

Policy for the Protection of Children

Introduction

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls all churches to welcome the children and also to make our churches safe places for children to grow and learn. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and also to protect those volunteers from false accusations. It is also our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children.

Purpose

Asbury United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

Procedures

We adopt these minimum standards for our ministries with children and youth:

1. Screening and recruiting:
 - a) Participation Covenant/Criminal background check/ Volunteer application - All volunteers participating in events involving children or youth will be required to complete and sign a participation covenant and complete a volunteer application. All leaders of children's or youth events or programs are subject to a criminal background check. These checks will be kept in a locked cabinet in the pastor's office to protect the privacy of the volunteer. A folder should be created for each volunteer and these documents (application, covenant, & background check) should be placed there for future reference. These files should remain confidential and only reviewed and shared with appropriate leaders. These records will be kept indefinitely in a secured location.
 - b) Interviewing — All workers will be interviewed by the pastor and children's coordinator before they begin teaching. References will be contacted.
 - c) 6 Month Rule - Volunteers for church sponsored events involving children or youth must be an active member of Asbury United Methodist Church for at least 6 months.

2. Supervision
 - a) Two Adult Rule — any church sponsored event that involves children and youth will have at least two adults present for the entire event. These adults shall not be related by blood. The two adults should be within eyesight of each other (in the same room) during the event, as well as before and after the event, while any child is arriving or waiting to be picked up by parents or guardians. These adults will have completed the volunteer information application. An adult is defined as over 21 years of age and at least 5 years older than the children / youth they are supervising. A list of all adults who are qualified to supervise children or youth events will be posted outside of every space in the church where events for children or youth will occur.

- b) Open Doors - Church sponsored events that involve children or youth shall take place in rooms with doors open. If a door needs to be closed for various reasons, then the adult leader shall ensure that any windows are not covered and the door is not completely closed. At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the door of the room may be closed only when a parent or guardian is present.
- c) Participation logs/Activity logs - Every church sponsored event involving children/youth will have an activity log. Leaders will be expected to record the date and start time of the event, a list of volunteers and children/youth attending the event. The leader will also note the arrival and departure times of each child and volunteer and the end time of the event. These logs should be kept in the Sunday school office in a designated cabinet.
- d) FirstAid/CPR Training - A basic medical supply kit will be kept in the Sunday school office on the bookshelf. This kit is to be present at all church sponsored activities/events that involve children and youth. The church will offer first aid/CPR training for all youth leaders and volunteers once a year.

3. Reporting

- a) Any member of the church observing abuse or receiving information of abuse should immediately report the incident to the Delaware Division of Family Services at 1-800-292-9582, and then inform the Pastor, Lay Leader, and Sunday School Superintendent, using the attached incident report form.
- b) The Pastor will notify the parents of the victim of the allegation immediately.
- c) The Pastor will notify the District Superintendent by phone (within 12 hours) and in writing (within 48 hours) and the church's insurance agent (within 48 hours).
- d) If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from any contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved.

4. Responding

- a) A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously and nothing will be covered up.
- b) The Media Director of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference or his/her designee is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor.
- c) If the allegation is against a paid staff person or pastor, the Lay Leader will contact the District Superintendent and SPRC Chair immediately.
- d) Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.