

Sample Template to develop a Safe Sanctuaries Policy for a Local Church

****Please do not simply cut and paste. Work through the process of understanding the “why, what and how” of Safe Sanctuaries. If you need help in developing your policy, please contact the conference center at 724.776.2300.**

INTRODUCTION *(why we are going to utilize Safe Sanctuaries as our means of keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe. Below is an introduction from Joy Melton’s book, Safe Sanctuaries, reducing the risk of abuse in the church for children and youth. You may choose to craft your own statement of “why”.)*

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for 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." (para. 162C)

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both 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 in their 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 sexual and ritual 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. P. 384-386)

PURPOSE *(what we plan to accomplish with our policy. Below is adapted from Melton’s book. You may choose to craft your own statement of “what”)*

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary/Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our strong and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all our children, youth and vulnerable adults. Therefore as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth.

- We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers;
- We will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care;
- We will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies;
- We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with State law.

POLICY ("how" we are going to accomplish our purpose. Again, do not simply cut and paste to create your own policy. Your policy must reflect what your church can and will do, not what you would like to do.

Recruiting, Screening and Hiring Workers

I. Paid staff

- A. Fill out an application.
- B. Provide 3 references
- C. Anyone 14 years of age or older shall provide Act 33, 34 and the FBI Criminal record check within 30 days of hire. Any position will be considered probationary until satisfactory background checks are provided. *(PA law states that all paid employees working with or having access to children/youth shall have these three clearances. You can other clearances if you would like, but you cannot do less.)* These forms need are valid every FIVE years and need to be updated with any change of address.
- D. Attendance at a Safe Sanctuary training.
- E. Annual ongoing training. *Whatever timeframe you choose, be sure that you are willing to follow through. This training could be a training from the conference center, your local CYS, or some other organization.*

II. Volunteer staff

- A. Provide **basic information** (name, address, phone and email. Where they work and where have they living previously.....)
- B. Anyone 14 years of age or older shall provide Act 33 and 34 clearances within 30 days. (PA law states that any volunteer working with children/youth shall have the Act 33 and 34.)
- C. Provide an FBI Criminal background check if the volunteer has not been a PA resident for the previous TEN consecutive years. (PA law and cannot be altered.)
- D. Attendance at a Safe Sanctuary training.
- E. **Annual** ongoing training. **Whatever timeframe you choose, be sure that you are willing to follow through. This training could be a training from the conference center, your local CYS, or some other organization.**

Basic Procedures

- I. At least **TWO adults** in every classroom **that are not married or cohabiting**.
 - A. Possible alternative - **TWO adults in every classroom.**
 - B. Possible alternative - **ONE adult in every classroom with an adult floater checking on all the classrooms throughout the class time.**
 - C. **Other?** If you need help, please contact the conference center.
- II. All doors to classrooms, offices and **supply closets (locked limited access supply closets may/may not have windows)** shall have windows in the doors.
- III. No person in authority less than **EIGHTEEN** years of age and there all always be a **FIVE** year gap between volunteer and child/youth.

- IV. A sign-in and sign-out procedure for children, youth and special needs adults.
- V. All volunteers shall be a part of the congregation for at least SIX months before volunteering with child/youth/vulnerable adults.

Mandated Reporting

- I. As defined in Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL)
 - A. **Clergy-person**.... of any regularly established church or other religious organization;
 - B. An individual **paid or unpaid**; who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, **accepts responsibility for a child**;
 - C. An employee of a child care service, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment;
- II. Responsibilities - Mandated reporters are required to make a report of suspected abuse when they have **reasonable cause** (*witness, suspect or are told*) to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:
 - A. They have contact with the child as part of work or through a regularly scheduled program activity or service OR
 - B. They are responsible for the child or work for an agency that is directly responsible for the child OR
 - C. Someone makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter and the child is identifiable. This includes children that the mandated reporter may not know through their work or volunteer position OR

D. A person 14 years old or older makes a disclosure that he/she has committed child abuse.

This includes children that the mandated reporter may not know through their work or volunteer position.

III. Reporting - To fulfill the legal mandate, when a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, he must immediately make the report.

A. Call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313. After making the call, mandated reporters must follow up with an electronic report or a written report completed on the [CY-47 form](#) within 48 hours of making the oral report.

B. Submit the report electronically. The report is submitted directly to ChildLine via Child Welfare Information Solution portal. You will need to include your name, telephone number and email address. You will receive an email confirmation that your report has been received; you should print and keep this confirmation for your records.

C. After making the report to ChildLine, the mandated reporter must tell the pastor or the position that they report (ex. Youth pastor). That person then is responsible to facilitate the organization's cooperation with any investigation and assists the mandated reporter with any concerns he may have.

D. If the Pastor is the one suspected, after contacting ChildLine the mandated reporter must contact the District Superintendent.

Vehicle/Driving Procedures

I. Church Owned Vehicles

1. Screening and Training of Drivers, including the Act 33, 34 and if needed the FBI Record Check.

2. Current and valid drivers license.
3. Minimum 25 years of age (check with your insurance company. They may have different age requirements).
4. TWO adult rule.
5. Keep passenger records.

B. Personal Vehicles

1. Screening and Training of Drivers, including the Act 33, 34 and if needed the FBI Record Check.
2. Current and valid drivers license.
3. Minimum 25 years of age (check with your insurance company. They may have different age requirements). Youth are never to drive other youth.
4. TWO adult rule.
5. Exception to the TWO adult rule is when traveling in a caravan to an event.

C. Youth Driving

1. Youth are never to drive other youth.
2. If parents allow youth to drive to church or event, this is parents decision. However, once the youth arrives at church or event, they are only permitted to return home.

Travel Procedures

I. Overnights

A. Hotel setting

1. Adults and youth shall not share a room. Youth stay with youth, adults stay with adults.

2. Adults are to be the same gender as the students they are chaperoning.
 3. Rooms should be on the same floor.
- B. Cabin setting (multiple bunkbeds/beds in room)
1. Men stay with men, women stay with women.
 2. Private changing spaces should always be provided in all bunk rooms.
- C. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual youth should be housed with same gender.
1. Single use hotel rooms can be isolating and should only be used in consultation with youth and his/her parents.
 2. Regardless of housing space, private changing spaces should always be provided.
- D. Transgender Students - A conversation should take place between the student, parent(s) and trip leader to decide on the most appropriate housing for the student. The Students safety and comfort should be considered. Private housing is an option, but can be isolating and should only be used in consultation with the student and parent(s).

Mission Trip Procedures

- I. Mission trips can be local, national or international and each provide different challenges.
 - A. Participants should understand the basic procedures of Safe Sanctuaries and be able to adapt them into a missional environment.
 1. At least TWO adults present when around someone under the age of 18.
 2. Be aware of your space. Are there windows? By placing yourself in a non-visible location you put yourself at greater risk.
 3. Leaders should be at least 25 years of age. No one in authority under 18.

4. When possible, if you are conducting an activity where you assume responsibility for children/youth under 18, have a roster of who you are responsible.
 5. No one with less than 6 months connection with the church should go on a mission trip without written consent by their local or former pastor.
- B. All participants 14 years and older shall obtain the Act 33, 34 and if needed the FBI record check.