

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Abuse Prevention Policy of First United Methodist Church of Eugene

I. Preamble [Introduction]

The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference has stated:

Our hope and belief today is that the church is a place where all people will find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. But, we know that abuse occurs in churches, large and small, urban and rural. It is a problem, which cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. In April 1996, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution (Resolution 65, "Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Churches, pg. 384, 1996 Book of Resolutions) aimed at reducing the risk of abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in the church. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children, youth, and vulnerable adults very seriously. While we may not be able to completely prevent abuse in every situation, it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a policy of prevention. We are responsible to create an environment of safe sanctuary for children, youth and vulnerable adults, and those who work with them. Thus the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference has established for its local ministry-settings these minimum standards for abuse prevention to demonstrate our concern for and commitment to the safety of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

First United Methodist Church of Eugene [hereinafter, "First UMC"] embraces these ideals and states categorically and unambiguously that we are opposed to any form of child abuse. Further we will be proactive in protecting children and youth in our care so that this Church and all its activities will be places of safety and nurture.

Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are gifts from God to the entire Christian Community. When anyone suffers, the entire Community suffers. When Jesus invited the children to "come to me," he was indicating that God stands with the most vulnerable, who should be most protected.

Child abuse is not only a violation of Christian hospitality and care for those Jesus says are nearest the kingdom of God. It is also illegal. The State of Oregon has definitions of child abuse that are applicable in every venue of Church activity.

Therefore, First United Methodist Church of Eugene establishes the following *Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Abuse Prevention Policy* [referenced hereinafter, “this Policy”].

II. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish procedures that prevent child abuse in any form and provide for the safety of all children, youth and vulnerable adults, by:

1. protecting from abuse the children, youth, and vulnerable adults that participate in church activities, and
2. protecting staff, both paid and volunteer, from uncertainty, and unfounded and/or malicious allegations of abuse through a comprehensive plan that includes: screening, training, supervision, reporting procedures, and response.

III. Scope

This policy for abuse prevention shall be applicable to

1. all ministry-settings wherein First UMC is involved, and
2. all activities by any group meeting at facilities of First UMC.

IV. Availability of this Policy

Copies of this policy will be available as follows:

1. in the church administrative office,
2. in the offices of each staff member,
3. in any classroom where children, youth, or vulnerable adults are regularly present,
4. through the Person In Charge [PIC] at any event where children, youth, or vulnerable adults are present,
5. on the church website.

V. Definitions for the Purposes of this Policy

1. Abuse is:
 - a. Generally, to treat in a harmful, injurious or offensive way; including physical or emotional: neglect, sexual abuse, ritual abuse;
 - b. also defined herein as defined by the State of Oregon and all applicable laws and statutes.
2. Physical Abuse includes:

- a. corporal punishment of a child performed by anyone other than an immediate family member, OR
 - b. any intentional hitting, pushing, or striking of a child by anyone that would lead to any injury, welts, or marks lasting more than a few minutes, OR
 - c. as also defined herein as defined by the State of Oregon and all applicable laws and statutes.
3. Sexual abuse includes behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content including but not limited to the following:
- a. displaying sexually suggestive visual material,
 - b. making sexual comments or innuendos about one's own or another persons body,
 - c. touching another person's body, hair, or clothing in a manner that can reasonably be understood as provocative or uncomfortable or overly intimate,
 - d. touching or rubbing oneself sexually in the presence of another person,
 - e. kissing,
 - f. sexual intercourse, and
any other activity that, subject to laws or statutes of the State of Oregon, is defined as sexual abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
4. Adult is a person 18 years old or older.
5. Child is person from birth until they turn 12 years old.
6. Youth is any person 12 years old to his/her 18th birthday.
7. Vulnerable Adults are any persons 18 years of age or older with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.
8. Activities are any activity or programs in which children, youth, or vulnerable adults are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.
9. Background Checks are researching references and records for indications of past or potential abusive and/or criminal activity.
10. Conference is The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.
11. Person-in-Charge [hereinafter, PIC] is an Adult staff person or volunteer who is the person responsible for oversight of any church activity. All PIC's must be Regular Volunteers as defined herein. PIC's must be at least five [5] years older than any youth. PICs determine who is allowed to participate as a Volunteer at the activity in their charge.
12. Volunteer is a person who assists in conducting activities under the supervision of person(s) in charge. A Volunteer may be a youth or an adult.
13. A Mandatory Reporter (for purposes of this policy) is:
- a. any adult who supervises children at First UMC, including Regular Volunteers, PICs, and Volunteers, and
 - b. any paid staff member, including the Pastor, and
 - c. anyone else designated as a "mandatory reporter" by the State of Oregon.

14. Staff includes all persons paid to work at First UMC for at least 30 days in any calendar year.
15. Regular volunteers are: all adults, volunteers, and PICs who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
16. PIC's must be Regular Volunteers.
 - a. Examples of Regular Volunteers would include, but not be limited to: Youth & children teachers, VBS workers, youth & children music workers, overnight youth & children activities volunteers, confirmation mentors.
17. Outside Organizations includes any organization other than the First UMC that rents or uses any facility of the First UMC; or is given permission by First UMC to use any facility and the name of the First UMC for any purpose.
18. Safe Sanctuary Coordinator [hereinafter SSC] is a person, either Staff member or Regular Volunteer, who is responsible for day to day implementation of this Policy, working with the Pastor and the SPRC.
19. SPRC is a group of persons working in conjunction with the SSC and the Pastor to oversee implementation, review, and dissemination of this Policy.

VI. Accountability

A. SSC Responsibilities

1. The day to day implementation of the church's Child Abuse Prevention Policy is the responsibility of the Children's Safety Officer at First UMC [hereinafter, SSC], and the Pastor.
2. The SSC shall be a member of the SPRC, appointed by the SPRC at the SPRC's first annual meeting.
3. The SSC's term of office will be from the time of appointment until the time a replacement is appointed, with a term limit of three years.

B. SSC Qualifications

The SSC will have the following qualifications:

1. Must be a member of either First UMC [or the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference for a period of not less than two years]; and
2. Must be a Regular Volunteer or Staff member (and therefore have passed through screening as described in §VII.C. below).

VII. Screening Procedures

A. Leadership as Privilege

Since working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults as well as leadership in the church are privileges, not rights, First UMC reserves the right to turn down any applicant for any position at any time, whether Staff, Regular Volunteer or Volunteer.

B. Timeline Accountability

All Regular Volunteers and Staff shall be screened prior to their assumption of a role of leadership. Regular volunteers at the time this policy is adopted shall be screened prior to two weeks before their role begins.

C. Requirements of all Regular Volunteers and Staff

All Regular Volunteers and Staff shall be required:

1. to complete an application including voluntary disclosure of information including:
 - a. legal name and other names previously used,
 - b. the applicant's social security number,
 - c. date of birth,
 - d. all driver's license numbers or Identification Card numbers,
 - e. previous involvement in churches and similar organizations,
 - f. prior experience working with minors,
 - g. five year employment history,
 - h. educational background,
 - i. an opportunity to share the applicant's thoughts on his/her gifts for ministry,
 - j. the applicant's current address and addresses covering the past ten [10] years, and
 - k. voluntary disclosure of any convictions of abusive behavior.
2. submit a waiver for the SSC and SPRC to obtain reference checks from application form,
3. submit a waiver for the SSC and SPRC to obtain a review of the Oregon and Idaho lists of sexual offenders or State or National criminal background checks.
4. submit a waiver for any other Background Checks as approved by the SPRC.

D. Reference Checks

1. All new Regular Volunteers shall provide at least two personal (non-family) references that have known the individual well for at least two years.
2. Staff shall provide at least two professional references as well as personal references.
3. Volunteer references will be checked by the SSC or by persons designated by the SSC, the Pastor, and/or the SPRC. Staff references will be checked by the SPRC or a designee of the SPRC. At a minimum, two references will be checked for each individual.

E. Personal Interviews

The SSC or a person or persons designated by the SPRC shall conduct a personal interview with the applicant discussing (but not limited to the following conduct):

1. experience working with children
2. any challenges working with children
3. beliefs about classroom management and discipline,
4. the applicant's thoughts on fairness in regard to gender and race.

F. Background Checks

The SSC under supervision and with support from the SPRC and a staff person designated by the Pastor is to be responsible for review and approval of each application before a person's service begins. Screening required by First UMC shall include:

1. A Oregon Sexual Offenders Check
2. National Sexual Offenders Check.
3. A National Background Criminal Check.

The cost of screening shall be covered by a separate line item established by the Finance Committee. At no time shall an individual be asked to pay the cost of his or her screening. The screening procedure for each individual shall be repeated every five years.

G. Custody of Records

The files of each screened person shall be maintained in a locked file cabinet in the administrative offices by the Pastor in consultation with the SPRC. This information shall be used only for the purpose of determining suitability of the person to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The information shall not be destroyed when the person is no longer a Volunteer. (This provides continuing proof that proper measures

were taken at the time of the person's involvement as a child or youth worker). In order to assure that all reasonable caution shall be taken to assure the confidentiality of these files, only the Pastor in consultation with the SPRC Chair and a representative of the Trustees will have access to these files.

H. Newly Hired Persons

In order to make sure that the appropriate screening is done, any proposed hirees are to be screened in consultation with the SSC.

VIII. Supervision: Regular Volunteers, Training, and Staffing

A. Regular Volunteers: Requirements

All Regular Volunteers must be:

1. adults over 18 years old, working with children and/or youth, and who attend First UMC regularly (50% of Sundays) for at least six months.
2. A spouse of, or a member of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference who has been the member of another congregation prior to relocating at First UMC may also be a Regular Volunteer. Said Regular Volunteer must pass the required screening as set forth herein [Section VII].
3. A Regular Volunteer or staff member shall be present with children and youth at all children or youth functions at First UMC.

B. Training

All Staff and Regular Volunteers are required to undergo training regarding direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Training shall include (but not be limited to) an annual orientation that includes information about the FUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy.

C. Staffing:

1. "No Volunteer is ever to be alone with any child, youth, or vulnerable adult "one on one." Volunteers must always be under the supervision of PICs..
2. PIC's determine who may be present at the activity they oversee, at their own discretion.
3. No individual child, youth, or vulnerable adult is ever to be alone with an adult who is not a member of the immediate or extended family. Groups of three or more children, youth, and vulnerable adults may be with a Staff members or a Regular Volunteer and another adult (preferred) or a Staff member and a Regular Volunteer where the group is visible to other adult members of the congregation [e.g. a gathering of children at one end of the Social Hall, where adults are sharing coffee at the other end].

4. Regularly scheduled events and activities require a “wandering Regular Volunteer,” who will periodically check in on the activity or event.
5. Proper advance planning and recruitment must assure that this supervisory relationship is consistently applied at every First UMC activity. There shall be no exceptions. Examples of such planning include, but are not limited to:
 - a. recruitment of and deployment of co-teachers and co-counselors;
 - b. a standing policy in every Sunday School class that the next-to-last and last student wait together (even when a parent has come for one student) until both can leave the classroom simultaneously (thus assuring that no child is left alone with a teacher), unless both student and teacher are in view of at least two members of the church (e.g. when church members gather outside during coffee-time and Sunday School classes are finishing, teacher may sit with student outside the classroom with other church members present until the parent(s) pick up the child);
 - c. any mentoring programs will be two adults and two youth or two youth and one adult...never one-to-one;
 - d. in order to facilitate this policy, a counselor is obliged to request another parent to stay a few minutes until the last youth or child is picked up from evening fellowship by their parent;
 - e. private counseling must take place in an open-door office or larger room, and only where another youth or adult is present within 20 yards and in a way that is visible to all parties; [any person who undertakes this activity should make the proper arrangements or cancel the interview].
6. Compliance with the “two-adult rule” is the intent and requires that there will always be two unrelated adults present. When the two-adult rule is not possible, the requirement is an open space (open door, window, etc) such that activities can be observed. In addition, a second adult is assigned to periodically observe the activities.

D. Additional Guidelines and Procedures

1. Each building that houses classrooms, in which minors are present, shall have a Hall Monitor present during Program hours.
2. Restroom use: Preschool age children shall be accompanied to the restroom by an adult who shall wait outside the door for the child. The child’s teacher shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting & returning to the classroom. It is further

recommended that elementary school age children may choose a same sex “buddy” to accompany them to the restroom. The child’s teacher shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting & returning to the classroom.

3. For Off-site Activities when children, employees and/or volunteers are participating in a First UMC-sponsored event:
 - a. As each facility will be different, it will be the responsibility of the program director to determine how best to use the facility and comply with the church policy.
 - b. Overnights: Males and Females shall be segregated during sleeping time. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the children, a minimum of two adults shall sleep in the sleeping accommodation areas with the children. Overnight events require a ratio of at least one adult per ten children or youth, with a minimum of at least two adults.
 - c. All volunteer and staff persons who drive and/or chaperone on off-site trips involving children shall comply with all aspects of the Child Protection Policy.

IX. Abuse Reporting and Response

A. Duties and responsibilities of a Mandatory Reporter

Duties and responsibilities of a Mandatory Reporter who witnesses or becomes aware of a suspected abuse situation include the following:

1. Assure the safety of the victim.
 - a. Whatever the victim says is to be taken very seriously.
 - b. Make sure that the victim is in a safe place and watched over.
 - c. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility but immediately remove him/ her from further involvement with children and youth until the matter can be investigated.
2. If there is a situation of immediate risk, call the police at 911.
3. Report the incident:
 - a. to the SSC or the Pastor and report the incident to DHS/Child Welfare, if these individuals fail to do so within 24 hours; [the preferred methodology for this Church], OR
 - b. Report the incident to DHS/Child Welfare [(541) 686-7555 or 911 after hours].

B. Duties of Membership

All members of First UMC, while not considered Mandatory Reporters within this Policy, are strongly advised to treat observations or allegations of abuse in the same manner as described within this Policy. To report and respond as described herein protects the victim, protects the church, and protects the witness(es).

C. Informing the Pastor

Unless the Pastor is implicated in the abuse, if the Pastor has not previously been informed, there shall be consultation by the person making the report or the SSC with the Pastor(s) no later than immediately after initial reporting to the SSC or CPS.

D. Responsibilities of the Pastor

The responsibilities of the SSC and/or the Pastor include:

1. Within 24 hours of the initial notification, the SSC, or the Pastor will:
 - a) Ascertain the details needed to make an accurate report.
 - b) Within 24 hours,
 - i) Write an incident report. The report should include the following information, if obtainable:
 - (1) The name, address, age and sex of the alleged victim;
 - (2) The name and address of the alleged victim's parents or other person responsible for his/her care;
 - (3) The nature and extent of the alleged abuse or neglect;
 - (4) Any evidence of previously known or suspected abuse or neglect of the alleged victim or their siblings;
 - (5) The name, address and relationship, if known, of the person who is alleged to have perpetrated the abuse or neglect; and
 - (6) Any other information known to the person making the report that would be helpful to the investigation of the alleged abuse.
 - c) Contact the appropriate State or law enforcement agency as soon as possible to file the abuse report and provide the aforementioned information and follow the instructions of the agency.
 - d) Report the suspected child abuse to the child's family and any agencies required by law.
 2. Confidentiality shall be given utmost priority. Depending on the circumstances, the circle of confidentiality may need to include the Chair of Trustees (insurance and liability matters) and/or the Chair of SPRC (potential staff involvement and use of staff time for pastoral care).
 3. Interviews with the child or youth about the allegation must be limited to CPS. No person related to the Church is to interview the child or take a statement regarding an allegation. (Providing the pastor is not implicated or involved, this statement shall not be construed to limit pastoral contact or appropriate

pastoral support for the child or youth, which will continue to remain consistent with the terms of this policy.)

4. The alleged perpetrators of the abuse are to be excluded from future events involving children, youth and vulnerable adults until the incident report is resolved. Removal of a person from any activities, shall be handled this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is being conducted.
5. Immediate pastoral attention should be directed to the entire family of the alleged victim and to the individual accused with the following guidelines:
 - a. if the pastor is named or otherwise involved to a degree that compromises or limits the degree of pastoral care that can be offered, the chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee shall contact the Southern District Superintendent and ask for additional pastoral support, and
 - b. recognizing that one counselor is insufficient to counsel both victim and abuser (or accuser and alleged perpetrator), the Crater Lake District Superintendent shall be contacted for additional pastoral resources.
6. The Pastor shall insure that the Church and Conference insurance carrier(s) is/are informed of charges or allegations in a timely manner as according to the policy.

E. No Liability for Conscientious Reporting

Finally, in regard to reporting an incident of alleged abuse, it shall be understood by all persons at First UMC that:

Reporters of suspected child abuse cases have absolute immunity, both civilly and criminally, for making such reports, unless it can be proved that a false report was made and that the person knew that the report was false. [ORS 419B.025]

At First UMC any willful false allegation of abuse shall result in disciplinary action by an appropriate body in the Church.

X. Other Prohibited Acts, Behaviors, and Response

Recognizing that Background Checks are useless without appropriate action, it is the policy of First UMC to never knowingly hire as Staff a registered sex offender in any capacity. Like wise, First UMC will not hire any person with a history of assaultive behavior.

First UMC will not allow anyone to become or remain a Regular Volunteer or Staff member who has ever engaged (or is observed engaging) in the following prohibited acts:

1. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult;
2. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child, youth or Vulnerable adult;
3. Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child, youth or Vulnerable adult;
4. Physical neglect of a child, children, youth or Vulnerable adult including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the Church;
5. Causing mental or emotional injury to a child, children, youth or Vulnerable adult;
6. Possessing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the Church;
7. Possessing, advocating the use of, or being under the influence of any illegal drugs;
8. Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a children's or youth function or while engaging in ministry with Vulnerable adults at the Church.
9. Physical Abuse of any kind is not to be tolerated at First UMC and must be reported in the same manner as sexual abuse.

XI. Hostile Environment

Language or actions by a youth or child – which create a hostile environment or are designed to intimidate or humiliate another youth or child must be reported to the SSC or the Pastor. These actions and this language shall include language and actions of a sexual, racial or ethnic nature, but shall not be limited specifically to such actions or language.

XII. Other Reporting and Response

A. Person Designated as Predatory Sex Offender or Anyone with a History of Assaultive Behavior

Where the SSC, the Pastor, or anyone on the SPRC has been made aware of a person who has a history of assaultive behavior or is registered with the State of Oregon (or any other jurisdiction) as a Predatory Sex Offender has been attending First UMC, the following responses are to be taken:

1. the Pastor is to interview the person, and to review guidelines for movement, activity, and behavior within First UMC which is consistent with any restrictions placed upon the person. The Pastor may use this

- interview as an opportunity to minister to the person as well as setting guidelines, and
2. the Pastor, with support of the SSC and SPRC may advise parents of children, youth, and vulnerable adults that the individual attending First UMC is so registered, and
 3. in cases where an individual is so registered and by attending First UMC is violating the laws of Oregon, the Pastor, SSC, or designee of the SPRC is to report the matter to the appropriate authority and inform the parents (as in step #2).

B. Other Crimes, Behaviors, and Activities

Where other crimes, behaviors, and/or activities by individuals at First UMC indicate a higher risk of abuse, the SSC, the Pastor, or other designee of the SPRC will discuss the concerns and response at the next SPRC meeting.

XIII. Outside Organizations

Any and all Outside Organizations (as this term is defined within this document) must adhere to this policy.

Any and all Outside Organizations are responsible for their own insurance with adequate limits regarding liability issues in the context of child abuse claims, allegations, and lawsuits. Further, a copy of the insurance policy of the Outside Group will be provided to the SPRC.

At all events where outside organizations use the facility of First UMC, a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy will be given to an authorized member of the group. The said person will be required to sign the Waiver and Release Form prior to the group's use of the facility.

XIV. Communication and Dissemination of this Policy

A. Regular Volunteer, Volunteer, and Staff

The provisions of this policy shall be shared with each Regular Volunteer, Volunteer, and Staff member, who shall sign and date a copy of the policy. The signed copies will be kept in the aforementioned file with the results of the background checks referred to in Section VII(F).

B. Membership

Each year, the membership of First UMC will be invited to a presentation lead by the Pastor, SSC, or other designee of the SPRC at which time the policy will be discussed and questions answered. This event will also be an opportunity for congregational education regarding issues of safety and protection from abuse. Prior to this event,

invitations should be sent to all parents and guardians who are known to have children, youth, or vulnerable adults attending First UMC.

C. Policy Review

The policy shall be reviewed by the SPRC (and/or a subcommittee selected by the SPRC) every calendar year for applicability and conformity with United Methodist principles, Conference policy, appropriate guidelines, and with State law.

XV. CONCLUSION

In all of our ministries we are committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth, and vulnerable adult is “surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal, pg 44).

A. Effective Date

This policy is to be effective as of January 1, 2009.

B. Additional Resources

1. Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church by Joy Thornburg Melton.
2. The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference “Crisis Communication” booklet.
3. Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations: A Resource for Leaders by Karen A. McClintock.
4. The Crater Lake District Superintendent [541.689.3725].
5. The Office of the Bishop and other ministry leadership of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference [503.226.7931].

Approved by the First UMC Covenant Council, and signed below:


Signature of Chairperson/ Committee


Date

(rev. 10/16/12)