

First United
Methodist Church
Cleburne, Texas

Safe Sanctuary
Policy

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Addenda

- 1. Application for Employment**
- 2. Application for Volunteer Worker Position
With children and/or youth**

Statement of Purpose

First United Methodist Church, Cleburne, Texas is a holy place, a sanctuary where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, fellowship, recreation, and service, with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith. As such, and as a United Methodist congregation, we are committed to providing a safe environment for all people who participate in any church-sponsored activity or program. Abuse of any person will not be tolerated, in any form, by the First United Methodist Church of Cleburne. Any incident, alleged to have occurred during a church sponsored event, shall be reported to the proper authorities and a "Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse" form completed.

Our Scriptural Basis

Our Safe Sanctuary Policy is informed by scripture and in part by these specific scriptural passages:

"Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'"

Luke 18:16-17 (NIV)

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.'"

Matthew 18:1-6 (NIV)

"Everyone must submit themselves to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, those who rebel against the authority are rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and they will commend you....Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience."

Romans 13:1-6 (NIV)

Purpose and Implementation

This Policy shall be a guideline for Staff, Volunteers, Workers, and members of First UMC, Cleburne for all events and programs held as a part of the church ministry program, and takes effect on approval.

Some Definitions

Abuse: Physical, emotional, mental, sexual, or other kinds of abuse directed at, or observed, or occurring with or to, a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult, including the definition of "Abuse" set forth in Section 261.001 of the Texas Family Code.

Child, Children: All persons from birth through twelve years of age.

Youth: Students from twelve years of age through seventeen years of age. A person becomes an adult for purposes of this policy when the person attains age eighteen regardless of the grade level at the time.

Adult: Individuals that are age eighteen years of age or older.

Vulnerable Adult: An adult who has one or more mental, physical or emotional impairments that render the person incapable of self-care and/or independent living without help.

Staff: Individuals that are compensated by any United Methodist Church entity or any entity sponsored by the United Methodist Church and who performs specific services that are related to a Conference and/or District Event and/or local church event.

Volunteer, Worker: A person who participates as a leader in activities, relating to any Conference and/or District Event and/or local church event, without compensation.

Shepherd, Aide: A person who assists a leader in activities, relating to any Conference and/or District Event and/or local church event, without compensation.

Responsible Person: A persons designated by a parent or guardian to pick up child from classroom or event.

Facilities: Church Property, including buildings and grounds.

Background investigation and/or Check: Use of a qualified risk assessment service to evaluate the criminal history as well as any other relevant background information of Staff, Volunteers, workers, shepherds, and aides for a Conference and/or District Event or Ministry and/or local church event.

Conference: Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church

Conference and/or District Event or Ministries: United Methodist Church controlled and approved Events or Ministries conducted by the Conference and/or District.

Local Church event: Ministries, programs, events planned by a local United Methodist Church including First UMC, Cleburne.

Types of Abuse

Texas Family Code

The Texas Family Code states that any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person should report the abuse. CPS Hotline 1-800-252-5400 or 911.

Physical Abuse: Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon, burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child's body.

Emotional Abuse: Abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental 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 and is devastating to the victim.

Neglect: Abuse in which a person endangers a child's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child's self-worth.

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 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.

Ritual Abuse: Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. 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 the child, other persons, and animals. Children making such reports must not be ignored.

Basic Procedures

1. Two non-related adults must be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth. If a worker is late, a parent will be asked to stay until the second worker arrives. Every effort will be made to find a second worker(shepherd).
2. Other organizations (i.e., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Upward Ministries, etc) using the church facilities will be expected to follow Safe Sanctuary guidelines by reading these Basic Procedures, filling out an application, and completing a background check.
3. A worker with children and/or youth must have been an active participant and/or member of the church for 6 months. Workers, with children and/or youth, who have less than 6 months experience in our church, must work in conjunction with seasoned workers as a shepherd or aide.
4. We practice an "Open Door Policy." Parents, ministers, and other appropriate adults are free to attend, drop-in, or observe any activity at any time.
5. Classroom doors must remain open unless the door contains a glass window or panel.
6. All nursery workers must be 18 or older.
7. Sign-in/sign-out sheets will be used in the nursery.
8. Children through grade 5 (except those serving as acolytes) must be picked up in the classroom by parents or designated responsible person following Sunday School. The same procedure applies for mid-week activities.
9. No workers will be allowed under the age of 18, but they may serve as aides for adult workers.
10. Aides must be five years older than those with whom they work.
11. If paid or volunteer supervision is not provided or available, parents must provide adult supervision for their youth and children while on church property.
12. Advanced notice will be given to parents or guardians for field trips. A signed permission slip and medical release form must be on file.
13. A background screening will be completed and kept on file for all staff, volunteers, workers, shepherds, and aides with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
14. Drivers of rented vans used for church activities must have driver license check done prior to driving van.

15. During worship services, and any activity in the sanctuary or chapel, ushers shall assign a hall monitor who shall watch the hallway leading to the children's wing, and all other church hallways, looking for unauthorized visitors or activities. This hall monitor shall lockdown the Family Center Doors and East Hallway door of the church to prevent unauthorized entry, and shall remain in the field-of-view between the sanctuary foyer and the children's area hallway to monitor all activities. This person shall also check on the nursery attendants periodically.

Training Strategy

All staff, volunteers, workers, shepherds, and aides with children and/or youth must complete the necessary application forms for their position and attend a mandatory orientation and training session where the Safe Sanctuaries Policy of First UMC, Cleburne will be explained.

I. Video

Safety Tips on a Sensitive Subject: Child Sexual Abuse

II. Outline of Policy

- A. Statement of purpose
- B. Our Scriptural Basis
- C. Some definitions of terms and types of abuse
- C. Basic procedures
- D. Screening process & reporting process

II. Forms

- A. Application for employment
- B. Application for Volunteer Worker

Reporting Procedure

1. The child will be moved to a place of safety: i.e., the pastor's office, the Children's or Youth minister's office.
2. The "outcry" person will report to one of the church professional staff.
3. The parents will be notified unless a family member is involved in the alleged abuse.
4. The "outcry" person, with the support of the church professional staff, will contact local law enforcement and Child Protective Services. 911
5. The accused person will be removed from working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults pending an investigation. Confidentiality will be maintained.
6. The following will be contacted about the alleged abuse: Church Trustee's Chairperson, District Superintendent, church attorney, church insurance company.
7. These steps will be documented in the "Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse" report.
8. All statements to the media will be through the church office and a designated staff communications person.

Criminal Background Check **Non-acceptance Guidelines**

The term "criminal history" refers to any items reported on a person's criminal records, including arrests, charges, convictions, and deferred adjudications. Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any ministries involving children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults:

--child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful;

--violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, family violence, etc;

Other offenses, depending on how recent, the frequency, and nature may also preclude a member from working in these ministry areas. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Senior Pastor and/or the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Team. In all such cases, the only determining factor will be the best interests, safety, and well-being of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults.