



# **Child Protection Policy**

**Faith UMC Task Force for the Prevention of Child Abuse in the Church Membership Form**

**Pastor**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Parish**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Trustee**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Lay Leader**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Youth Director**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Children's Director**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Representative from each group working with Children or Youth**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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### Forms

Form A	Employment Application (5 pages)
Form B	Application to Work/Volunteer with Children and/or Youth (4 pages)
Form C	Reference Check Form (1 page)
Form D	Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check (1 page)
Form E	Event Permission Slip/Emergency Medical Authorization (1 page)
Form F	Transportation Acknowledgement (1 page)
Form G	Accident Report (1 page)
Form H	Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse (2 pages)
Form I	Self Evaluation (1 page)

### Addendum

Excerpts from *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*  
Ohio Revised Code 2907.01 – 2907.02, 2151.421 and 2919.22

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Faith United Methodist Church  
Mansfield, Ohio

## I. Introduction

*People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)*

This incident from the ministry of Jesus speaks of the value our Lord placed on children and the example of faith that they provide for the rest of us. As followers of Jesus, we understand that children and youth are inherently valuable members of Christ's community.

Jesus highlighted not only the faith and openness of children, but also their vulnerability. This vulnerability puts children at risk, but it also places them close to God. Their dependence on God may be what Jesus was trying to get his disciples to see as a model for their own faith. This vulnerability and dependence makes the protection and support of the community of faith even more important. Jesus was teaching that, within the community of believers, there must be protection for each of us in our dependence on God and on each other. As followers of Christ we resolve to protect children in their vulnerability and also to learn from them as we all grow in faith.

Our culture appears to be experiencing an increase in the incidence of child abuse and neglect. As much as we do not like to think about abusive and hurtful things happening in the church, it is clear that it is our duty as the Church to guard and protect the children, youth, church staff, and volunteers who participate in our ministries.

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that... children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation, and abuse.

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse... occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma. Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved, the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to "create communities of faith where children and adults (can) grow safe and strong." (From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 1996, pgs. 384-386*) Since the 1996 General conference, every annual conference in the U.S. has reported at least one incident of child abuse.

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse and the protection of children and youth in our church.

## **II Purpose**

The purpose of the Child Protection Policy of the Faith United Methodist Church is to;

1. Provide procedures specifically designed to protect children, youth, church staff and volunteers associated with the ministries of the church.
2. Establish appropriate ways of responding to alleged, reported, or suspected incidents of abuse.
3. Be in a compassionate ministry with all affected persons – the alleged victim, the alleged victim’s family, the accused, the accused’s family and the church family.

We hereby resolve to put into practice the procedures set forth herein with the intent to;

1. Safeguard the children/youth of our church from abuse and neglect.
2. Respond to all allegations in a fair and compassionate manner.
3. Protect church staff and volunteers for potential false allegations of abuse.
4. Limit the extent of our church’s legal risk and liability.
5. Strengthen our Christian Educational Children/Youth Ministries.

# Procedures To Support The Policy

## I Definition Of Abuse

“Child Abuse” is defined in accordance with current Ohio Law. At the time this policy was being written/adopted, the current law in Ohio defined child abuse to consist of any of the following:

1. Engaging in any sexual activity with a child, as defined under Chapter 2907 of the Ohio Revised Code;
2. Endangering a child, as defined in Section 2919.22 of the Ohio Revised Code; or
3. Denial, as a means of punishment, of proper necessary sustenance, education, medical care, or other care necessary to a child for the child’s health; or
4. Use of restraint procedures on a child that cause injury or pain; or
5. Administration of prescription drugs to a child without the written approval and ongoing supervision of a licensed physician; or
6. Providing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances to a child; or
7. Commission of any intentional act that results in any injury or death to a child; or
8. Infliction of physical or mental injury that threatens to harm a child’s health, welfare, or safety.

\*\*In its present form, this law defines “child endangerment” to include any of the following: (1) abuse; or (2) torture or cruel abuse, or (3) corporal punishment or other physical discipline (e.g. such as spankings) or prolonged cruel restraint, which is excessive under the circumstances, and which could likely physically injure the child, or (4) repeated, uncalled-for discipline which, if continued, would seriously impair the child’s mental health or development, or (5) involving the child in any obscene, sexually-oriented activity or conduct.

## II Selection and Screening Procedures

Although our Christian concern for children/youth leads us to be saddened when any form of child abuse takes place anywhere, our major policy need is to be certain that abuse does not occur within the framework of any Faith UMC program or ministry with children/youth. This policy is intended to help our congregation make Faith UMC a truly safe and caring place.

In an effort to create a safe environment within our church, each church staff person and volunteer who works with the church’s children/youth programs either regularly or occasionally, on or beyond the church grounds, will be screened and will be trained on child protection issues.

While the Staff Parish Relations Committee may set additional screening requirements, such as a police background check and performance standards for paid staff, the procedures for selecting and screening is as follows:

1. Each person being considered to work with children/youth in any church programs, whether as a volunteer or paid staff person, shall:

- a. Fill out an application form. (Either **Form A** - Employment Application Form or **Form B** – Volunteer Application Form)
  - b. Be a member or regular attendee of this church for six months minimum, or
  - c. Be a member or regular attendee of another Christian church for six months minimum, to be verified by contact with that church.
2. Before placing the applicant in a position of responsibility, the pastor, church staff member, or lay person responsible for the ministry will review the written application. At the discretion of the leadership, references may be checked and an interview conducted. Indications that an interview or reference check must take place include:
  - a. The person is a newcomer to Faith UMC and/or the area.
  - b. The person wants to work alone.
  - c. The person has indicated that they have been charged with a crime against children or youth. (Persons who have been previously convicted or plead guilty or no contest to a crime against children or youth will not be placed in a position involving access to children or youth.)
  - d. Upon reviewing written application, issues are raised which require clarification.
3. Interviews will follow the interview guidelines provided as an attachment to this policy (see page 11) and be conducted by the pastor, church staff member or layperson responsible for the ministry or through the use of a designed person(s). The results of the interview, especially when sensitive areas have been discussed, will be kept confidential and will only be disclosed to those persons requiring this information in order to make a decision as to whether the applicant should be accepted as a volunteer. (*Sample interview questions are on page 12*)
4. When references are checked by the pastor, church staff member, or by the layperson responsible for the ministry, a written record of such contact will be retained with the application form. (Form C – Reference Check Form)
5. Each person applying to work with children and/or youth shall authorize the church to conduct a criminal records check (Form D – Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check), at the leadership's discretion, including but not limited to an Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and/or a Federal Bureau of Investigation check.
6. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each volunteer will sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agreed to abide by the church's Child Protection Policy and Procedures, which will be made available to the applicant.
7. In the unfortunate situation where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children /youth, the church covenants to handle such decision in a confidential manner which is sensitive to that person.

### **III Supervision Of Children And Youth**

While recognizing the important role of youth volunteers in children/youth ministries, all activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least one person who is at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than those they are supervising.

For the purpose of this document, this will be adopted as the assumed and recognized definition of an “adult”, throughout the document, specifically one who is eighteen (18) years of age or older, and is at least five (5) years older than those they are supervising.

#### **Supervision of Classroom Activities**

It is preferable that at least two adults be present for all classroom activities involving children and youth. When two adults are not available, a designated person will periodically check the rooms and be aware of the children/youth’s whereabouts if they leave the classroom area. Even when two adults are available per classroom, it is advisable to have periodic classroom checks. While recognizing the important role of youth volunteers in children/youth ministries, in an effort to assure a safe environment, all activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least one person who is at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than those whom they are supervising.

#### **Open Door Policy**

Parents, volunteers, or staff of the church may visit and observe the program at any time. Every effort will be made to hold all events in rooms that have not only exterior windows, but windows in the doors.

#### **Sign-In/Sign-Out Procedure**

For all church-related activities where child-care is specifically designated, persons responsible for children who are infant through age three years old will sign in their child and indicate the preauthorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed out for both Sunday School and other children’s activities. From age four years old through sixth grade, teachers/leaders will be encouraged to ensure that children are returned to their parent’s/legal guardian’s custody; however, parents will assume responsibility for their child/children when the announced/planned dismissal time has come.

#### **Record Retention**

All children/youth activities should have a written record of the names of participants and supervisors. Records shall be kept for three years, after which their retention is discretionary.

#### **Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities**

With the exception of the circumstances identified under Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities (which immediately follows this section), at least two adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children/youth.

#### **Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities**

1. **Youth Counseling:** In instances of youth counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling is most effective on a one-on-one basis, a church staff person or volunteer may meet individually with a child or youth with the awareness and previous consent of that individual’s parent or legal guardian. Exceptions to consent may be made for emergencies.

2. **Dismissal from Group Events:** In group events, it may be inevitable that one child or youth's transportation from the event arrives after all the other children/youth's transportation has arrived. In those circumstances, a child/youth may unavoidably be in the individual presence of an adult. Because this circumstance may be simply unavoidable, the general rule which requires the presence of two adults is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the child or youth's well being.

### **Trip and Retreat Supervision**

1. There shall be at least two adults present for all trips, retreats, and other times children/youth gather at or away from the church building. (Please note that at least three adults are preferable so that in the event of an emergency, there will be continued adequate supervision.)
2. There shall be at least one adult of each gender present at co-ed events. At single gender events, at least one of the two or more adults present will be of the same gender as the children/youth.
3. In situations where two adults are not available per room where children/youth are staying overnight, then no adult should stay alone in a specific room with the children/youth. In those circumstances where adults are not staying in the rooms with children/youth, special measures should be taken to assure the children/youth safety and supervision, such as adult hall monitors, "taping" doors, and periodic room checks by two adults of the same gender as those being checked. Parents should be made aware of housing accommodations.
4. The person in charge of each trip and/or retreat shall carry permission slips including permission for emergency medical care. (Form E – Event Permission Slip/Medical Authorization Form)
5. Rules for providing transportation for church events:
  - The designated leader of the event must know the driver; driver must be at least 21 years old;
  - Driver must have a valid state driver's license for the vehicle being operated;
  - Driver must have proof of insurance;
  - At least two people must accompany driver;
  - Driver must have read and signed an acknowledgement form indicating that this policy has been read and will be followed. (Form F – Transportation Acknowledgment)
  - In the event that a youth, (who is of legal age to drive) wishes to drive and has the permission of the event leadership, verbal permission to drive from the youth's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) must be obtained, and any youth/children who are to be riding with that youth, must have signed permission slips acknowledging that they do so with the knowledge of their respective parent(s) or legal guardian(s). All other requirements except the first will apply to the youth driver.

## **IV Response By Church Workers To Injuries & Accidents**

In order to assure proper attention was given to an injury or accident an accident report must be completed by the adult supervisor within 24 hours of the incident whenever a child/youth is injured. (Form G – Accident Report Form)

## **V Response By Church Workers To Allegations Of Abuse**

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children/youth participating in the life of the church. The Church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse.

Therefore, it is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. We shall report suspected abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. To report abuse is to witness to the world of the love and justice of God. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help.

In the sad occasion when and if abuse occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. We will seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place for all involved.

If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident to the pastor as soon as possible. (If the accused is the Pastor see item six below.) Be prepared to do the following:

Please note: many steps should be done as simultaneously as possible, and with the highest priority as possible, always ensuring the safety of the victim, the confidentiality of the alleged offender, and the integrity of the investigation.

1. IMMEDIATELY notify the proper authorities (children services board, the county department of human services exercising the children services function, or a local law enforcement agency in the county in which the child resides or in which the suspected abuse occurred.) **This is a requirement of the law.** (Reference section 2151.421 of The Ohio Revised Code, see addendum.) Do not attempt an investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
2. Notify the parents of the victim (unless the authorities advise otherwise) and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) does not wish the incident to be reported.
3. If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities. Follow their advice about notification of the parents.
4. Take any allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family, showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the alleged victim and the victim's family.
5. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's attorney, the church's insurance company, and the district superintendent. The district superintendant will report the allegations to the bishop's office. Do not try to handle this without professional assistance.
6. If the accused is a clergy member of annual conference, local pastor, or diaconal minister, provisions of Paragraph 358 and Paragraphs 2623-2629 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* must be followed. See addendum.

7. A written report of the basic information shall be kept to ensure on-going ministry to and advocacy for, victims and others involved. A form for this purpose shall be available in the church office. (Form H – Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse) The report shall be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It shall be filed in a secure place in order to ensure confidentiality. It shall be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed. The church must also file a copy of the report with the bishop's office of the East Ohio Conference, where it shall remain confidential.
8. IMMEDIATELY, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth for their own safety as well as for the safety of others.
9. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the pastor or other designated person may tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, that person shall be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid staff person of the church, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
10. Any contact with the media should be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.
11. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. Any comments by persons other than the designated spokesperson to anyone in the media or otherwise, may create a breach of trust, as well as confidentiality, and may increase the liability of the church. Therefore it is strongly suggested that those who have any knowledge of an alleged incident speak only to the proper authorities, or the legal/insurance representatives, or the pastor about their knowledge.

## **VI Education Of Volunteers/Staff**

The church shall provide regularly scheduled training focused on issues of child protection for those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training or a district or conference sponsored training session shall be required of all adults and youth helpers who will have direct contact with children or youth in the church's ministry. (See Self-Evaluation Form I)

The training may include:

1. The definition and recognition of abuse.
2. The church's policies on reporting abuse and appropriate forms.
3. The purposes of the policy as protection for children/youth and for church staff/volunteer workers.
4. The meaning and importance of confidentiality.
5. The maintenance of a positive learning classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
6. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders.

Approved by Administrative Council November 21, 2000

Policy Effective Date: January 31, 2001

## INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

(Sample interview questions on page 12)

Goals of the interview:

1. Work from the application form and fill in any gaps in the application form.
2. Open paths for further discussion on the part of the applicant.
3. Observe how the applicant conducts self in the process.
4. Keep a written record of the applicant's responses to the interview questions.

In conducting an interview, the interviewer should be aware when “red flags” are raised concerning the applicant. These “flags” are indicators of issues that must be explored further to be assured that all information is collected concerning a prospective employee/volunteer. Some of the “flags” include:

**Many addresses or churches attended over a short period of time.** This could indicate that a person is trying to be anonymous. But it could also indicate that they are a college student who moved a lot to keep rent low.

**Wants to work with only one age group.** If someone would like to work with only one specific age group, it could indicate that person has targeted that age group for molestation. Or it could mean that is the age group for which they were trained and experience has shown that they do not work as well with other ages. Also be aware of those who seem overly committed to one age group. For example, someone who simultaneously leads a scout troop, coaches little league, serves as a Big Brother and now wants to teach Sunday school may be neglecting their own age appropriate peer relationships in order to cultivate potential victims.

**Does not want/need/like close supervision.** The interview may indicate that the person does not like to be closely supervised. This might raise questions about motivation for applying for this work.

The interviewer needs to be able to explore issues as they arise during the interview and depart from the set of prepared questions to do so. It is helpful, therefore, if interviewers prepare ahead of time for the interview by:

1. Reading the application form.
2. Noting areas of exploration.

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Why are you interested in being associated with our church?
2. How would you describe yourself?
3. When you heard about this position, what appealed to you the most?
4. What specific skills do you bring to this position?
5. With what age group and gender do you prefer to work? Why? Please give examples of your work with this age group.
6. If you are trained for a certain age group, are you willing to work with other age groups or gender?
7. What kinds of programs or activities would you be willing to lead, supervise or conduct? If trained would you be willing to conduct other activities?
8. What do you feel are chief indicators of a successful program or activity?
9. Give a specific example of how you overcame a difficulty in a job, school or family.
10. Give an example of how you overcame a problem with a youngster other than your own. How were you disciplined as a child? Who would/do you discipline?
11. Under what supervision style do you work best?
12. In what types of activities or recreation do you participate?
13. What were your favorite subjects in school?
14. What would you like to tell us that hasn't been covered?
15. What questions do you have about our congregation?
16. Other questions to raise regarding information given on the information form?

One might conclude the interview with one or two hypothetical situations that are typical in your church and ask the applicant how they would respond in that situation.