



# Safe Sanctuary Policy for Ward's Chapel United Methodist Church

Training in Safe Sanctuaries referenced  
below is based on Safe Sanctuaries -  
Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the  
Church by Joy Thornburg Melton.

# Matthew 18:5-6

## New Living Translation (NLT)

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- ⑤ “And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me. ⑥ But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

# Section 1: Levels of Child and Youth Supervisors

## **Level A: Heavy and frequent involvement with children and youth**

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Pastor

Lay Leader

Chair of Christian  
Education

Youth Ministries Leader

Nursery Attendants

Nursery Assistants

Sunday School

Superintendent

Preschool Director

Preschool Teachers

Preschool Assistants

Preschool Office

Manager

# Level A requirements

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- a) Filled out employment or volunteer application (Appendix 7)
- b) Filled out Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire
- c) Signed acknowledgement for receiving a copy of WCUMC Safe Sanctuary policy (Appendix 6)
- d) Has been interviewed
- e) Completed reference check
- f) Has attended WCUMC Safe Sanctuary class
- g) Criminal records form filled out and taken by adult to Criminal Justice Information System for background check/fingerprinting. (This is a one-time check as CJIS will inform WCUMC via alert letter should individual be arrested for listed crimes.)

## **Level B: Moderate and regular involvement with children and youth**

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Sunday School Teacher

Youth Group Event  
Planners

Vacation Bible School  
Director

Overnight Youth Group  
Chaperone

Vacation Bible School  
Assistant Director

# Level B Requirements

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- a) Filled out a volunteer application
  - b) Filled out Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire
  - c) Signed acknowledgement for receiving a copy of WCUMC Safe Sanctuary policy
  - d) Has been interviewed
  - e) Completed reference check
  - f) Has attended WCUMC Safe Sanctuary class
  - g) Completion of criminal records check authorization form
- Criminal records checked every 24-30 months

## **Level C: Irregular and infrequent involvement with children and youth**

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**Sunday School  
Assistant**

**Vacation Bible School  
Teacher**

**Sunday School  
Substitute**

**Assistant Youth Group  
Leader**

**Youth Group  
Chaperone**



# Level C requirements:

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- a. Filled out a volunteer application
- b. Filled out Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire
- c. Signed acknowledgement for receiving a copy of WCUMC Safe Sanctuary policy
- d. Has been interviewed
- e. Completed reference check
- f. Completion of criminal records check authorization form  
(Criminal records checked every 24-30 months)

## Section 2: Disqualification from Child and Youth Supervision

# Disqualification

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- Ward's Chapel UMC will not knowingly permit any person to work with children if that person has criminal pending charges or has received a conviction, a probation before judgment, a finding of not criminally responsible, or a finding of not guilty by reason of insanity for the commission or attempted commission of the following crimes or their equivalents

# Disqualification

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- Any crime involving violence against a person including but not limited to Maryland Criminal Law section 14-101 (See Appendix 1 for section 14-101)
- Child abuse or neglect
- Sexual misconduct
- Pornography
- Sale or distribution of illegal drugs (limited to the last 10 years)
- Possession of illegal drugs (limited to the last 10 years not including probation before judgment)
- Cruelty to animals
- Stalking
- Harassment (limited to the last 10 years)
- Reckless endangerment (limited to the last 10 years)

## Section 3: Rules for Supervisors and Supervision of Children and Youth

# Rules for Supervisors

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## **The Six Months Involvement Rule**

requires all volunteers that want to work with children and youth to be in attendance at Ward's Chapel United Methodist Church for at least six months before they are allowed in any position involving contact with minors. Upon Pastor Approval, WCUMC reserves the right to waive the six month involvement rule.

# Rules for Supervisors

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## **Youth Leaders Minimum Age**

- ⦿ Leaders of youth ministry working under the Pastor of Youth Ministry must be 18 years old or older.

## **No Supervisor under age 18**

- ⦿ People under age eighteen can *assist* a responsible adult, but they should not substitute for an adult under the Two Adult Rule (see below).

# Rules for Supervisors

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## **The "Five-Years-Older" Rule**

- Any adult must be at least five-years-older than any child/youth that he/she is supervising.

## **Event Driver of Children and Youth**

- Persons having a DUI or DWI conviction or probation before judgment within five (5) years immediately prior to an event or currently showing alcohol restrictions on their Motor Vehicle Records shall not be allowed to act as an event driver. All event drivers must be age 25 or older and provide a copy of the front and back of their driver's license. Event drivers must supply WCUMC with a certified copy of their driving record every 24-30 months and may request reimbursement from WCUMC.



# Rules for Supervision of Children and Youth

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- **The "Two Adult Rule"**  
goal is to have no fewer than two Level B or higher adults be present at all times during a church sponsored program, event or ministry focusing on children or youth. If this is not possible, there will be a roving Level B or higher adult who moves amid the classroom/event during the program period.  
No adult should be with any one youth at any time.

# Rules for Supervision of Children and Youth

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- **Advance Notice to Parents for off-site events**

A basic rule with children and youth ministry is to always give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will participate. Before the event, parents must give written permission for their child to participate.

- **Windows in All Classroom Doors**

Each room set aside for children and youth will have a door with a window in it or half door with the upper half remaining open. Any classroom door without a window or a half-door should remain open at all times.

## Outside groups utilizing church facilities

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- Any organization that focuses on children or youth using Ward's Chapel United Methodist church facilities must provide a copy of the organization's youth protection policy or must adhere to Ward's Chapel United Methodist Safe Sanctuary policy.

# Section 4: Reporting Procedures

# Reporting Procedures

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- Maryland State law provides for **mandatory reporting** when a person has reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected. WCUMC policy will adhere to Maryland Law for reporting suspected abuse or neglect. All cited provisions of Family law Title 5 are in Appendix 2.

## **Immunity for Reporting**

- Maryland law provides immunity for those who, in good faith, report suspected child abuse or neglect. Any person who makes or participates in making a report of abuse or neglect under §§ 5-704, 5-705, or 5-705.1 or participates in an investigation or a resulting judicial proceeding shall have immunity from civil liability or criminal penalty.
- Note that Maryland law also provides criminal penalties for making false reports to a law enforcement office.

# Reporting Procedures

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Upon receiving information or allegations of abuse or neglect, the reporter (person witnessing the incident or allegations) must immediately perform two tasks:

- a. If the incident recently occurred, the reporter's first duty is ***to protect the child by removing him or her*** from the location of the accused, securing the scene, and safeguarding any other children in the reporter's care.

# Reporting Procedures

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b The reporter must also ***contact the Pastor to inform him or her of the situation***. If the Pastor is unavailable, alternate points of contact are the chair of Christian Education, the Youth Ministries Leader and the Sunday School Superintendent

2. The reporter, assisted by the Pastor, Lay Leader, Chair of Christian Education or Sunday School Superintendent will ***contact the local department of social services*** and provide an oral report. The reporter must fill out an Incident form (Appendix 4). The church leader assisting will use the Reporting Contact form (Appendix 5) to make a record of calls.



# Report of abuse or neglect

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- The name, age, and home address of the child
- The name and home address of the child's parent or other person responsible for the child's care
- The whereabouts of the child.
- The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect of the child, including any evidence or information available to the reporter concerning possible previous instances of abuse or neglect.
- Any other information that might be helpful to determine the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect and the identity of any individual responsible for the abuse or neglect.



# Reporting Procedures

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- If the alleged abuser is a child or youth worker or other church staff, that individual will be immediately removed from further contact with children by the Pastor or Lay Leader or Chair of Christian Education or Leader of Youth Ministries or the Sunday School Superintendent, Removal will remain in effect until expressly rescinded by the Pastor or person acting in his or her stead.

# Reporting Procedures

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- Concurrent with State reporting, the Pastor shall inform the Baltimore Washington District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church.
- Following completion of the mandatory reporting requirements, the Pastor or Lay Leader or Chair of Christian Education or Leader of Youth Ministries or Sunday School Superintendent will contact the church's insurance carrier and the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

# Section 5: Responding to Allegations of Abuse or Neglect

# Responding to Allegations

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- **Attitude toward Allegations**

All allegations of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously. We must respond faithfully and honestly to the alleged victim and the accused.

- **Addressing Inquiries**

In addition to fulfilling State reporting requirements, Ward's Chapel United Methodist Church must also be prepared to respond to inquiries from the congregation and the media.

# Responding to Allegations

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- **Media Inquiries**

Ward's Chapel United Methodist Church's attorney shall respond to media inquiries regarding allegations of abuse or neglect. The church attorney is the only person authorized to make statements to the media. Ward's Chapel United Methodist Church staff and others including member of the congregation should decline invitations to speak with the media and should forward all requests for statements to the church attorney.

- **Congregational Inquiries**

Ward's Chapel United Methodist Church will respond to congregational inquires about alleged incidents of abuse or neglect to the maximum extent permitted by law.

# Section 6: Implementation

# Implementation

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- Implementation of this policy requires Ward's Chapel United Methodist Church to allocate resources for additional staff and/or obtain volunteers to
  - 1) manage and maintain the records and documents pertaining to Safe Sanctuaries
  - 2) conduct reference checks,
  - 3) evaluate criminal records and make recommendations and decisions regarding eligibility to supervise children and youth.
- Given the highly sensitive and personal nature of the information, particularly the criminal records, any and all individuals who will have contact with this information must sign a confidentiality agreement.

# Implementation

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- Completed forms should be turned in to the Pastor or designated member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)
- Pauline Reisberg, a member of the SPRC, will be collecting completed forms from VBS volunteers and will bring them to the Pastor and members of the SPRC for confidential review.



# Section 7: Registered Sex Offenders

# Registered Sex Offenders

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- The Pastor will regularly review the list of registered sex offenders in the state, by region surrounding the church and compare this against members of and regular visitors to the church or respond to confirmed reports by others by:
  - the creation of an individual covenant with the offender, and the assignment of “designated attendants” who will be required to be present in order for the offender to attend any church functions or be present on the church property. (see Section 7 for further details)

# Section 8: Policy Review and Amendments

# Please complete the following:

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- Appendix 6 – Acknowledgement of Safe Sanctuary Policy
- Appendix 7 – Volunteer Application for VBS with Youth or Adult responsibilities
- Appendix 10 (Yellow Form) – Questionnaire with complete references