of abuse.

4. **Sexual Abuse.** Abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution. Vulnerable adults may also experience sexual abuse as a non-consenting adult.

5. **Ritual Abuse.** Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child, youth or non-consenting adult are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to a child, other persons, and animals. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Persons making such reports must not be ignored.

6. **Abuse of Vulnerable Adults.** Ritual, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect of any person 19 years of age or older with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities. **Financial Exploitation:** The use of deception, intimidation, or threat to take unauthorized control of a vulnerable adult's property with the intent to deprive the vulnerable adult of their property.

# *Indicators of Abuse*

People suffering from abuse often will not tell anyone about it. Therefore, it is important to be able to recognize signs of abuse. The following characteristics may be indicators of abuse, although they are not necessarily proof. Individually, any one of the indicators may be a sign of other, more or less serious problems. When indicators are observed, they can be considered as warnings and should not be ignored.

## **Possible Signs of Physical Abuse** may include, but are not limited to:

1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others.
2. Fearfulness of parents, caregivers and/or other adults.
3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and/or property.
4. Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for child's developmental stage or a vulnerable adult's activity level.
5. Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises.

## **Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse** may include, but are not limited to:

1. Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal.
2. Exhibits severe lack of self-esteem.
3. Failure to thrive.
4. Threatens or attempts suicide.
5. Speech and/or eating disorders.
6. Goes to extremes to seek adult approval.
7. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns.

## **Possible Signs of Neglect** may include, but are not limited to:

1. Failure to thrive.
2. Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate.
3. Begs or steals food; chronic hunger.
4. Depression.
5. Untreated medical conditions.
6. Poor hygiene.

# *Indicators of Abuse - continued*

## **Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse** may include, but are not limited to:

1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and developmental stage.
2. Depression – cries often for no apparent reason.
3. Promiscuous behavior.
4. Runs away from home and refuses to return.
5. Difficulty walking or sitting.
6. Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas.
7. Exhibits frequent headaches, stomachaches, and extreme fatigue.
8. Sexually transmitted diseases.

***In addition to these indicators, children who have been sexually abused at church may exhibit some of the following:***

1. Unusual nervousness or anxiety about being left in the nursery or Sunday School class.
2. Reluctance to participate in church activities that were previously enthusiastically approached.
3. Comments such as "I don't want to be alone with _____" in reference to a childcare worker or teacher.
4. Nightmares including a childcare worker or teacher as a frightening character.
5. Unexplained hostility toward a childcare worker or teacher.

## **Possible Signs of Ritual Abuse** may include, but are not limited to:

1. Disruptions of memory and consciousness.
2. Unexplained mistrust and mood swings.
3. Flashbacks.
4. Eating disorders.
5. Fear of the dark, especially at sundown or a full moon.
6. Agitation or despair that seems to occur in cycles.
7. Fear of ministers, priests, or others wearing robes or uniforms.
8. Nightmares or sleep disorders.
9. Any of the symptoms of sexual abuse.

## **Possible Signs of Elder Abuse** may include, but are not limited to:

1. Untimely or unexplained death
2. Unexpected falls
3. Unexplained injuries like broken bones and sprains, head injuries, bruises, burns, cuts or abrasions. Infected bedsores or pressure ulcers.
4. Medication errors or overdoses
5. Malnutrition and dehydration
6. Unsanitary or unclean conditions
7. Agitation, withdrawal or fear
8. Frequent crying
9. Complaints of poor treatment

# *Abuse FAQs*

- **Who should report suspected abuse?**

Alabama's mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting law states that all school teachers and officials, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, members of the clergy as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, shall be required to report, or cause a report to be made of the same, orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, followed by a written report, to a duly constituted authority. This applies to volunteers and employees equally.

- **Must I report suspected child abuse and/or neglect?**

Some people are required, by law, to report suspected abuse or neglect, but anyone is encouraged to make a report if he or she suspects a child is being abused or neglected. Those required, by law, to report suspected abuse include a wide range of medical professionals, childcare workers and teachers, law enforcement and clergy. Also required to report are persons called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of abuse or neglect.

- **How can I be certain that a child has been abused or neglected?**

Certainty is not required. In most instances, the only way you could be absolutely certain that a child had been abused or neglected would be if the parent or other person admitted it. All that is required is a reasonable suspicion that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect. After investigating the report, the Department of Human Resources determines whether abuse and/or neglect occurred.

- **How am I protected?**

All persons reporting suspected abuse or neglect (whether required by law to report or not) are presumed to be acting in good faith. They are, by law, immune from legal action, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be taken. Thus, you have full protection in the event a parent or someone else should seek to initiate action against you.

- **Who should I report suspected abuse to?**

Volunteers and staff may report abuse directly to DHR or law enforcement if they prefer. They are encouraged to also report to church employees or a member of the clergy staff so the church may be aware of the situation. Church employees should report suspected abuse to their supervisor or to one of the clergy staff. Clergy staff are obligated to report suspected abuse to Law Enforcement or DHR. Law enforcement or DHR will contact Child Protect in cases involving a child and One Place Family Justice Center in the case of elder abuse. If the person suspecting or witnessing abuse does not directly report to DHR or law enforcement, they should follow up to make sure the incident has been reported.

- **What are my responsibilities after I report suspected abuse?**

If a report is made within the church, you are obligated to make sure the person receiving the report adequately responds and contacts the necessary agencies and church leadership as necessary. If the situation is not handled satisfactorily, you are obliged to press for further action and you may call DHR yourself.

Source: Family and Children's Services Division Office of Protective Services State of Alabama DHR

# *Definitions*

**Authority figure** is an **adult** who is the primary leader of any children, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult activity and such person is required to be 21-years of age or older.

**Assistant** is a person who gives help to and is directed by an **authority figure** in the course of any youth, children, or at-risk or vulnerable adult activity; including, but not limited to, volunteers, interns, camp counselors, and vacation Bible School workers. Such an assistant must be at least twelve (12) years of age. However, in order to count for satisfying requirements of the **two adult rule** such assistant must be an **adult** as herein defined.

**Adults** are all persons who have attained the age of majority (19 years in Alabama).

**Floater** is an **adult** who acts as an **assistant** to an **authority figure** to monitor covered activities or events in order to comply with the **two adult rule** when achieving such compliance by use of two non-related adults is unfeasible.

**Two Adult Rule** is a core principle regarding the supervision required for covered activities and overnight events. This rule means that a minimum of two **adults who are no closer than first cousins in relationship** should be utilized in all programming with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults. However, when unfeasible to staff at buildings and outdoor areas with two non-related adults, there should be at least an additional adult serving as a **floater** with visual and physical access to all areas where such programming occurs. Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window providing a line of sight enabling the **floater** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where covered activities or events take place.

# *Bullying Prevention*

## Definition of Bullying:

Bullying is a pattern of behavior in which a person is "exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons." Negative action is when a person intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another person, through physical contact, through written, verbal, or electronic expression or in other ways. The intent is to make fun of, embarrass, or exclude others. There is an imbalance of strength and the person who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending him/herself and is somewhat helpless against the person or persons who harass.

**The following are examples of bullying behaviors:**

1. Saying hurtful and unpleasant things
2. Making fun of others
3. Using mean and hurtful nicknames
4. Completely overlooking someone
5. Deliberately excluding someone from a group of friends
6. Attempting or threatening to inflict injury on another person
7. Spreading false rumors
8. Sending mean notes, texts, etc.
9. Using any type of social media to make fun of, embarrass, or exclude others
10. Trying to get other students to dislike another person
11. Damaging a person's property

**General Statement of Policy**

1) FUMC has a zero-tolerance policy toward bullying. This policy applies not only to people who directly engage in an act of bullying, but also to persons who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another person's act of bullying.
2) No employed staff or volunteer shall permit, condone or tolerate bullying. They must be prepared to intervene quickly and decidedly in bullying situations and in situations where there is only a suspicion that bullying is taking place.
3) Children, youth, parents, staff and volunteers are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to a supervising adult.
4) All complaints of bullying will be investigated and appropriate action taken.
5) This policy applies to all persons who are on church grounds and all persons who are participating in a church sponsored off-campus trip or event.

**Church Action:**

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, the appropriate church staff shall:

1) Talk with any volunteers who were present to determine the validity of the complaint.
2) Contact parents of both parties to inform them of the alleged incident.
3) Complete Bullying Report form (Forms Section – F2)
4) Work together with parents to counsel all involved parties on correcting behavior and making amends.

**Determining the line between teasing and bullying:**

We live in a society where teasing is part of our culture. Teasing, however, should not cause pain or hurt to another. Teasing is considered playful and okay when…

- ✓ The intent is not to shame or hurt.
- ✓ It is used as a way of fitting in or when talking with friends and everyone involved is getting an equal piece of the "teasing pie."
- ✓ One person does not get more than their fair share of the teasing.
- ✓ A group does not gang up on one person.
- ✓ Comments are not making fun of someone's disabilities, ethnicity, faith, or characteristics that are out of the person's control.
- ✓ Comments made are not meant to harm in any way and if when asked, the person would stop making them.
- ✓ It is a one-time behavior, not repeated over and over again.

# *Accidents*

- All accidents should be reported to parents or caregivers.
- In the event that a child has a head trauma of any degree, a parent will be notified.
- If additional medical attention is deemed necessary, the Church Administrator should also be notified whether the church staff or parents/caregivers seek the additional aid.
- Accidents occurring on church property or in conjunction with church activities which result in physical injury to a child, youth or vulnerable adult must be documented. (Forms Section – F1)
- Accident Reports should be kept on file with the Supervising Staff Member. If additional medical attention was deemed necessary, a copy of the report should be given to the Church Administrator.

# *Volunteer Standards/ Screening/Training*

## Authority Figure

**Safe Sanctuaries Standards:**

- Minimum age of 21 years old and it is required that they are at least four years older than the children or youth being supervised. These standards for authority figures are designed to separate authority figures from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the authority figure's role.

**Safe Sanctuaries Screening:**

- Be recommended or approved by the director of the ministry program
- Have experience or qualifications for the position sought
- Consent to the following checks: (Forms Section – A3; E5)
    - Multi-state criminal and sexual offender check based on social security number (Background checks will be valid for five years unless the individual has been absent for twelve (12) months or longer)
    - Submit proof of insurance and valid driver's license (for those who will be transporting children, youth or at-risk adults)
- Demonstrate an active relationship with FUMC for three months before being permitted to serve as an **authority figure**
- Complete the Adult Participation Covenant Form (Forms Section – C2) *Optional
- All documents will be held in a secured area with limited access.

**Safe Sanctuaries Training:**

- Attend/fulfill Safe Sanctuaries training to meet the requirements of FUMC

## Assistant

**Safe Sanctuaries Standards:**

- Whether working with youth or children, assistants must be:
    - Minimum age of 14 years old and ideally be at least four years older than the participants.
    - 12 and 13 year olds may assist under the direct supervision of an adult. 12- and 13-year-olds should be at least 4 years older than the participants.
    - In the judgment of a staff member, competent to assist in the activity.
    - Assistants less than 19 years old may not be counted as an adult.
    - Assistants less than 19 years old may not lend aid unless two authority figures are present.

**Safe Sanctuaries Screening:**

- Be recommended or approved by the director of the ministry program
- Complete the Youth Participation Covenant Form (Forms Section – C4) *Optional

**Safe Sanctuaries Training:**

- Attend/fulfill Safe Sanctuaries training to meet the requirements of FUMC

# *Employee Standards/ Screening/Training*

**The following criteria applies to all persons seeking to be employed as caregivers, teachers or advisors to children, youth or vulnerable adults. Additionally, ALL FUMC employees, no matter their responsibilities must have a favorable background check.**

**Safe Sanctuaries Standards:** In addition to the requirements needed for employment, the following Safe Sanctuaries standards must be met:

- Employees must be a minimum age of 19 years old but cannot be considered an authority figure until they reach the age of 21. It is required that they are at least four years older than the children or youth being supervised. These standards for authority figures are designed to separate authority figures from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the authority figure's role.

**Safe Sanctuaries Screening:**

- Be interviewed by the director of the ministry program. (Example - Forms Section – A1)
- Provide three character references. (Example - Forms Section – A2)
- Complete the following:

  **Non-school staff complete–**

  - Multi-state criminal and sexual offender background check based on social security number (Background checks will be valid for five years unless the individual has been absent for twelve (12) months or longer.) (Forms Section – A3)
  - Motor vehicle record if:
    - Employment involves transporting children, youth or at-risk adults
    - Employment involves driving a church vehicle

  **School employees complete–**

  - DHR state Background Check
  - Childcare Safe Sanctuaries Employment Application. (Forms Section – B1)
  - Childcare Employment Agreement. (Forms Section – B2)
  - ECDC – complete DHR specific paperwork
  - Motor vehicle record if:
    - Employment involves transporting children, youth or at-risk adults
    - Employment involves driving a church vehicle

All forms and personnel documents will be held in a secured area with limited access.

**Safe Sanctuaries Training:**

- Attend/fulfill Safe Sanctuaries training to meet the requirements of FUMC within 14 days of employment.

# *Notification of Unfavorable Background Check*

- The person shall be notified with a "Notification of Unfavorable Background Check" form. (Forms Section – A4)
- Volunteer applicants receiving an unfavorable report will be counseled by the Pastor in Charge and another church leader (laity or staff) chosen by the Pastor.
- Employment applicants or staff receiving an unfavorable report will be counseled by the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Documentation will be placed in the employee/applicant's file.
- The review process may consider the following:
    - The nature and seriousness of the crime or conduct
    - The relationship of the crime to the purpose of the congregation
    - The age of the person at the time of commission of the crime or conduct
    - The time elapsed since the time of commission of the crime or conduct
    - Anything the minister in charge deems relevant to consideration of employment
    - Any charge that deals with sexual or physical abuse shall prevent that person from being employed by First United Methodist Church

# *Staffing Ratios*

**There must always be at least 2 employed Staff and/or volunteer staff supervising children/youth/vulnerable adults regardless of the number of participants in the group. At least one of these people must have a background check and current Safe Sanctuaries training.**
In order to provide adequate supervision for the safety and well-being of children participating in the programs and activities of FUMC, the following ratios (adults: children/youth) are recommended: All FUMC ratios will meet or exceed Alabama DHR and AWF Conference Safe Sanctuaries requirements. **Two Adult Rules apply in all cases.**

| AGE GROUP/PROGRAM | FUMC TARGET RATIO | DHR Guide | Safe Sanctuaries Guide |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nurseries, Sunday School, Children's Church, Children's Choirs, Summit Kids, Youth Events** | Always 2 adults per room/group. | | |
| 0-9 Months | **1:4** | 1:5 | 1:5 |
| 9-18 Months | **1:4** | 1:5 | 1:5 |
| 18-24 Months | **1:6** | 1:7 | 1:7 |
| 2-3 Years | **1:6** | 1:8 | 1:8 |
| 3-4 Years | **1:8** | 1:11 | 1:11 |
| 4-5 Years | **1:10** | 1:18 | 1:18 |
| Kindergarten – 8 Years | **1:10** | 1:21 | 1:21 |
| 8+ Years | **1:10** | 1:22 | 1:22 |
| **Overnight Trips** | | | |
| Grades 1-3 | **1:6** | N/A | 1:8 |
| Grades 4-8 | **1:8** | N/A | 1:10 |
| Grades 9-12 | **1:8** | N/A | 1:12 |
| **Participants who are physically or mentally impaired** | | | |
| Those needing constant and individual assistance or supervision | **1:1** | N/A | 1:1 |
| Those needing close, but not constant, assistance or supervision | **1:2** | N/A | 1:2 |
| Those needing occasional assistance | **1:4** | N/A | 1:4 |
| Those needing minimal assistance | **1:4** | N/A | 1:5 |
| **First School** | | | |
| Infants | **1:5** | 1:5 | 1:5 |
| One year old | **1:5** | 1:5 | 1:5 |
| 18-24 months old* | **1:6** | | |
| Two years old* | **1:8** | 1:8 | 1:8 |
| Three years old* | **1:11** | 1:11 | 1:11 |
| Four years old* | **1:12** | 1:18 | 1:18 |
| Five years old* | **1:12** | 1:18 | 1:18 |
| *Travelling Aide is acceptable to meet the two adult rule – all doors must remain open unless two adults are present. | | | |
| **Early Childhood Development Center** | Follow DHR Regulation Guidelines | | |

If a volunteer finds himself/herself in a circumstance where ratios are not being met, the volunteer needs to notify the person in charge and make every attempt to resolve the situation. If at the end of a class, one adult must leave before all the participants have been picked up, the remaining adult must leave the door open, move the class to a high traffic area, or into a room with another adult.

# *Overnight Activities/Trips/Special Settings*

## *adapted from the AWF Conference Safe Sanctuaries Guide*

## Interpersonal Boundaries

- Adult workers with youth and children must be attentive to:
    - Appropriate dress code
    - Appropriate use of language
    - Appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement. (i.e. an adult leader should never initiate a hug and should always be the one to end the hug.)

## Overnight/Out of Town Day Trips

- A signed and notarized Release of Liability – Adult Participant (19 and over) is required for all adults attending an overnight activity or activity outside of the "River Region." (Forms Section – E1)
- A signed and notarized Release of Liability and Consent to Medical Treatment – Minor Participant is required for each minor (18 and under) attending an overnight activity or activity outside of the "River Region." (Forms Section – E2)
- Offsite events for children and youth, or an overnight event held at the church require the appropriate adult to children/youth supervisory ratios indicated on the "Staffing Ratios" page.
- Two non-related adults must always be present to protect both children and adults by providing a check on behavior and as witnesses in the event of accusations.
- The adults staying with the young people must always be the same gender as the young people.
- Large bunkhouse style lodging is recommended.
- If a bunkhouse style accommodation is not available, select a hotel with rooms opening to an interior closed hallway when possible.
- If two non-related adults cannot be assigned to a room housing youth, the youth should be housed separately from the adults.
- **Room sharing limits** means that adults staying with young people during **overnight events** must be the same gender as the young people and that such adults must not be alone in a lodging room with a young person at any time and must not share a bed with a young person unless he/she is an immediate family member or guardian of such young person and of the same gender.
- **Immediate family member or guardian room sharing exception** means that an immediate family member or guardian of a young person who is chaperoning an **overnight event** is permitted to share a room and bed with his/her child no matter the gender as long as no other young people are sharing the room.
- Where adults need to be assigned to separate rooms, it is recommended that one adult room be located between every two youth rooms on the hall if possible.
- Adults should develop a rotating schedule allowing for the hallways to be monitored throughout the night.
- If room checks are needed, they should involve two adults of the same gender as the room residents.

## Mentoring

- Provide screening and background checks for adults who will be working with young people.
- Establish clear written guidelines for settings, boundaries, and the environment where the mentoring will occur.
- Provide Safe Sanctuaries training for all mentors.

- Outings should always be in public places with routes and time-frames agreed upon in advance. If possible, outings with several mentors and young people are preferred.
- One-to-one mentoring should be conducted in a group setting such as one large room.

## Counseling

- During counseling sessions at least one door of the room must have a window or must be left open for the entire session.
- Ideally, sessions should be conducted when others are nearby.
- Counseling sessions should never be held in secret.

## Home Visitation

- When visiting a young person in their home, the two non-related adult rule still applies.
- If a young person drops by the home of an adult volunteer or staff person, the visit should be conducted in the front yard or moved to a public venue.
- Educating young people of these requirements before they visit is most beneficial.

## Tutoring and Other Specialized Services:

- Specialized Services will be considered as any activity that by its purpose is best provided on a one-on-one basis. These may include tutoring, therapy, music lessons, etc.
- Services and persons providing "Specialized Services" at FUMC must be approved by FUMC administration.
- Persons providing 'Specialized Service" must be cleared through a multi-state criminal and sexual offender check based on social security number.
- All "Specialized Services" must take place in an occupied building, on an occupied floor in a room with a windowed door during regular program hours.
- A sign will be placed outside the door while the services are being rendered so that others know that an authorized service is being rendered. (Forms Section – E4)
- A completed Release of Liability – "Specialized Services" form must be on file before a child may participate. (Forms Section – E3)

## Outside/Visiting Groups Using the Church Facilities Overnight

- Outside groups should be notified in advance that FUMC Montgomery is a Safe Sanctuaries congregation and alerted to any requirements that could be placed upon their group.
- Each group is required to submit a completed "Release of Liability for Facilities Use" form. (Forms Section – E7) This form and area of concern are "under construction" and will be updated as the policy is finalized by the Trustees.

# *Digital Safety*

## GENERAL

- Volunteers and employees should not post pictures taken at church functions to personal social media pages
- Do not initiate friending with minors
- Volunteers and employees should maintain Christian principles when using social networking sites, especially when referencing church events
- Authority figures and assistants are to be accountable for cyber communications
- When posting pictures and videos, no names should be posted for those under 19 years of age
- Pictures will be carefully screened for appropriateness before posting
- Pictures of children in bathing suits or shirtless are not appropriate for public forums
- Remember that anything posted can be saved and forwarded
- Keep in mind that you represent Christ and your local church – exercise caution
- Posting derogatory comments about individuals or the church by FUMC employees may result in disciplinary action. Please communicate with a ministry leader or a clergy member to address any concerns.
- Volunteers should not post derogatory comments about individuals or the church. Please communicate with a ministry leader or a clergy member to address any concerns.
- Firewalls on computer systems will be in place and kept up to date.
- Guidelines provided in the FUMC Technology Policy document will be strictly followed.
- Guidelines provided in AWF Conference 2020 Digital Addendum will be strictly followed.

## AWF Conference 2020 Digital Addendum-Below

**Digital/On-Line Ministry** includes, but is not limited to, video conferencing, teleconferencing, chat rooms, private/group messaging, web sites, and all social media platforms.

## Church "Admin" on Ministry Accounts

- There shall always be two, unrelated authority figures with administrator rights on any account that is posting official ministry content.

## Church-Sponsored programs/events/broadcasts

- Where there is no real-time interaction between viewers (e.g., a video posted but not broadcast live) the two adult rule applies in that there shall always be two, unrelated authority figures with administrator rights on any account that is posting official ministry content.
- Where there is real-time interaction between viewers, there shall be two, unrelated authority figures in attendance wherever the real-time interaction is happening (chat room, etc.).
- The church programs/events/broadcasts shall be initiated from official church accounts rather than personal accounts. Two authority figures shall beincluded.

## Friending/Online Social Connections

- Digital/on-line media accounts shall be set up as ministry accounts and shall have two authority figures as administrators.
- Ministry leaders involved with children, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adults shall never initiate a "friend request" on personal accounts. Parents of children, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adults may request to be a friend on a personal account of a ministry leader.
- The connections and all shared information on these sites shall only be ministry related and that information includes but is not limited to: GIFs, videos, and photographs.

## Video Conferencing

- There shall always be two unrelated authority figures present in any video conference.
- When possible, a waiting room shall be employed for participants to ensurethat two authority figures are present before students enter the video conference.
- When breakout rooms are employed one authority figure shall function asa floater (refer to II. B. 5) when it is possible to "float" between rooms.
- When an authority figure is available in the house of a participating student, their presence in the room with the student can count toward the two-adultrule.

## Private Text Messaging

- Private text messaging is allowed. When possible, it shall be shifted to a group text that shall include two authority figures.
- No messaging shall take place on a platform where messagesautomatically disappear.
- Authority figures shall not delete history or chat logs from a messaging platform for 30 days.

## One on One Video Calls

- One on one video calls shall not take place.
- When a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult initiates a video call the authority figure is to deny the call and move the conversation to a group video platform, text, or audio call.
- If and when video calls are unavoidable, due to medical emergency, the authority figure shall involve another authority figure as quickly aspossible.
- A parent present with the child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult whenthe call is initiated shall serve as the second authority figure.

## Best Practices of Video Conferencing

- If using video conferences, one must be sure to understand how the conference works. Most have tutorials to help the leader understand controls and abilities of the software being used.
- The parent shall be notified of the conference and give permission for their child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult to participate.
- At least two authority figures shall be on the video at all times.
- Passwords and waiting rooms shall be used.
- Parents are always welcome to attend conference videos.
- All chats shall be open to all participates. No private messages. Turn off peer-to- peer chat so all chat occurs between all participants.
- Limit screen sharing to hosts only.

## Apps with disappearing message capability shall not be used

# *Transportation*

- Transportation is a covered activity whenever such transportation is provided in a church-owned or leased vehicle (car, SUV, van, bus, etc.) or when a church staff member is the driver of or present in any vehicle used for such transportation. This provision shall not apply to multi-vehicle caravanning transportation and require two adults to occupy each of the private vehicles in a caravan.
- Any such transportation provided for a church sponsored or church hosted program of day-care, pre-school, or after-school care that is licensed under the laws of Alabama shall abide by and conform with the respective state laws and regulations, if any, applicable to such a transportation function**.**
- Whenever possible church vehicles and charters should be utilized instead of private vehicles.
- The trustees or transportation committee are responsible for establishing, monitoring and enforcing safety policies for church-owned vehicles.
- If it is absolutely necessary to use private vehicles the following criteria must be met:
    - All drivers should be screened in the same manner as other leadership for an event.
    - A driver information sheet must be on file. (Forms Section – E5)
    - When private vehicles are used to transport young people for programmed church-related events, leaders should ensure that appropriate insurance is being maintained by both the church and the private driver.
    - All drivers must be 21 years of age or older.
        - Exceptions:
            - Licensed drivers under 21 years transporting their own family members.
            - Specifically for Youth events where "rides to school provided" is offered:
                - A child brought to the event by a driver less than 21, may leave with that driver.
                - A parent has authorized their child to ride in a car with a licensed driver under the age of 21 on the Travel Permission Form for Youth. (Forms Section – E6)
    - When possible, it is recommended that two adults be placed in each vehicle or the vehicles be teamed in minimum groups of two that stay together at all times.
    - No young person other than the driver's own child should sit in the front seat. No lone adult should sit in other seat rows also occupied by a young person other than their own child.
    - If a car seat is required, parents must provide their own transportation or personally install the car seat for the driver.
    - No one should be transported, no matter how small the distance, in the bed of a pick-up truck.

# *General Supervision Guidelines*

The following guidelines shall be used when planning supervision for all church gatherings where children, youth and/or vulnerable adults will be in attendance. These guidelines apply to all activities and programs of FUMC, and to any programs or events that are held on the grounds of FUMC.

**Two Adult Rule** is a core principle regarding the supervision required for covered activities and overnight events. This rule means that a minimum of two **adults who are no closer than first cousins in relationship** should be utilized in all programming with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults. However, when unfeasible to staff at buildings and outdoor areas with two non-related adults, there should be at least an additional adult serving as a **floater** with visual and physical access to all areas where such programming occurs. Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window providing a line of sight enabling the **floater** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where covered activities or events take place.

**Open-door Policy:** Classrooms, childcare, and program rooms used for children, youth or at-risk or vulnerable adults should be open to visitation at any time by staff, parents, caregivers, or other volunteers at any time without prior notice. Insurance carriers recommend the church to have a window in all doors where children and youth activities meet. If there are no windows, doors must be left open.

**Visitors:** Visitors must be authorized by a supervising staff person. A visitor is defined as someone who is not the parent of a child in the group.

**Three Month Rule:** All volunteers wishing to give service in the areas of children, youth or vulnerable adult ministry should demonstrate an active relationship with FUMC for a minimum of three months. Persons not meeting this requirement may serve only in an assistant capacity with two other non-related adults.

**Sign-in and Sign-out Procedures:** Sign-in and sign-out procedures should be in place for all ministries for and with children and youth. Check-in for children's programs should be implemented for any activity involving child drop-off, including but not limited to Children's Church, Summit Kids, ELMO, and Sunday School.

**Releasing Children:** Children 2nd Grade and younger are not released on their own. Children 3rd-5th grade may be released with written consent from a parent. Children must be picked up by a parent or sibling over age 16 unless other written instructions are in hand.

**Nursery Care:** Paid staff will follow all Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines. The Nursery Caregiver handbook gives further detailed instructions for paid nursery staff. Regular training will be offered to include CPR certification, First Aid, emergency procedures, cleaning procedures, and childcare training. Parent volunteers should be advised that only nursery staff members may change diapers apart from their own child.

**Supervision of Children:** Children (5th grade and younger) should be in a designated program area or be with a parent/guardian or in childcare unless the parent has given written permission for the child to leave an activity.

**Restroom Guidelines:** When possible, children should use a classroom bathroom. Adults should avoid being in a bathroom alone with a child. If sending a child alone is unavoidable the door must be slightly propped open.

**Sick Children:** For the health and wellbeing of all, children who have vomited or had a fever in the previous 24 hours should not attend church programs. Children who become ill after arriving should be isolated but never left unattended. Parents or caregivers should be contacted immediately.

**Appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement**. Hugs should normally be initiated by the child or youth. "Side hugs" to allow space and respect are preferred.

**Appropriate dress code.** When working or serving, staff and volunteers should dress modestly in clothing appropriate for interactions with the group or activity being served.

**Appropriate use of language and tone of voice.** Speech should always be kind and loving. Derogatory statements should never be voiced. A kind and calm tone is always advised with the exception of warnings of imminent danger.

**Appropriate Discipline:** A One, Two, Three discipline policy will be adhered to.

**One:** Leaders will **TALK** to a child who is not following rules, being disrespectful, or being disruptive. The child will be given the chance to change behavior.

**Two:** If the inappropriate behavior continues, the leaders will **SEPARATE** the child from the group for a short period of time. (Rule of thumb – one minute for each year of age.) Children should never be unattended.

**Three:** If the inappropriate behavior continues when the child returns to the group, **CONTACT** the ministry supervisor to assist. Supervisors will make decisions about the next steps to be taken.

**Corporal punishment and shaming are strictly prohibited.**

# *Procedures for Reporting Alleged Abuse*

**Reports of abuse should be kept indefinitely.**

## Contacting Reporting Agencies – in this order

1. Department of Human Resources: 334-293-3305
2. Law Enforcement: 334-625-2831 (CID – ask for someone in Juvenile)
   334-625-2651 (option 2)

## Forms and Resources

Containers or cabinets clearly marked as "Emergency Response Resources" can be found on the main floor in each FUMC building. The resources available will include, but not be limited to: Appropriate Safe Sanctuaries forms, emergency contact information, instructions for appropriate handling of a variety of situations and a First Aid Kit.

## During Church Related Activities

Should an adult in charge suspect abuse, or a child, youth or vulnerable adult report abuse by any member of the church staff, volunteer, or employed staff, or by any person present at a church sponsored meeting or activity, the following procedures shall apply for reporting the alleged abuse:

1. The adult in charge (Employed Staff or Supervisory Volunteer) shall document the incident in writing. If possible, the form, "Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse – Section 1", should be used. Documentation shall be signed and dated. (Forms Section – F3)

2. The Senior Pastor, Executive Minister, or Church Administrator shall be notified as soon as possible. If a pastor is the accused party, notify the Chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) or the District Superintendent.

3. Once an accusation occurs, if not already done, the Senior Pastor or SPRC Chairperson shall notify the following:
   - DHR or law enforcement
   - District Superintendent
   - Chairperson of the FUMC Trustees, who shall notify the Church insurance carrier

   If possible, the form, "Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse – Section 2", should be used. Documentation shall be signed and dated. (Forms Section – F4)

4. The Senior Pastor or SPRC Chairperson may also notify the following persons:
   - Attorney
   - Pastoral Care Consultant

## Non-Church Related Activities

If an adult in a supervisory position suspects a case of abuse, or a child, youth or vulnerable adult reports abuse occurring away from church-sponsored functions, the following procedures shall apply:

1. The adult shall document the incident in writing. Documentation shall be signed and dated. (Forms Section – F3)
2. The Senior Pastor and the Executive Minister shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. The Senior Pastor shall notify DHR or law enforcement. Documentation shall be signed and dated. (Forms Section – F4)

**Additional Abuse Intervention Resources.** Below are child abuse intervention reporting resources and contacts for use by the local church.

1. Child Protective Services – Montgomery County DHR/Main Number (334) 293-3305
2. Montgomery Police Department (334) 625-2651 (option 2)
   (334) 625-2831 (CID – ask for someone in Juvenile)
3. Child Protect (334) 262-1220
4. DHR Adult Abuse Hotline – 1-800-458-7214
5. One Place Family Justice Center (334) 262-7378
6. National Child Abuse Hotline 1(800) 422-4453
7. Parents Anonymous 1(855) 427-2736
8. Alabama Sex Offender Registry www.offenderwatch.com/network/alabama

# Principles of Responding to Abuse

If allegations of abuse are made, our response will be guided by the following principles:

1. All allegations will be taken seriously.

2. Respect for privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.

3. Victims include the abused, the family of the abused, the peers of the abused, the family of the accused, and the congregation.

4. The needs of the victims will be given high priority.

5. Full cooperation will be given to civil authorities.

6. The Senior Pastor, or other individual appointed by the Senior Pastor, is mandated by Alabama legislation to report the alleged abuse and shall be the church's spokesperson with the media.

# *Dealing with Persons Accused of Abuse*

## Employed Staff

Should a FUMC employee be accused of physically or sexually abusing a child or vulnerable adult, whether or not in connection with a church activity, that employee shall immediately be reassigned to a position that does not have any supervisory authority over children, youth or vulnerable adults, and shall not return to a supervisory position until such time as the Senior Pastor and Chairperson of the SPRC deem appropriate. The decision to return an employee accused of physically or sexually abusing someone to a supervisory position should be made in conjunction with FUMC's legal counsel and/or insurance carrier.

Pending investigation, FUMC reserves the right to reassign or suspend the employee, with or without pay and benefits, depending on the circumstances.

## Volunteers

Should a FUMC volunteer be accused of physical or sexual abuse, whether in connection with a church activity or not, that volunteer shall immediately be suspended from working on any FUMC activities that involve children, youth or vulnerable adults. The volunteer shall not be allowed to work on any FUMC activities involving any of these at-risk groups until such time as the Senior Pastor deems appropriate. The decision to return a volunteer to activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults should be made in conjunction with FUMC's legal counsel and/or insurance carrier.

# *Training Criteria*

1. There shall be a variety of Safe Sanctuaries training sessions offered at the church at various times during the year to meet the needs of the employed staff and adult volunteers that work with any "at-risk" groups at the church.

    - This training will be required of all employed staff persons and adult volunteers that work with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
    - All training will be done in-house via attendance at a Safe Sanctuaries training session OR an online presentation provided by FUMC.
    - It is the responsibility of each supervisor to provide training themselves or to arrange for training within 14 days of the start of employment.

2. If possible, each newly hired staff person that will serve in an area for children, youth and/or vulnerable adults should attend a Safe Sanctuaries training session before he or she begins work or within 14 days of his or her starting date at the church. If no Safe Sanctuaries training session can be arranged within 14 days, the newly hired staff person shall be suspended from work, continuing to receive full pay and benefits, until the required training can be arranged. It is the responsibility of the Executive Minister, or other such staff member as shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor, to ensure that this training requirement is satisfied in a timely manner.

3. Each new adult volunteer, upon his or her appointment to that position, shall attend or complete a Safe Sanctuaries training session within 90 days of the time of the appointment. If the new volunteer is not able to attend or complete a Safe Sanctuaries training session within 90 days of the time of his or her appointment, that person shall be suspended from the position and shall not be allowed to serve in any supervisory capacity with children, youth or vulnerable adults until that person is able to attend or complete a Safe Sanctuaries training session. It is the responsibility of the employed staff person that has supervisory authority over the newly appointed volunteer, to ensure that this training requirement is satisfied in a timely manner.

4. Staff members and adult volunteers serving in a supervisory capacity for children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults are required to attend Safe Sanctuaries training each year as long as that person shall continue to serve in a supervisory capacity for children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults. Documentation will be on file.

5. In the event of an unforeseen circumstance requiring use of a substitute worker who has not had such training, that substitute worker must be briefed on the Safe Sanctuaries policies by the director or other supervisor before beginning work.

6. A copy of this document will be provided to each employed staff member for review. The Safe Sanctuaries Policy is available on the FUMC website. A copy of this document is on file in the administrative office of FUMC.

# *Training Session Overview*

Training sessions will be held so as to meet the needs of the Employed Staff and Adult Volunteers that work with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults at the church. Sessions will include at least the following:

1. FUMC policies and procedures.
2. The definitions and signs of abuse.
3. Behaviors that could indicate problems.
4. Guidelines for prevention.
5. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline.
6. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders including discipline, interpersonal boundaries.
7. Procedures for reporting of alleged abuse.
8. Confidentiality.
9. Procedures for response.
10. Forms

## Responsibility for Training Sessions

The Executive Minister, or such person as shall be designated by the Senior Pastor, shall have the responsibility for ensuring that:

- Safe Sanctuaries training sessions contain up-to-date, appropriate materials to educate those who work with children, youth and at-risk adults as to the risk of physical or sexual abuse in our church, and how to reduce such risk.

- The Safe Sanctuaries training sessions are provided often enough and at a variety of times during the year so that all employees and volunteers have sufficient opportunity to attend.

## Documentation of Training

Each staff member and adult volunteer must sign a statement certifying that he or she has attended a Safe Sanctuaries training session and has read, understood, and will abide by this policy. The Safe Sanctuaries training session is not deemed to be complete until a signed and dated certifying statement has been received by FUMC.

Each signed, certifying statement shall be kept on file by FUMC indefinitely, or until legal counsel advises that destruction of the certifying statements is permitted.

# *Educating the Congregation*

It is recommended that the following educational opportunities be provided for the congregation of FUMC:

1. The general congregation should be made aware that FUMC has a Policy on Reducing the Risk of Physical and Sexual Abuse in the Church, a.k.a. Safe Sanctuaries and that we ensure that our staff and adult volunteers are fully trained to reduce the risk of abuse during any church-related activities.

2. We will be open to sharing our Policy with any member of our Congregation.

3. We will make every reasonable effort to allow concerned members of our Congregation to attend a Safe Sanctuaries training session.

4. We will encourage classes and presentations that focus on sexuality education and safety to groups within our Congregation including age-appropriate classes for youth and children.

Additional guides and suggestions for the clergy are available from the Alabama West Florida Conference website and Safe Sanctuaries conference policy.

# *Implementation and Keys to Success*

Responsibility for implementation of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy & Minimum Standards (SSPMS) shall be the responsibility of the Pastor in Charge, the governing body, and permanent Safe Sanctuaries Committees (SSC) organized in compliance with the church's governance process.

1) **Develop** a policy based on the minimum standards outlined in "Report 8 – Policy Statement Concerning Safe Sanctuaries adopted by the Alabama West Florida Conference – June 2014.
   a) A "Safe Sanctuaries Policy Committee" will be appointed by the Executive Minister. Members will provide expertise, experience and advice in development of the policy. Committee members and contributors included: Seth Gowan, Jannah Bailey, Kyle Drumwright, Caroline Sease, Lyl Parker, Susan Hunt, Hope Hicks and Stacey Moseley. Contributing Staff Members included: Glenda Argo, Robbie Plunkett, Honey Williams, Adrian Borden, Christi Davis, Jean Carr, Jessica Coblentz, Daphne Johnston, Phillip Saunders, Renee Norman and Jay Cooper.
   b) The *Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Training Guide for Reducing the Risk of Child and Vulnerable Adult Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse in Church* developed by the committee was proposed to the FUMC governing bodies for approval and adoption.
2) **Appoint** a Safe Sanctuaries Advisory Committee to ensure that the policies are implemented, and appropriate church resources are dedicated to meeting all standards. According to the AWF Conference policy, The Safe Sanctuaries Committee in addition to its chairperson, shall include, but not be limited to, the Pastor in Charge, Governing Body chairperson, Lay Delegate to AWF Annual Conference, Lay Leader, Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chairperson, Board of Trustees chairperson, and may include, if such offices and positions exist, Youth Director, youth leadership team representative, Children's Director, children's leadership team representative, Day Care Director, After School Program Director, and one or two at large lay members. This committee will facilitate and/or oversee:
   a) Funding, as needed to meet or exceed all requirements.
   b) Ensuring that screening, training and inspection requirements are being met.
   c) Maintaining adequate liability insurance coverage which includes coverage for sexual misconduct.
   d) Guarding all records by keeping them in locked cabinets and limiting access.
   e) Educating the congregation on the need for such a policy and the role they play in its success.
   f) Communicating regularly with the congregation concerning Safe Sanctuaries policies and decisions.
   g) Preparing for the worst.
3) **Appoint** a Working Safe Sanctuaries committee comprised of appropriate staff and lay leadership to facilitate and/or oversee:
   a) Screening of all staff members and volunteers. No exceptions. Current and new.
      i) Applications and Covenants should be on file.
      ii) Check all references.
      iii) Complete all Background Checks.
   b) Training the volunteers and staff.
   c) Conducting regular inspections and inquiries to ensure safety standards are being met.
   d) Attending periodic training and education on Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards and procedures as may be provided by the Alabama-West Florida Conference by the Pastor in Charge and SSC chairperson or other SSC designated member. Further, it is recommended that attendance at such conference-wide training include, at a minimum, designees from the local church who will be personally coordinating and conducting safe sanctuaries training for employees and staff within the local church.
4) **Review** these policies yearly or as needed.

# *Review and Amendment Process*

A yearly review of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Training Guide should be conducted. Amendments and revisions should be offered and discussed by both the Advisory and Working Safe Sanctuaries Committees. New programs, technologies, legal requirements, etc. may dictate revision prior to the yearly review. If a change in policy is required prior to the review date, revisions may be made as necessary with approval of the Sr. Minister. Amendment by these committees will not require additional approval from governing bodies unless approval is requested by the Sr. Minister.
In addition to a full review of stated policies, the following self-evaluation should be conducted.

| STATEMENT | YES | NO | INCOMPLETE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Screening and reference collection is being done on all employees. | | | |
| Screening and reference collection is being done on all volunteers working with children, youth or vulnerable adults. | | | |
| Safe Sanctuaries Training for employees is adequate and a variety of training opportunities are being offered. | | | |
| Safe Sanctuaries Training for volunteers is adequate and a variety of training opportunities are being offered. | | | |
| Clear reporting procedures for suspected incidents of child abuse that follow state laws are in place. | | | |
| Adequate insurance coverage is available in case a child abuse complaint occurs. | | | |
| Clearly defined building usage strategies as a part of our child abuse prevention plan are in place. | | | |
| A clearly defined response plan is in place if an allegation of child abuse is made against someone in our church. | | | |
| Annual educational opportunities are offered to parents of children and youth on recognizing and preventing child abuse. | | | |

The Safe Sanctuaries Policy Guide will be available to all FUMC volunteers and employees on the FUMC website. This will allow for revision as necessary without reprinting. Paper copies will be available in the Church Administrator's office and as needed for reference.

It is suggested that every employee read the policies as part of their first day of work. Supervisors should call their attention to policies that will be of particular importance to them. Childcare employees should be immediately informed of revisions or amendments by their supervisor.

# *Sources*

**-Alabama West Florida Conference Safe Sanctuaries Policies**
**-Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church** by Reverend Joy Melton AWF Conference.
**-Policy on Reducing the Risk of Child Physical and Sexual Abuse in Church -** Due West UMC, Marietta, GA
**-Safe Sanctuaries** – Navarre UMC, Navarre, FL
**-Family and Children's Services Division Office of Protective Services State of Alabama DHR Website**
**-DHS, National Center on Elder Abuse**
**-Additional sources as cited in this document**