



Cedarville United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church

As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our others especially children, youth and vulnerable adults very seriously. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against abuse in our churches.

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical safety, protection, and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We also have this policy in place to protect both our paid and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of abuse.

These delineated policies are the minimum necessary precautions for protecting children; youth and vulnerable adults Cedarville UMC will monitor updates and recommendations by the United Methodist Church and may modify these procedures.

As a Christian community of faith we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that provide an environment for spiritual growth and for safety of all in our care, as well as those who work and volunteer in our ministries.

All of those who participate in the life of this congregation and use its facilities, individuals, organization, and groups within and outside this congregation are required to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:

Careful screening is an effective way to help protect children, youth and vulnerable adults. It can be time consuming and expensive, but is an essential step in selecting the most reliable, committed and experienced staff and volunteers for every program that involves children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Screening Standards:

Programs and ministries that are licensed or accredited by a licensing or accreditation body, or that have formally adopted screening, training and supervision procedures, and are pre-approved by the conference Board of Trustees shall follow their established requirements for the screening and selection of persons who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults. An example of such a group is the Boy Scouts of America.

For all other programs and ministries, all new applicants for employment or volunteer service with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall complete the following prior to start of service:

- 1) Written Application – All prospective employees with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall complete a written application that shall include at least the following information:
 - a. Name
 - b. Address
 - c. Phone Number
 - d. Work/Volunteer History
 - e. Experience and skills related to the position
 - f. Two (2) personal, non-related references.
- 2) Background Checks – The following background checks shall be obtained for all prospective employees and volunteers
 - a. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Report – A report of criminal history information obtained from the Pennsylvania State Police or a statement from the Pennsylvania State Police that the State Police central repository contains no information related to that person. The report or statement shall have been obtained within an on-year period proceeding initial application. **A new State Police Criminal History Report shall be obtained every three (3) years.** The original document shall be kept in file, or a copy shall be made of the original and be kept in the file with a notation that the original was shown by the applicant.
 - b. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance – A certification obtained from the Department of Public Welfare as to whether the applicant is named in the central register as the perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse, indicated

report of child abuse, founded report or indicated report for school employee. The certification shall have been obtained within a one-year period preceding initial application. **A new Child line report shall be obtained every (3) years.** The original document shall be kept in file, or a copy shall be made of the original and be kept in file with a notation that the original was shown by the applicant.

- c. FBI clearance (fingerprinting) required for all employees of the church. NOTE volunteers need an FBI fingerprinting report UNLESS they have been a resident of Pennsylvania for all of the last ten years and affirm in writing they have not been convicted in any other state of any of the Pennsylvania offenses that prohibit service.

A new FBI report shall be obtained every three (3) years for persons who become or remain non-residents of Pennsylvania. The original document shall be kept in the file, or a copy shall be made of the original and be kept in file with a notation that the original was shown by the applicant.

- d. Based on the results of the background checks obtained from sections (a), (b), and (c), the following, as found in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S.S. Chapter 63, shall be grounds for denying employment or volunteer service. Grounds for denying employment or volunteer service is not limited to this list only:

- i. No applicant may be hired or used in volunteer service that is named in the central register as the perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse committed within the previous five (5) years.

- ii. No applicant may be hired or used in volunteer service if the applicant's criminal history record information indicates the applicant has been convicted of one or more of the following offenses under Title 18 (related to crimes and offenses) or an equivalent crime under Federal law or the law of another state:

- 1. Chapter 25 Relating to criminal homicide
 - 2. Section 2702 Relating to aggravated assault
 - 3. Section 2709 Relating to harassment and stalking
 - 4. Section 2901 Relating to kidnapping
 - 5. Section 2902 Relating to unlawful restraint
 - 6. Section 3121 Relating to rape
 - 7. Section 3122.1 Relating to statutory sexual assault
 - 8. Section 3123 Relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse
 - 9. Section 3124.1 Relating to sexual assault
 - 10. Section 3125 Relating to sexual aggravated indecent assault
 - 11. Section 3126 Relating to indecent assault
 - 12. Section 3127 Relating to indecent exposure
 - 13. Section 4302 Relating to incest
 - 14. Section 4303 Relating to concealing death of a child
 - 15. Section 4304 Relating to endangering welfare of children
 - 16. Section 4305 Relating to dealing in infant children
 - 17. A felony offense under Section 5902(b) Relating to prostitution and related offenses
 - 18. Section 5903(c) or (d) Relating to obscene and other sexual materials and performances
 - 19. Section 6301 Relating to corruption of minors
 - 20. Section 6312 Relating to sexual abuse of children
 - 21. The attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the offenses listed above

- iii. No applicant may be hired or used in volunteer service if his/her criminal history record information indicates the individual has been convicted of a felony offense under the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act (P.L. 233, No. 64), committed within the previous five (5) years.

- e. Applicants may be provisionally hired or used as volunteers for a single period not to exceed 30 days or, for out-of-state applicants, 90 days, if **all** of the following conditions are met:

- i. The applicant has applied for the required background checks and the applicant provides a copy of the appropriate completed request forms.

- ii. The administrator has no knowledge of information pertaining to the applicant, which would disqualify them from employment or volunteer service pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or volunteer service listed above.

- iii. The applicant swears or affirms in writing that he is not disqualified from employment or volunteer service pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or volunteers service listed above.

- iv. If the information obtained in the background checks reveals that the applicant is disqualified from employment or volunteer service, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed.

- v. The applicant will not be permitted to work alone with children, and the applicant will work in the immediate vicinity of an employee or volunteer who has completed the screening process.

- f. Applicants who can not obtain background checks due to administrative reasons may be used as volunteers if **all** of the following conditions are met:
 - i. The administrator has no knowledge of information pertaining to the applicant, which would disqualify them from employment or volunteer service pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or volunteer service listed above.
 - ii. The applicant swears or affirms in writing that he is not disqualified from employment or volunteers service pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or volunteers service listed above.
 - iii. The applicant will not be permitted to work alone with children, and the applicant will work in the immediate vicinity of an employee or volunteer who has completed the screening process.
- 3) References – at least two References Checks shall be made on all new applicants for employment or volunteer service .
- 4) Relationship with Church – All prospective workers with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall demonstrate an active relationship with the local church for at least six months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in activities for children, youth or vulnerable adults. In the case of new staff hires, references deemed adequate by the hiring supervisor will replace the six-month waiting period.
- 5) Records – All written records shall be confidential and shall be kept in a locked file cabinet. All files shall be maintained for three (3) years after service ends.

ADDITIONAL SCREENING MEASURES:

Additional screening measures that can be considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Written Position Descriptions – A written position description defines duties, performance expectations, and general qualifications necessary and to whom the position reports. This basic document establishes a common understanding of the role for each position.
- 2) Additional background checks – In addition to the State Police, Child line, and FBI background checks, Cedarville can conduct additional checks that include the following:
 - a. Commercially available background searches including:
 - i. Multi-state criminal records
 - ii. Multi-state sex offenders records
 - iii. Drivers license records
 - b. Checking the Megan’s Law website (www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us/)
- 3) Formal Interview – An interview provides a time to clarify any questions the church may have about information on the application, and it offers an opportunity to discuss the responsibilities of the role.

SUPERVISION:

Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse or exploitation of children, youth or vulnerable adults, and to protect staff persons and volunteers from unfounded accusations.

Supervision Standards:

Programs and ministries that are licensed or accredited by a licensing or accreditation body, or that have formally adopted screening, training, and supervision procedures, and receive pre-approval from the conference Board of Trustees shall follow their established requirements for the supervision children, youth and vulnerable adults.

All other programs and ministries of the church shall use the following standards for the supervision of children, youth and vulnerable adults.

- 1) The two adult rule – Regardless of the size group, there will always be at least two adults present. This may include the presence of an adult ‘roamer’ who moves in and out of rooms/ministry activities.
- 2) No child, youth or vulnerable adult will be left unsupervised while participating in a ministry activity/event.
- 3) All ministry activities should occur in open view. Each room or space where ministry activities/events occur must be open to public view. For example: enclosed spaces such as classrooms shall have a viewing window, a glass panel in the door, a ½ door configuration or an open door.
- 4) No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 18 years of age or older and is at least 5 years older than the children/youth being supervised.
- 5) Ministry events involving transportation shall require a written consent form signed by the parent or guardian of the child/youth/vulnerable adult.

TRAINING:

Programs and ministries that are licensed or accredited by a licensing or accreditation body, or that have formally adopted screening, training, and supervision procedures, and receive pre-approval from the conference Board of Trustees shall follow their established requirements for the training of persons who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

For all other programs and ministries of the church, all persons who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall participate in orientation training and then an annual review.

The orientation shall include an explanation of the Safe Sanctuaries program including:

- 1) The need for Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures
- 2) Supervision requirements
- 3) Recognizing signs of child abuse
- 4) Reporting procedures

The initial training shall occur prior to the adult having direct supervision of children, youth or vulnerable adults.

The annual review shall include a review of the Safe Sanctuaries policies, procedures for supervision, and current information on how to identify and report child or vulnerable adult abuse. The annual review may be a self-conducted reading of materials followed by a written self-test.

The training will at a minimum consist of a review of this policy and an understanding of the types of abuse and reporting procedures.

DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

In Pennsylvania abuse is defined as Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury or sexual abuse or exploitation.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation.
- Causing serious physical neglect
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury or sexual abuse or exploitation.

Engaging in any of the following acts:

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing, or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonably restraining or confining a child.
- Forcefully shaking, slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
- Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- Causing a child to be present at a meth lab.
- Knowingly leaving a child with a known sexual predator.
- Causing the death of a child through any act or failure to act.

REPORTING:

Reporting of an allegation of child abuse is required whenever there is “reasonable cause to suspect” that abuse has occurred (PA Child Protective Services Law), Title 23 Pa. C.S.S. Chapter 63). Reasonable cause to suspect abuse can occur (1) when any staff or a volunteer personally witnesses an incident of abuse, (2) when an allegation of an event of abuse is made to staff or volunteer by a third party, and/or (3) when a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse to staff or a volunteer. It is crucial that reporting is immediate and the allegations dealt with as soon in time as possible to the incident or disclosure.

Reasonable cause to suspect abuse can occur:

- 1) When any staff or volunteer personally witnesses an incident of abuse as defined above
- 2) When an allegation of an event of abuse is made to a staff or volunteer by a third party, and/or
- 3) when a child, youth, or vulnerable adult discloses abuse to staff or a volunteer which meets the criteria of the PA Law.

PLEASE NOTE ALL VOLUNTEERS ARE MANADATED REPORTERS UNDER PA LAW

Reports of suspected child abuse are made to the Pennsylvania Child Abuse Hotline (24-Hour service) at 1-800-932-0313 or to the Childline & Youth agency of the county in which the alleged abuse occurred. As an added measure for safety CUMC will post this hotline number in public areas of the facility.

The Church Policy shall include:

- 1) The individual to whom an allegation of abuse must be reported.
- 2) The individual who must file the report to child welfare authorities.
- 3) The process by which a report is filed with child welfare authorities.
- 4) A requirement that a plan of safety is put in place for the child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- 5) A requirement for a written statement from the person who observed or was informed of the suspected abuse.
- 6) A requirement that the District Superintendent be notified if the alleged perpetrator is a staff person or volunteer of the church.

In the event that a member of the clergy becomes aware of suspected child abuse as a result of confidential communication which is protected under 42 PA C.S. 5943 (relating to confidential communications to clergymen), the conference legal counsel should be consulted.

Reasonable cause to suspect abuse can occur:

- 1) When any staff or volunteer personally witnesses an incident of abuse,
- 2) When an allegation of an event of abuse is made to a staff or volunteer by a third party, and/or
- 3) when a child, youth, or vulnerable adult discloses abuse to staff or a volunteer which meets the criteria of the above PA Law.

The mandated reporter observing the behavior or receiving the allegation or disclosure must immediately file the report to the Pennsylvania Child Abuse Hotline.

A mandated reporter who fails or delays reporting may be charged with a misdemeanor or a felony, depending on whether the non-reporting is willful and how serious the abuse is.

Reports of suspected child or youth abuse are made to:

Pennsylvania Child Abuse Hotline (24/7 service) at 800-932-0313

Immediately after filing the report, the person filing the report must inform the Pastor or SPR Chairperson

- Within 48 hours, the person filing the report must also make a written report on the appropriate form (CY-47). (form available at the church office or on the conference website)
- Persons making reports have immunity from civil and criminal liability. It is presumed that reports are made in good faith.
- Releasing the identity of the person making the report is prohibited. This applies to law enforcement, the child welfare workers, and the church.

RESPONSES FOR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE:

Any allegation of abuse requires a process to address responding to the victim, the alleged perpetrator, and the press. The response must be quick, compassionate and unified. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

Response to victims of abuse:

In the instance of any allegation of abuse, there shall be a reaching out to the victim and the victim’s family. Pastoral resources shall be extended, and the conference I-Care Team can be contacted to assist in providing this service. The care and safety of the victim shall be considered the first priority. Response to the victim and the victim’s family shall be done in a positive and supportive manner.

The parents of the victims shall be notified and steps shall be taken to address the safety and well being of the child or youth until the parent(s) arrive. NOTE: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, the direction of the child welfare authorities shall be followed concerning notification of others.

Response to all alleged perpetrators of abuse:

The alleged perpetrator shall immediately, yet with dignity and respect for their sacred worth, be removed from further involvement with children or vulnerable adults and advised that there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse shall not be discussed with the alleged perpetrator at the time of removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by the appropriate authorities. When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or a volunteer, has committed an act of abuse, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry activities/events with children, youth and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate authorities and in accordance with the Book of Discipline

Response to the Media:

The District Superintendent, the Conference Director of Communications and pastor shall decide on a single spokesperson for contact with the public/media. All media requests for statements shall be directed to that spokesperson.

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and or its designee to implement this Policy, to design and conduct future training, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this policy.

UPDATED AND EFFECTIVE 1/1/15

DEFINITIONS:

Child or children or youth – any person who has not reached his/her eighteenth birthday.

Imminent Risk – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S.S. Chapter 63) – An act or recent act or series of such which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual exploitation of a child.

Mental Abuse – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S.S. Chapter 63) – An act or failure to act that results in a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment that: Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic, or in reasonable fear that the child's life or safety is threatened; or Seriously interferes with the child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.

Persons who work with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults – any person who works with young people under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults in any regular capacity such as Sunday School teacher, youth group leader, choir director, regular driver, regular food servers, and general helpers on a schedule that repeats such as weekly, monthly, quarterly; or who participates on-site or in transportation for an overnight or longer program.

Physical Abuse – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S.S. Chapter 63) – A recent act (within the past two years) or failure to act, which causes a non-accidental serious physical injury that causes the child severe pain or significantly impairs the child's functioning, either temporarily or permanently.

Serious Physical Neglect - (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S.S. Chapter 63) – A prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning. Other essentials include food, shelter, clothing, dental care, personal care, protection from physical injury and supervision.

Sexual Abuse - (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S.S. Chapter 63) – An act or failure to act that results in the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist any other person to engage in a sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of any explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming, of any sexually explicit conduct to rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, statutory sexual assault or other form of sexual exploitation of children.

Supervision – to oversee or direct a ministry or activity.

Vulnerable Adult – A person eighteen (18) years of age or older who, because of a mental or physical dysfunction, is unable to manage his/her own resources, carry out the activity of daily living, or protect himself/herself from abuse or neglect without assistance from others.