

Safe Sanctuary Policy for United Methodist Church of Delran

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Introduction to Policy for Delran UMC

“OUR CALLING AND OUR MANDATE IS TO ENSURE SAFE SANCTUARY FOR GOD’ S PEOPLE”

Background:

Throughout the gospels, Jesus provides teachings on providing a peaceable kingdom for all of God’s people, including our most precious gifts, our children and youth (Matthew 5:9, Luke 18:15-17). The peaceable kingdom begins with sanctuary.

Scriptures provide examples of how sanctuary is to be a community of protective nurture and harmony (Psalms 20:1-2, 27:4-5). As Christians, we are called to create a safe sanctuary in our churches. They must be holy, safe, and protective communities for all of God’s children, regardless of age or ability. The purpose of this policy is to address the safety of our children and youth at all local churches, and at District or Annual Conference sponsored events. The South Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church recognizes the need to have a formal, written policy with procedures in place (1) to help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or the appearance of abuse of children and youth and (2) to help protect workers from false accusations and/or suspicions. It will also facilitate nursery problem resolution through a position titled counselor/oversight adult before parents or guardians are disturbed or removed from the worship service to address their child’s issues.

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in the case of an incident.

Scope of UMC Policy

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons including all paid and unpaid leaders, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults who participate in any activities or events sponsored by the UMC of Delran.

The UMC of Delran policy shall be applicable at all UMC and District activities involving children and youth. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: Summer District Camps, District/Conference Trips, District Confirmation Retreats, Mid-Winter/Carnival/Fest, District and Conference Youth Leadership Meetings, Choir Clinic, and School of Christian Missions.

Definition of Childcare Provider, Assistant Leader, and Leader

- * Childcare provider is someone that is eighteen (18) years of age or older with a high school diploma or equivalent.
- * Assistant Leader is someone 18-20 years of age with a high school diploma or equivalent, who is supervised by a leader.
- * Leader is someone who is twenty-one (21) years of age or older.
- * Nursery counselor/oversight adults shall be someone who is 21 years or older and has childhood care or behavior modification experience

Supervision

To achieve compliance with the Safe Sanctuary policy it may be necessary to combine groups; recruit, train, and reference additional volunteers; or cancel an event. Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, children and youth will be instructed to use the "buddy system". It is also strongly encouraged that there be present at least one leader who is trained and certified in First Aid and CPR at all UMC of Delran events if at all possible. Nursery counselors /oversight adults will be first line problem solvers before parents or guardians are contacted from the nursery using a numbering system that allocated a number to each child within the nursery that can be seen while in the worship service on the projection system.

Supervision for Nursery/Childcare at UMC of Delran:

There shall be a minimum of one (1) Childcare provider unless there are more than six (6) children which need care; for that case, two (2) Childcare providers will be required. We recommend that whenever possible State Childcare Minimum Standards shall be followed, particularly in relation to the Number of childcare providers to child ratio. Parents or guardians should fill out an attendance and medical card(TBD) for each child attending. Each parent or guardian will be given a number that corresponds to their child in case of behavior or medical emergencies. This number will be displayed during service if parent or guardian attention is required immediately. There will be at least one Primary nursery counselor/oversight adult assigned each Sunday to facilitate solutions to any problems arising in the nursery, and they will have an assigned number of

99. These counselors should have experience with childhood behavior challenges and rectification if possible. The Lay Leader shall make sure that this process is correctly followed .

Supervision of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults at Delran UMC events:

UMC Of Delran events shall observe the “1 Leader Rule”

(1 leader per classroom, 2 leaders within line of sight when outdoors.)

- * Exception to allow 1 leader or 1 assistant may be made with the approval of the event leader on a case-by-case basis.
- * Any one-to-one mentoring or consulting shall be conducted in sight of another leader or assistant leader.
- * Understanding that there is safety in numbers, one leader can be in contact with multiple youth (**6th-12th** grade) so long as they are in line of sight of other leaders or assistant leaders.
- * Vulnerable adults shall have the same protection as children and youth.

Over-night Accommodations

At events that require overnight accommodations:

- * We strongly recommend that in group settings at least (1) leader be present in every room used for overnight accommodations, with a total of two for major events.
- * When staying in a hotel, leaders shall sleep in separate rooms from children/youth; or if necessary for children/youth to share a room with a leader, leaders shall sleep in separate beds from children/youth so long as any one leader shall not be alone with any one child/youth.
- * Recognizing accommodations may be restrictive in some cases (example: Windham at Lakeview), one leader is adequate, so long as any one leader shall NOT be alone with any one-child/youth.
- * Vulnerable adults shall have their needs met after consultation with their care givers.

Definitions of Abuse

- * **Verbal Abuse** - Any verbal act that humiliates degrades or threatens any child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- * **Physical Abuse**- Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individuals' age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth or vulnerable adult.
- * **Sexual Abuse** - Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4) romantic involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual contact with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in Conference or District sponsored activities, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples are not limited to: displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse.
- * The above definitions also apply to vulnerable adults and will be treated as equivalent requirements in the definition of abuse..

Screening for Leaders, Assistant Leaders, and Childcare providers

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children and youth. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment.

The following policy shall apply to all programs dealing with children, youth (under 18) and vulnerable adults:

1. Personnel policies for all programs , both church and non-church:
 - a. Requirements
 - i. The GCFA recommended volunteer application form, available from the GNJAC (www.gnjac.org) website, shall be used for screening all workers.
 - ii. A background check is required for all workers, lay and clergy.

- iii. Volunteer workers shall be regular attendees of a local congregation for at least six months before being allowed to supervise such programs.
 - b. May use the online GNJAC approved service for background checks.
 - c. It is recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry that a background check be completed for all clergy under appointment. This task must be completed within one year.
 - d. The cost of all background checks is to be paid by the UMC of Delran.
2. Screening forms and background checks:
 - a. Shall be reviewed by the Chair of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, the supervisor of the prospective employee or volunteer and the Pastor.
 - b. Screening forms and related data shall be maintained in confidence.
 - c. Screening forms, background checks and related data shall be required of all persons.
 - d. If the applicant is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children, youth or vulnerable adults, the applicant will not be approved.
3. All such programs shall be clearly differentiated between those which are church operated and those that are non-church operated.
4. Results of screens shall be kept confidential. The determination of whether a particular crime is serious enough to result in the UMC of Delran giving a negative recommendation shall be made by the UMC of Delran in its sole discretion. Without in any way limiting those crimes which the UMC of Delran may determine to be serious, the UMC of Delran offers the following examples as guidelines:

Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults:

- * Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful
- * Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc
- * Persons having a Criminal History of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
- * Persons having a Criminal History of a drug related conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to participate in the event.

Compliance with these policies and adoption of a Safe Sanctuary Policy shall be reported through a written question to be answered as part of the Charge Conference Report, therefore it is important that this policy reflect the approved GNJAC Safe Sanctuary Policy dated 6/2005 and be approved prior to Church conference (2005).

5. The Primary counselors/oversight adults should be chosen as problem solvers and

facilitators for challenge resolution for the nursery Coordinator. They will help facilitate better behavior and address challenges before parents or guardians are contacted using the number system described previously. Counselling and childhood behavior modification will be beneficial abilities, but not required.

Training

The GNJAC shall, through its Districts, develop and implement training and orientation procedures for all persons in leadership who work with children and youth at Conference or District activities and events. Training shall include but is not limited to appropriate discipline, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries, leader misconduct, and this policy. No person shall, after June 1, 2007, have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth until they have completed this training program. We recommend that at the beginning of each event a review of this policy be conducted.

The Conference Safe Sanctuary Certification Authority will consist of four persons: a member of the Cabinet, the Director of Spiritual Formation and Teaching Ministries, the Area Provost and the Conference Safe Sanctuary Staff Person.

The guidelines of these Sanctuary Certification certified are entrusted with Children and Youth policies and procedures create a status of Safety with the GNJAC. Leaders thus certified are entrusted with the title "Certified Safe Sanctuary Worker "for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

Reporting of Incidents

When a leader of a Church program, event or activity suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the NJ Penal Code is taking or has taken place, he or she shall call 911 when needed and report the abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency and/or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DYFS of New Jersey or state agency responsible for vulnerable adults)). The leader shall contact the administrator or event leader immediately, and cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

- * Address any needs the child or youth may have, medical or otherwise. Report to the parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s).
- * The person suspected of abuse (respondent) shall, for the safety and well being of the children or youth, be removed with dignity from further contact with the children and youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential. If the event leader is the respondent, then the report should be made to that person's Conference

supervisor.

- * Following the report of an incident, the event leader, or supervisor in charge shall document the report, and then speak with the alleged victim, being careful to use open-ended questions.
- * All such conversations shall be documented. Careful and confidential documentation is essential. The documentation should include the following:
 - (a) The name of the leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time and place and any action taken by this person.
 - (b) The alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth.
 - (c) Any statement made by the alleged victim.
 - (d) *Name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent.*
 - (e) Any action taken, i.e. suspension of the respondent.
 - (f) *Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of worker spoken to, content of that conversation and case number assigned.*
 - (g) *Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation.*

Notify the Conference/District authorities.

- * It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current Book of Discipline, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.
- * Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential Conference Safe Sanctuary Certification Authority file for future screening purposes.

Media Response

The Bishop shall be informed by the Pastor of all investigations or allegations of abuse. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall come from a spokesperson in the Conference Communications Office or as designated by the Bishop. Refer all inquires to the spokesperson. Do not give out any information, simply state that all inquiries will be answered by the conference spokesperson.