

LOCAL CHURCH POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

University United Methodist Church

As adopted by the University United Methodist Church, December 2, 2012

INTRODUCTION

“Let the children come to me and do not stop them: for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Matthew 19:14). Scripture and our United Methodist tradition inform us in our belief that God values all of human life - perhaps children most of all.

The *Social Principles* of the United Methodist Church states, “...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.” (§ 162.C, *2008 Book of Discipline*) *The Book of Resolutions* encourages all conferences to become involved in the prevention of the physical and sexual abuse of children (#65 *2008 Book of Resolutions*, p. 201) The *2008 Book of Discipline* names child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment as chargeable offenses for clergy and lay members (§ 2702, *2008 Book of Discipline*).

OUR COMMITMENT

Therefore, it shall be the policy and covenant of the University United Methodist Church (UUMC) to do everything in our power to prevent physical, emotional or sexual abuse against children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities involved in any ministry sponsored by our local church. Further, we are called to minister to those persons who are experiencing abuse and to those who have been victims of abuse in the past. To that end we covenant to be aware of our legal responsibilities and to comply with those responsibilities and go beyond those responsibilities when necessary to act justly in the best interest of those who have been abused or those who are most vulnerable to abuse.

The UUMC will participate in orientations and training seminars for clergy and others in a role of leadership with children, youth, and developmentally disabled dependent adults. The Kansas West Annual Conference, on behalf of this congregation, through the Safe Gatherings program will help to screen clergy and others in a role of leadership children, youth, and developmentally disabled dependent adults and will report instances of abuse as stated in Reporting Section.

The guidelines of the Safe Gatherings program and the procedures set forth will a status of certification for persons within the UUMC. Persons thus certified are entrusted with the title “Certified Worker with Children, Youth, and Adults with Developmental Disabilities.” Certified workers with children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities shall be given the opportunity to renew certification in a manner determined by the Sexual Ethics Committee of the Kansas West Annual Conference.

SCOPE

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons working with children, youth, and developmentally disabled dependent adults, including volunteers. Additionally, this policy and its provisions shall apply to all staff employed by University United Methodist Church.

Effective September 1, 2012, no youth under the age of 16 will be certified by the Kansas West Annual Conference.

DEFINITIONS

The policies and procedures herein draw upon the definitions contained in the *Sexual Ethics Policy for Lay Employees and Volunteers* found in the Kansas West Annual Conference Journal, updated October 2009.

1. Physical Abuse -Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. This definition includes any non-accidental physical injury caused by a caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the physical health of a child, youth, or adult with developmental disabilities.
2. Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse means unwanted physical conduct of a sexual nature, sexual contact or sexualized behavior and may include, by example, touching, fondling, other physical contact and sexual relations.
3. Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is "any unwanted sexual advance or demand, verbal or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue" (2008 Book of Discipline, paragraph 161). Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender.
4. Sexual Misconduct: Sexual misconduct means a chargeable offense within the meaning of ¶2702 of the *Book of Discipline*.
5. Persons in a ministerial role of leadership with children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities: Shall include all paid and unpaid staff, whether lay or clergy who have a direct or indirect contact with same who participate in any activities or events sponsored by the University United Methodist Church.
6. The Certification Authority for this church shall be the Certification Authority for the Kansas West Annual Conference.

SCREENING AND TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS OR STAFF

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children, youth, and developmentally disabled dependent adults. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of persons who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment.

1. Prior to employment or acceptance as a volunteer or paid staff person, the event coordinator or administrator in charge of an event or program shall direct each prospective worker to complete the Safe Gatherings program. By registering for Safe Gatherings, the applicant will give the Certification Authority of the Kansas West Annual Conference permission to contact references and perform the necessary investigation to complete the review of the application.
2. Upon receipt of the application, the Certification Authority shall facilitate a screening check with the Kansas Bureau of Investigation or other appropriate agencies. Effective September 1, 2012, all persons applying for Certification or Recertification must register for online training through Safe Gatherings and pay a fee of \$30 toward the cost of background checks. University United Methodist

Church will pay \$30 for each individual completing Safe Gatherings certification on behalf of UUMC. In the event that the individual does not complete the training in 30 days and must start over, the \$30 fee will be the responsibility of the individual the second and additional times.

3. The Safe Gatherings program will facilitate reference requests from all applicants, who must have one clergy and one lay person as references. The clergy reference must be a District Superintendent if the applicant is a professional minister.
4. The Safe Gatherings Coordinator of the Kansas West Annual Conference will receive the completed reports, and review them. If any of the completed forms or reports raises questions about the fitness of the applicant, the Certification Authority should disapprove the application and notify the applicant and the UUMC pastor. The University United Methodist Church reserves the right to turn away any persons for volunteer or paid service.
5. If the applicant, clergy or lay, volunteer or paid, is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children, youth, or adults with developmental disabilities, the applicant will not be hired/approved. Any conviction of a crime against children, youth or adults with developmental disabilities shall disqualify any applicant.
6. Results of screenings shall be kept confidential within the limits of the law.
7. The Kansas West Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church has developed an online training program for all clergy and others in a role of leadership who work with children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities. It is the responsibility of this local church to arrange for its applicants to take the Safe Gatherings online training. No person shall, after January 1, 2013, have primary responsibility for working with children, youth, or adults with developmental disabilities until they have completed this training program, except for persons already holding valid certification. Those currently certified in Boundary Awareness are deemed compliant until the date their current certification expires. They must then take the Safe Gatherings course to be in compliance. Persons without certification may assist certified workers.

SUPERVISION

Whenever possible, a team approach to ministry to children, youth, and developmentally disabled dependent adults is most appropriate. Ordinarily there will be two workers present during each event. Workers are to be encouraged to warn each other when questionable behavior is displayed.

At the completion of the event or program, the administrator or supervisor in charge shall file a report with a count of persons in attendance and a comment that there were/were not any reportable incidents. This document will be retained on file in the church office.

REPORTING OF INCIDENTS

When an incident of suspected physical abuse or sexual abuse occurs, the protection of children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities must be paramount. Any person having a reasonable basis to suspect that a developmentally disabled person or a child or youth under age 16 has been abused shall promptly report it to the person in charge of the event (“event director”), to the pastor, and to the Kansas Department of Children and Families at 1-800-922-5330.

The event director shall take reasonable steps to protect abused persons and others from further harm, which may include removing the person accused from the site of the event, and/or suspending such person from working with children, youth, or persons with developmental disabilities, pending further investigation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Management of all provisions of this Policy is the sole responsibility of the University United Methodist Church. In carrying out the duties and responsibilities of this policy, the University United Methodist Church may utilize and rely on certain policies, procedures, and/or training courses recommended or endorsed by the Kansas West Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. The UUMC, in relying upon any such assistance, acknowledges that the Conference provides the assistance for informational purposes only and does not assume any responsibility for the actions of the University United Methodist Church with respect to the implementation and/or enforcement of this policy.