



Our Covenant:

As a Christian community, the United Methodist Church of Whitefish Bay pledges to conduct the children and youth ministry in a way pleasing to God. We will do this in ways that will assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, volunteers and staff. We will follow reasonable guidelines, educate our staff and volunteers regarding the guidelines and best practices of Christian care.

Safe Sanctuary Policy Overview

Safe Sanctuaries is a policy regarding making congregations safe places where children, youth, and vulnerable adults may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith. These policies include procedures and protocol for interacting with vulnerable populations when they are in the care of ministry staff and background checked volunteers from drop-off to release, including policies for off campus trips and events. Outside groups will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging the compliance with UMCWFB Safe Sanctuary policy. These policies are not enforced when caregivers or parents are present.

**** Child safety in the *Carpenter's Shop Daycare* and *Tree of Life* preschool is governed by policies in these areas as deemed by state licensing which requires teacher training and certification, as well as fingerprinting and more extensive background checks. ****

The congregation is encouraged to review this policy and is welcome to discuss or report any concerns to a member of the team. The member will communicate with the appropriate people to ensure your questions and concerns are answered.

The Two Adult Rule

To protect all UMCWFB staff, volunteers, and most importantly children and youth minors, we will adhere to the Two Adult Rule: more than one unrelated adult supervisor will be present during any church activity or any activity that occurs on church property. At no time during UMCWFB programs may an adult staff member or volunteer be alone with a single child unobserved by another staff or volunteer.

In emergency situations, when the two-adult rule has been compromised, parents should be notified and apprised of the situation as soon as possible.

Supervision and Safety

Following guidelines are designed to keep youth and children safe.

- Children or youth will never be allowed to be in the building alone or unsupervised by adults.
- UMCWFB will assure that staff and volunteers working with children and youth are at least three years older than the oldest youth attending the activity or program.
- UMCWFB staff and volunteers will not discipline children by use of physical punishment. UMCWFB staff and volunteers will not verbally or emotionally abuse children.
- When assisting young children in the bathroom, an adult must use least invasive intervention, and stay within sight of another adult. Adults are prohibited from using designated children's restrooms.
- All children and youth activities should have safe adult to child ratios (two adult rule still applies.)
 - 0-1 years, 1 adult : 3 children
 - 1-2 years, 1 adult : 6 children
 - 2-5 years, 1 adult : 8 children
 - 6-18 years, 1 adult : 10 children
- Children in preschool and nursery care will only be released to a properly identified and pre-authorized adult.
- Staff and volunteers will be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children and indicate, in writing to the lead pastor or other member of the team, any suspicions of possible abusive or unhealthy activities.

Screening and Background Checks

All compensated persons, non-members, and volunteers who are regularly involved with supervision of minors will complete an Application for Criminal Records Check prior to working with minors. This check may include national, state and city as well as sex offender lists. There will be a criminal records background re-check every five years for active persons involved with children and youth.

A Participation Covenant shall be signed by any UMCWFB member who volunteers on an occasional basis (a few hours each month).

Persons new to the Congregation who wish to work with children and youth will be permitted to do so after they have been in worship regularly for six months or submit two references and have a background check. This requirement can be waived if a new member is transferring from another church within which he or she engaged in volunteer ministry under a comparable Safe Sanctuary policy.

Personal reference checks may be conducted and documented prior to prospective employees and lead program volunteers begin duties. Personal interviews will be conducted for higher risk positions e.g., youth groups, overnight trips, mission trips or largely unsupervised activities involving children or youth.

Volunteers with criminal abuse violations will not be accepted. Adults who have been convicted of or plead guilty to either child sexual or physical abuse (if known to the administration) will not be allowed to volunteer in an area involving the supervision of youth or children.

Training and Education

An orientation program including written materials explaining UMCWFB policies, procedures, and regulations will be conducted for all new staff and volunteers. Upon completion, a signature will be required acknowledging having received and read appropriate policies and standards. (Participation Covenant Statement)

UMCWFB congregation and families participating in children and youth activities will be made aware of our policy annually.

Staff and volunteers who are working directly with children will be provided with information regarding the signs of possible abuse. Training will provide information on procedures and mandatory reporting to any suspicion of abuse.

Transportation

Any driver that will be transporting youth or adults for a church activity will need to fill out the Driver Information Form prior to the event. Refer to the form for our requirements of age, insurance, and safety.

When traveling in a single vehicle, two adults must be present. If multiple vehicles are used, vehicles must travel "caravan" style with all vehicles staying in communication and stopping together.

Youth attending an event may only transport themselves or a family member during the event unless written consent is offered.

When Parents Are Not Present

During most events and activities, parents should be on the church campus. We recognize there are some special events where parents are not present. For those situations, we collect parent permission and emergency information to ensure child safety. If the child is a guest of another family, the guest would fall under their responsibility.

Sensitivity

Leaders at UMCWFB will educate themselves on proper terminology to be sensitive to all youth. Leaders will open clear communication with youth and families to ensure the best solution for all youth at overnight events. LGBTQ+ youth will have the option to use the single person restroom if it is more comfortable for them.

When abuse is suspected...

At the first report of suspected abuse, the staff member or volunteer receiving the information will take immediate action by notifying a Pastor or supervising staff.

UMCWFB leadership will meet relevant State or local child abuse reporting requirements and will cooperate to the extent of the law with authorities involved.

If a reported incident involves a staff member or a volunteer, that person will be suspended and not allowed at UMCWFB until the investigation is complete. Suspension of the staff member or volunteer will end only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the church board. Reinstatement is at their discretion. UMCWFB will promptly notify a parent or legal guardian of the child involved in the alleged incident as specified by the State or local agency. Discrete and confidential reporting of suspected abuse is expected in all cases. UMCWFB staff members and volunteers must be sensitive to this need, and therefore, should only discuss the suspected abuse with a pastor.

All allegations will be taken seriously but will not be pre-judged. Situations will be handled forthrightly, with due respect for privacy and confidentiality. UMCWFB's insurance carrier will be notified promptly. Civil authorities will be given full cooperation within the guidance of UMCWFB's attorney. The victim's wellbeing will be respected and protected. The victim should not be held in any way responsible. Pastoral resources available will be extended. The care and safety of the victim is the priority. Guidelines from the Wisconsin Annual Conference will be followed if an allegation is reported involving a staff member.

Use of Technology

UMCWFB staff and volunteers will communicate to parents and youth together or in group environments, never communicating with just one child or youth. This policy includes all forms of electronic communication including text, e-mail, social media sites, and video-type communication (i.e. Zoom or Skype.) UMCWFB staff will recognize and respect that behaviors and actions online are also reflections of how other Christians associated with UMCWFB may be portrayed.

UMCWFB staff and volunteers will not access or download pornographic images on church computers or devices.

Registered Sex Offenders

Sex Offenders should communicate with the Pastor upon attending church. They are welcome to worship with the stipulation that there is another adult with them at all times in the building or church related activity. They are forbidden access to areas that are exclusive to children when children are occupying the space. A registered sex offender will never be allowed to volunteer with vulnerable adults, children or youth.

