



**SPECIAL
EVENTS &
TRAVELING
WITH
YOUTH**

**ABUSE PREVENTION
STRATEGIES**





DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

The United Methodist Church

This pamphlet was produced by Young People's Ministries.

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SAFETY

God has given us a sacred opportunity and great responsibility to nurture and protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and the persons who work with them. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children, youth, and vulnerable adults seriously. It is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk of abuse by following a thorough, practical policy of prevention.

Young People's Ministries at Discipleship Ministries, The United Methodist Church, works with agencies of the general United Methodist church and individual annual conferences in establishing **Safe Sanctuaries®** policies, guidelines, practices, and training. This work most often applies to annual conference, district, or local church settings. This support from **Young People's Ministries** is a direct result of The UMC's 1996 General Conference adoption of a resolution to reduce the risk of abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in the church (*Book of Resolutions—1996*, 384-386).

This particular set of guidelines is specifically intended to address best practices that will be consistent with **Safe Sanctuaries®** guidelines and policies at special events and while traveling with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. These guidelines can be employed as a risk reduction strategy in a wide variety of ministry activities. Ministry leaders can use the following suggestions as they plan events and travel with youth, or other vulnerable populations, as a part of their ministry.



EVENTS

- All adults should be background checked and trained in procedures and guidelines around child abuse prevention, and/or **Safe Sanctuaries®**.
- For larger events that implement the above standard for “event staff and organizers,” churches sending groups with chaperones should sign a validation regarding the completion of a background check and other training of their own chaperones. Local and larger events may offer on-site basic training for abuse prevention, that specifically relates to procedures for that event.
- A minimum of two unrelated adults with each group of youth with Adult/Youth ratios:

Junior High 2:8 High School 2:10

- All adults should be at least eighteen years of age and at least five years older than the youth being supervised.
- All participants should have completed a “Health and Permission to Treat” form which includes emergency contact information.
- At least one adult at the event should be certified in CPR and First Aid and will provide medical care within the scope of their certification.
- All treatment should be logged.
- Routine medication should be administered by an adult and/or Chaperone.
- Medication should be in original containers with instructions from the doctor for administration.
- Youth should be checked into and out of the event.
- A policy should be in place regarding youth driving themselves to an event.
- If permitted, youth should turn in their keys on arrival.
- No youth should transport other youth to and from events.

- A driver should be at least seven years older than those they are transporting.
- No adult should transport a youth alone to an event.
- General “*Rule of 3*”—At least three people should be present at any one time, whether it is youth together or adult chaperones with youth in and around the event.
- If the event is an overnight event participants should be provided their own beds whenever possible, and youth should always room with youth of the same age range and gender or be provided individual rooms.
- Participants should only room with an adult (over age eighteen) if there is a dormitory sleeping style and either another participant or two unrelated adults.
- Dormitory rooms should house only one gender.
- Participants should never sleep alone in a room with an adult.
- Sleeping rooms are only for the persons assigned to those rooms. Event leadership should at least know which rooms are being used by which churches (at large events). Having a written room record that lists individual participants is recommended.
- Sleeping rooms should not be a gathering place for other youth.
- Youth may share a room with one adult if it is their parent/ guardian.
- There should be a process in place for nightly check-ins and assurance that all youth are in their assigned room for the night.
- Check-ins should be done in person, not by message passed through another participant or by phone or text.
- Youth should not be left unsupervised at anytime.
- Each participant should sign a behavior covenant.
- Parents should be given a copy of the event covenant and understand the consequences around it.



TRAVELING WITH YOUTH

DOMESTIC TRAVEL

Pre-trip Preparation/ Documentation

- Each adult traveling with youth must go through their church's and/or annual conference's background check and abuse prevention training.
- Each adult considered a chaperone should be at least five years older than the young people they are traveling with.
- A medical form should be completed by ALL participants (including chaperones) and provide the following: name, address, emergency names and phone numbers, date of birth, health history including on-going treatment, current medications, any over the counter drugs they are prohibited to take, allergies, permission to treat, and how to access out of area/country insurance benefits. Copies of these medical forms should be taken on the trip, and kept in a secure location under supervision of one chaperone.
- Each youth and his or her parent/guardian should be provided phone numbers that will enable them to contact the adult trip leader (or other adult chaperone) at any time in the event of problems en route or other emergencies.
- Trip Itineraries should be provided for all parents and guardians.
- Emergency contact numbers for the facility at which the youth/travel group will be staying and the hosting organization (conference office, and the like) should be provided for all parents and guardians.
- A behavior covenant should be provided to and signed by all participants and their parents/guardians. This covenant should include the following: social networking guidelines or restrictions, acceptable behavior during free time, dress code, language, drinking, drugs, smoking,

weapons, respect for adults, and adherence to the event schedule. Specific consequences should be outlined, as well as who is responsible for transportation and related expenses if a participant is sent home.

- Any medication sent with the youth, child, or vulnerable adult should be in the original container with the doctor's instructions. These medications should also be listed clearly on the medical form referenced earlier.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

- The US State Department recommends that trip leaders have a notarized letter of permission from the parents or legal guardians allowing an identified group leader to travel with their youth. The letter should include the adult leader's (primary chaperone) name, the youth's name, the dates of travel, and countries to be visited.
- Two copies of each trip participant's passport should be made—one copy for the trip leader (separate from the original passport) and one to be kept on file with the trip participant's parents or guardians.
- If contact information is provided to parents/guardians for an international trip, international charges should be addressed beforehand (e.g. are calls/text messages allowed?). Parents and trip leaders should research how the cost of phone calls or text messages beforehand. Email or web based messaging is often free, but internet access at international locations may be limited.

TRAVEL BY AIR

- Trips and all participants should be booked on a direct flight whenever possible.
- Travel alone should be avoided when possible.
- Youth travelers should never fly alone on international or cross-country flights. Adult chaperones should not travel alone with participants. If a youth must travel alone, it is

possible to register them as unaccompanied minors (for a fee) with the airline. The airline then keeps track of them from gate to gate during flight itineraries.

- If a group is gathering from multiple locations to fly to a single location—such as Global Convo, General Conference, the YOUTH event, or the like—that requires a connecting flight, a designated domestic hub airport should be determined as a meeting location. All youth who travel to this hub airport should be met by two unrelated adults, with ample time planned for delays and transfers from one flight to another.
- Each participant should contact his or her parents or guardians at each leg of the flight when possible.

ALL TRAVEL

- Supervision ratios for teens should be one adult for every ten youth. This ratio increases with younger ages per **Safe Sanctuaries®** guidelines.
- Each youth should be accompanied on their return trip to the airport, bus station, train station, and the like, by two unrelated adults, if not traveling together, until the youth boards the flight or clears security. Adults should remain in the terminal until the plane, bus, or train departs. At this point, chaperone responsibility ends. This should be clearly communicated to parents and guardians.

HOUSING

- Participants should be provided their own beds when possible.
- Youth should always room with youth of the same age range and gender or be provided individual rooms.
- Participants should only room with an adult (over age 18) if there are dormitory sleeping styles and either another participant or two unrelated adults are in the room.
- Dormitory rooms should house only one gender.

- Participants should never sleep alone in a room with an adult.
- Sleeping rooms should only be for the persons assigned to those rooms. They are not a gathering place for other youth.
- Youth may share a room with one adult if that adult is the youth's parent guardian.
- There should be a process in place for nightly check-ins and assurance that all youth are in their assigned room for the night. Check-ins should be done in person, not by message passed through another participant or by phone or text.

RECREATION/FREE TIME

- Appropriate guidelines for the event area and age of the participants should be established in advance regarding where participants may go during breaks/free time and where they may not go.
- A system for letting chaperones know participants' whereabouts should be in place (text message or phone call).
- Youth should be in groups of at least three during free time.
- In-person check-in times and a meeting place should be established before break/free time begins.

MEDICATIONS, FIRST AID, AND INCIDENT REPORTING

- A well-stocked first aid kit with over-the-counter (OTC) medication should be brought on trips.
- Over-the-counter medication should be used before its expiration date.
- First aid treatment should be administered by a designated adult who is certified and current in first aid CPR.

- Any treatment or dispensing of medicine should be logged with date, name, medical complaint or condition, and treatment (this can be recorded in a small notebook or on a simple spreadsheet).
- A general procedure to report accidents and/or incidents and lines of communication should be developed before the trip.

Jesus often spoke of the importance of young people being included and provided for within the community of faith. Our hope and belief today is that the church is a place where children and youth find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. These suggestions help organizers of events and trips where youth are participants.