



# **FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - LUFKIN**

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## **First UMC Lufkin**

### **Child, Youth, Vulnerable Adult Safety Policy**

**Adopted October 18, 2005**

**Revise/Approve by Church Counsel July 14, 2014**

**Purpose:** OUR CALLING AND OUR MANDATE IS TO ENSURE SAFE SANCTUARY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

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 Lufkin FUMCL, including all church-sponsored events.

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.

#### **Definitions of Abuse:**

1. Verbal Abuse- Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades or threatens any child or youth.
2. 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 individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth.
3. 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 conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in FUMCL 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.

#### **Plan for reducing the risk of Abuse:**

1. Screening for all paid and volunteer personnel: The program staff is responsible for assuring that all paid and volunteer personnel under their ministry area comply with background checks and Safe Sanctuary Training as directed prior to participation with children, youth or vulnerable adults. Non-compliance is subject to disciplinary action.
  - A. Prior to employment or acceptance as a leader, assistant leader or childcare provider (paid or unpaid), the event leader in charge of an event or program shall direct each prospective applicant to complete the application/consent form. By signing the form, the applicant gives permission to Lufkin FUMCL to contact references and perform the necessary investigation to complete the review of the application. All screening shall be done in accordance with guidelines to be established by the Conference Safe Sanctuary Certification Authority.



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B: Criminal background checks will be performed biannually. Results of screens shall be kept confidential. The determination of whether a particular crime is serious enough to result in Lufkin FUMCL giving a negative recommendation shall be made by Lufkin FUMCL in its sole discretion. If the applicant (paid or unpaid) is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children or youth, the applicant will not be approved. Any conviction of a crime against children or youth shall disqualify any applicant. Without in any way limiting those crimes which the Lufkin FUMCL determines to be serious, the following examples are offered 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 and youth:**

- 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.

**C: Training:** All paid and volunteer personnel are required to participate in initial and annual training and educational events provided by the church to keep apprised of church policy and state laws regarding child abuse. Safe Sanctuary certification is required every two years. No person shall, after June 1, 2005, have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth until they have completed this training program.

**2. Supervision:** An adult is anyone 18 years of age or older. A youth assistant is anyone under the age of 18 who may work with children and youth only when supervised by at least two adults over the age of 18 years. Youth assistants cannot be in charge of, nor left alone with children and youth. Background checks on youth under the age of 18 are inaccessible, so choose youth with great care.

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."

Observation of activities in rooms is essential, whether it is done by windows, open doors, glass doors, electronic technology, etc.

For all persons seeking to work with children and/or youth, membership in this church shall be at least 6 months (OR written recommendation from the senior pastor at the church most previously attended OR written recommendation from two current members of this church who have been members at least one year.)

### **Supervision for Nursery/childcare:**

- There shall be a minimum of two (2) childcare providers per room.
- We recommend that whenever possible State Childcare Minimum Standards shall be followed, particularly in relation to the number of childcare providers to child ratio.

### **Supervision of children and youth:**

- Lufkin FUMCL shall observe the "2 Leader Rule" (2 leaders per classroom, 2 leaders within line of sight when outdoors.)
- Exception to allow 1 leader/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.



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- 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.

### **Overnight Accommodations:**

At events that require overnight accommodations:

- We strongly recommend that at least (2) leaders be present in every room.
- 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, one leader is adequate, so long as any one leader shall NOT be alone with any one-child/youth.

### **3. Reporting of Incidents**

#### **A. Assess needs for emergency care for the victim:**

1. Report incident to the parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s) as well as a member of the FUMCL pastoral staff.
2. Provide emergency healthcare as needed. --First Aid, Emergency Services, Hospital emergency room
3. Arrange for Crisis counseling where deemed appropriate.
4. Take all allegations seriously and do not pre-judge the situation.
5. Offer and provide pastoral resources as needed and show care and support to prevent further hurt.

#### **B. Secure the area/ evidence:**

1. Maintain the integrity of the area.
2. Protect all evidence for the professional investigation.
3. 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.

#### **C. Communication to outside Entities:**

1. Notify legal authorities as required. (911)
2. Notify the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (800-252-5400).
3. Under the counsel of the church attorney, full cooperation will be given to civil authorities.
4. The Senior pastor or his designee will be informed of all details of the incident and will release any information that is to be disseminated to the media. Other participants will not release information to the media.
5. The Senior Pastor or his designee will notify the church's insurance carrier, immediately.
6. The Senior Pastor or his designee will inform the FUMCL's Board of Trustees and appropriate church legal counsel.
7. The Senior Pastor will notify the East District Authorities. All confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential Texas Conference Safe Sanctuary Certification Authority File for future screening purposes.
8. Church staff will be notified on a "need to know" basis (to protect the privacy of the victim and/or accused) and will be expected to maintain confidentiality of incident subject to disciplinary action for non-compliance.

#### **D. Documentation of Incident:**

1. Promptly document in writing all of your steps at handling the incident.



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2. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation, however, proper documentation of the incident is crucial and should include the following items.
  - 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.
  - h. Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.
3. All files will be retained in a locked, secure area to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

**E. Dealing with the Accused:** It is a privilege to work with youth. Great responsibility is required. Those who violate this policy shall immediately be removed from contact with Children and youth and appropriate authorities shall be notified immediately.

1. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult is secured.
2. Offer and provide pastoral care to the family of the abuser as appropriate.
3. Refer to outside counseling services.
4. Refer to outside clergy if deemed more desirable or requested by the family.

Source: Texas Annual Conference Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures effective June 1, 2005, Updated July 2006

Conference Consent for Background Check

[http://www.txcumc.org/files/fileslibrary/application\\_for\\_background\\_checks.pdf](http://www.txcumc.org/files/fileslibrary/application_for_background_checks.pdf)

Conference Safe Sanctuary Policy

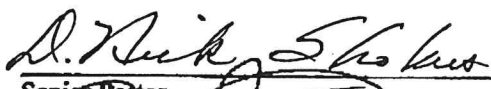
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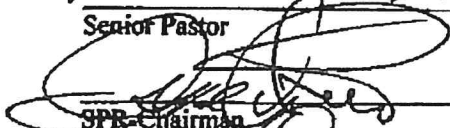
Guidelines for formulating Safe Sanctuary policies

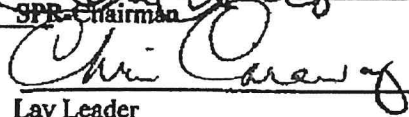
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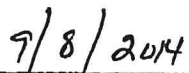
Incident Report for Suspected cases of Abuse

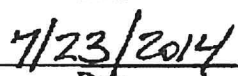
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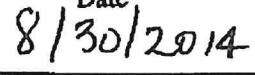
  
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Senior Pastor

  
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SPR Chairman

  
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