

Safe Sanctuary Policy – Union Church

- I. Purpose and Biblical Foundation**
- II. State of Kentucky Child Protection Information**
- III. Recruitment, Screening, and Training of Workers**
- IV. Procedures for Prevention and Safety**
- V. Response and Reporting**

I. Purpose and Biblical Foundation

When you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me. But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck. Matthew 18:5-6, *The Message*

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both radical hospitality and protection to children. Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our strong and unwavering commitment to the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

II. State of Kentucky Child Protection Information

Information about state practices in regards to child and vulnerable adult abuse can currently be found on the website of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community Based Services, Child Protection Branch. <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/childsafety.htm>

For information regarding reporting standards and investigation protocol and definitions and indicators of abuse, review the Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Booklet, found on the website and available in print in the Union Church office. Another resource, during weekday hours, is the Madison County office for Protection and Permanency, 986-8411, PO Box 461, 204 Pauline Drive, Berea.

The 24 hr. Child Abuse hotline is 1-877-KY-SAFE1 (1-877-597-2331)

III. Recruitment, Screening, and Training of Workers

- A. Requirements for all church staff members and volunteers who regularly work with minors (at least 5 or more times in this capacity in one year)
 - a. Current CPR/First Aid Certification for people paid to work with minors
 - b. Completed Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form
 - c. Three Reference Checks, done initially and when applicant hasn't volunteered for 3+ years.
 - d. Personal Interview
 - e. Criminal Background Checks, which include a Sex Offender Registry review, done initially and when applicant hasn't volunteered for 3+ years

- f. Safe Sanctuary Training, yearly
 - g. Signing of Safe Sanctuaries Covenant, yearly
- B. Requirements for volunteers who periodically work with minors (2-5 times in this capacity in one year) and one-on-one with vulnerable adults
 - a. Completed Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form
 - b. One to Three Reference Checks
 - c. Sex Offender Registry review
 - d. Safe Sanctuaries Training or Safe Sanctuaries Policy Orientation letter, yearly
 - e. Signing of Safe Sanctuaries Covenant, yearly
- C. Requirements for volunteers who work once yearly with minors
 - a. Completed Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form
 - b. Sex Offender Registry review
 - c. Safe Sanctuaries Policy Orientation letter
 - d. Signing of Safe Sanctuaries Covenant, yearly
- D. All paperwork filled out for these procedures shall be considered confidential and kept in the locked and restricted access filing cabinet. The following are authorized to access the files as needed: Faith Development Board members, Church Administrator, Pastoral Staff, Office Administrator, Church Council Chair, Administration Board members, and the Moderator.
- E. Safe Sanctuaries Training includes an overview of this policy, procedures for ministries with children and youth, steps to report incidents of abuse, details of state laws regarding types and warning signs of child abuse, and appropriate interpersonal boundaries.
- F. Six Month Hospitality policy states that all new regular attendees take part in the ministries of the church for 6 months before volunteering to lead children and youth activities.

IV. Procedures for Prevention and Safety

- A. Every 1-3 years, CPR and First Aid training will be coordinated for those required to have it for their positions and others who might be interested.
- B. There will be no fewer than two adults present with minors, preferably unrelated. A floating adult visiting more than one class group can assist with supervision. For overnight events, there must be at least one adult of each gender of the participants.
- C. Youth over the age of 16 may work with an unrelated adult in supervising children in situations like Sunday School and Vacation Bible School when other adults are readily available.
- D. The two supervising individuals working with minors must be at least 5 (five) years older than the participants.
- E. When children are on the playground during church events, an adequate number of adults should be with them at all times as per the above policies.
- F. In a mentorship or other one-on-one situation between an adult and a minor, they should meet in a public place (church, coffeehouse) or where at least one other unrelated adult is nearby. If they want to meet in a private place, written permission must be granted by the parent/guardian.
- G. Classrooms and child care rooms are open and may be visited without prior notice by paid staff, volunteers, or parents. All classrooms must have an unobstructed window or open half door.

- H. Counseling sessions with minors shall take place in a room with an open door or unobstructed window, ideally when others are nearby. Similar precautions should be taken with vulnerable adults.
- I. One parent or guardian is required to sign their child into and out of programs (Sunday school, VBS, etc.) for children elementary age and below. The adult who signs the child in will indicate who will sign them out.
- J. Written consent of a parent/guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, any overnight activities, and any one-on-one mentoring or counseling sessions.
- K. Appropriate methods of discipline for children and youth include positive reinforcement, redirecting, and time outs. Inappropriate methods of discipline include shaming, spanking, hitting, or threatening.

When children need to go to the restroom, volunteers will accompany children to the main bathroom door, but not any further unless the child needs assistance. If the child needs assistance, the volunteer will leave the door cracked open during the bathroom process.

V. Responding and Reporting

- A. Tell one of our pastors, the moderator, or the church administrator. If a volunteer or staff member suspects that a minor has been or is being abused or neglected, they should talk immediately to the one of these staff members. This ensures that the church leadership is aware of the situation and offers support to the person reporting the incident.
- B. Fill out an incident report form together with the staff member. It is imperative to document all actions and conversations related to allegations. The information on the form must be kept confidential and access limited only to those who must know.
- C. Take any necessary steps to assure the safety of the victim and notify parents of victim if appropriate. If you feel the child is in immediate danger, call 911.
- D. Report to Department for Community Based Services. It is the duty of everyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is dependent, abused, or neglected to report this information. The 24 hour hotline is 1-877-597-2331. The local Madison County office number is 859-986-8411. The Department of Community Based Services has the authority and obligation to assure that reports meet the statutory definition of abuse, neglect, or dependency before a formal child protection investigation is set in motion. State law says that the clergy-penitent privilege shall be a ground for refusing to report.

Additional steps may include, but are not limited to, the following, depending on the situation:

- * Removal of offender. If the possible abuser is a staff member or volunteer with minors in the church, they shall be immediately relieved of that position until the allegations are resolved.
- * Notify church's insurance company as appropriate.
- * Notify congregation as appropriate. Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.
- * Consider what groups or persons in the congregation might have been affected by the incident and ensure that appropriate ministry takes place.
- * Respond to the media. Only people designated to speak on behalf of the church (lead pastor, associate pastor, moderator) shall make comments to the media. No one else is authorized to speak on behalf of the congregation.

Appendix

- Application and Disclosure form
- Reference check form
- Safe sanctuaries covenant
- Safe Sanctuaries policy orientation letter