



# Child/Youth Abuse Prevention Guidelines Sample

## Wesley United Methodist Church

The purpose of this policy is to protect the children and youth of Wesley United Methodist Church, to protect all paid or volunteer persons, and to protect the church.

The strategy areas adopted by Wesley United Methodist Church for the purpose of providing safeguards against child/youth sexual abuse are as follows:

- I. Screening Procedures
- II. Supervising Church Workers
- III. Reporting Obligations
- IV. Response to Allegations

### I. Screening Procedures

- A. Those who work with children or youth must have actively attended the church for at least three months. Paid employees, pastoral spouses and workers recruited for special programs are exempt for this rule (i.e., Pre-School, Drop-In, secretarial or others as determined by church staff).
- B. All paid or volunteer persons who work with children or youth will be required to complete and submit these forms:
  - Child/youth worker screening form (attached).
  - Authorization for release of child abuse information (See State Dept. of Human Services form attached).

The following persons must complete the Screening Process: Clergy, Secretarial, Custodial, Director of Christian Education, Music and Choir Leaders, Nursery employees, Pre-School and Drop-In employees, all persons who are chaperones on overnight trips and youth fellowship activities, and others as deemed necessary by the Minister/Director of Christian Education.

- C. The Minister/Director of Christian Education will be responsible for the process screening and maintaining all records.



1. The screening procedure will include a personal interview with the applicant. The interview will include a discussion and review of the screening form.
2. The applicant's references shall be contacted and a record made. The references will be asked the questions found on Addendum A.
3. A Child Abuse Registry (State Code, Chapter 235A) will be made during the screening process.
4. Volunteers or paid staff with convictions of abuse or who are listed on the current State Central Abuse Registry as having abused a child will not be permitted to work with children or youth. The kinds of behavior which disqualify an applicant include, but are not limited to the following: child molestation, incest, rape, assaults involving minors, physical abuse of a child, and child pornography.
5. A Sex Offender Registry (State Code, Chapter 692A) will be made (attached).

## II. Supervising Church Workers

- A. As a goal of both children and youth departments, a minimum of two adult workers should be present at any church activity involving children or youth. The ideal ratios would be:

1 adult to 4 children	Newborn-Kindergarten
1 adult to 6 children	Grades 1-6
1 adult to 8 youth	Grades 6-12

The weekday programs, Pre-School and Drop-In, operate within the Guidelines of the Department of Human Services, State of State.

- B. All adult chaperones and supervisors involved in activities requiring overnight accommodations must be cleared in advance through the Screening Process and by an authorized pastor or staff employee.
- C. The ratio of one adult to four children/youth must be observed on all activities requiring overnight accommodations.



- D. When an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child or youth on a regular basis (defined as more than three times for the same purpose), parental permission must be obtained using Addendum B.
- E. Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between an adult worker and a youth or child will be confronted immediately. The procedure is outlined in Roman Numeral IV.
- F. Where possible and under new construction, windows will be installed in classroom doors.
- G. The church nursery and early childhood areas must utilize the identification number system for checking in and releasing children.
  - 1. This system allows only the holder of a specific tag or number to receive the child or baby from the nursery or early childhood areas.
  - 2. That tag or number must match the tag or number on the child or baby.

### **III. Reporting Procedures For Church Workers**

#### **A. Mutual accountability**

- 1. Whenever questionable or inappropriate behavior is observed, it must be reported to the proper individual or pastor.
- 2. The pastor will then follow steps in Roman Numeral IV.
- 3. If the behavior is that of a pastor or clergy person, the church worker should report as described in IV.A of this policy.

#### **B. Personal responsibility**

- 1. Church workers will take personal responsibility to report questionable or inappropriate behavior.
- 2. Church workers should understand that reporting is an act of love and concern, and not an act of disloyalty.



### C. Reporting

1. All reporting, after being received verbally, should be documented in writing. Documentation in writing should follow through the entire process.
2. The first line of reporting is the pastor or department leader responsible for the program where the abuse occurred.
3. The second line of reporting is the Senior Pastor.
4. The third line of reporting is to the Chairperson(s) of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

## IV. Responding to Allegations of Abuse to a MINOR

### A. CLERGY

In the event of an allegation that an act of sexual abuse has been committed by any person serving Wesley United Methodist Church as clergy, under appointment or employed, the allegation shall be promptly reported to the District Superintendent of the Methodist District of the Methodist Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and to the Bishop of the Conference, the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee for Wesley United Methodist Church, and the liability insurance carrier for Wesley United Methodist Church.

The District Superintendent or the Bishop shall handle and/or refer the allegation as provided by the United Methodist Church Discipline and Methodist Conference Policy.

The District Superintendent or Bishop in consultation with the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee for Wesley United Methodist Church shall also be responsible for ensuring that the person claiming to have been abused is provided with information concerning: (1) the investigative process; (2) the availability and identity of counselors experienced in working with victims of abuse; and (3) the individual's option to contact law enforcement authorities with respect to his or her allegation (this decision is up to the individual).

Any suspension of or other disciplinary action against the clergy person will be handled pursuant to THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE of the United Methodist Church and any Sexual Abuse Policy of the Methodist Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church then in force.



## **B. LAITY, Employed and Volunteer**

In the event of an allegation that an act of sexual abuse has been committed by a lay employee or volunteer of Wesley United Methodist Church, while in the course of his or her employment or volunteer responsibility at Wesley United Methodist Church, the allegation shall be promptly reported to the Senior Pastor and the Chairperson(s) of the Staff Parish Relations Committee of (if applicable) Wesley United Methodist Church. The Chairperson(s) of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall notify the liability insurance carrier for the church. The Staff Parish Relations Committee of Wesley United Methodist Church shall inquire into the facts relating to the allegation. The Staff Parish Relations Committee shall then take appropriate steps, based upon all relevant factors, including the results of its consultation with the pastor, with respect to the continuation, suspension, or termination of the accused person's employment or volunteer responsibilities with the church.

Upon learning of the allegation of sexual abuse by a lay employee of the church or by a church volunteer in the course of his or her employment, the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall take steps to see that the person claimed to have been abused is provided with information concerning: (1) the process of inquiry which the church will follow (as outlined previously above); (2) the availability and identity of counselors experienced in working with victims of abuse; and (3) the individual's option to contact law enforcement officers with respect to the allegations made (this decision is up to the individual) .

In responding to allegations of sexual abuse against clergy or laity, the following guidelines will be applied:

- A. Public detailing of accusations will be avoided if reasonably possible.
- B. Parents of the alleged victim will be notified of the allegation as soon as reasonably possible; the parents will be asked to assist in putting the allegation in writing.
- C. The alleged victim and the accused will be treated with dignity and respect.
- D. If a statement to the press or media is deemed necessary it shall be prepared in writing and will be the statement utilized by the Senior Pastor or Staff Parish Relations Chairperson(s).
- E. The complaining party will be told that the church cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of the complaint.