

## **Safe Sanctuaries Practices & Procedures First United Methodist Church, Madison (FUMC)**

For the purposes of this policy, we provide the following definitions:

- **Child:** a person who is from birth through fifth grade.
- **Youth:** a person who is in sixth grade through high school senior and is under the age of 18.
- **Vulnerable adult:** a person over the age of 18 who has significant mental and/or functional impairment.

• **Two-Adult Rule:** It is recommended that two or more adults be present during any church activity that involves children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Exceptions may need to be made, as with the confirmation mentor program, with counseling, with providing transportation, etc. Such exceptions should be handled by

- (a) using an “open door” policy (the door to the room where the youth and adult are meeting is left open) and/or
- (b) notifying appropriate church staff

Exceptions may also need to be made in some situations in which every attempt was made to secure two adults. Under these circumstances a youth may assist an adult.

• **Leader Maturity:** An adult must be at least five years older than the oldest youth they will supervise. Young adults who do not meet the five-year rule may serve as volunteers provided that they serve under the supervision of one or more adults who do meet this criteria. No one under age 18 and no one who does not meet the five-year rule will be given supervisory responsibility for a group of youth.

• **Six-Month Rule:** Prior to volunteering with children, youth or vulnerable adults, an adult should be an active part of the FUMC church community for at least six months.

• **Visibility:** Windows (or half-doors) remove the opportunity for secrecy and isolation and should not be permanently covered. If there is no window, the door stays open.

• **Photo/Video usage:** Obtain permission before publishing photos or videos, either in print or online. Do not provide identifying information, about location or youth or children’s names. No tagging should be allowed on social media.

• **Rule of Three:** Youth may be allowed out of direct supervision with specific time/space boundaries but should always be in groups of at least three.

• **Communication:** Obtain parental permission before contacting youth directly (text, phone, Facebook, Snapchat, email, etc.).

- **Transportation:** Drivers should have a reliable automobile and provide a copy of drivers' license. No adult alone with a youth.
- **Sleeping Arrangements:** Children and youth will have the option to sleep in a boys, girls, or non-gendered/coed sleeping space. Parents and their children and youth will designate which area students will sleep in on the even registration forms. When it is not possible to have a non-gendered sleeping room, parents, children and youth will have the option to choose what sleeping space they feel most comfortable with.
- **Notify Parents:** Always give parents advance notice and information about events. Require written, advance permission when appropriate. Obtain necessary medical permissions.
- **Accident/Incident Forms:** Should be filled out promptly and filed. All forms should be reviewed annually to determine if a pattern is emerging.
- **Sign in/out procedures:** Young children in nursery should be signed in/out by a parent or guardian.
- **Parent and Family Education:** Because we have a commitment to a comprehensive plan for the prevention of child abuse with our ministries, we want to provide information about the plan to the congregation and parents. A family education event will be presented annually to disseminate the components of this plan. An event could include: (1) a speaker from a local law enforcement agency, (2) a speaker from a local child protective service agency, (3) a doctor or counselor who is experienced in treating abused children, (4) an attorney experienced in advising churches about risk management or loss prevention, (5) a video about the incidence of child sexual abuse within churches, (6) printed copies of your churches abuse prevention policies and procedures, (8) a time for worship and prayer, and (9) a discussion/presentation on first aid and CPR training for all church workers with children and youth as a basic step to assure the safety of children. Having workers who are prepared to deal with bumps, bruises and scrapes with competency goes a long way toward building the confidence of children and parents involved in the children's ministry.