

St. Paul's United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy
(as approved by Church Council on 5/19/09)

Part 1. Policies for the reducing the risk of abuse in the Church

Part 2. Policies regarding incidents of abuse toward Children and Vulnerable Adults

Part 3. Recommendations

Definitions:

Pastor – The ordained and appointed clergy of St. Paul's UMC.

Staff – Refers to any person who is paid, either hourly or by salary by St. Paul's UMC.

Volunteer – Refers to any person who engages in unpaid work at or in the name of St. Paul's UMC, including but not limited to Faith Explores teachers and guides, Faith Discovery group storytellers, Loving Care team members, acolyte coordinators, childcare volunteers (including parents), youth group leaders and helpers, parent chaperones.

Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPR) – The committee which hires, evaluates, counsels and supports staff. They are also responsible for identifying and recruiting persons to the ordained ministry.

Child and Children – refers to any person ages birth through the completion of 5th grade.

Youth – a person who has completed the 5th grade through 18 years old.

Vulnerable Adult – a person over the age of 18 whose mental, emotional, or physical condition makes him or her susceptible to abuse (temporarily or permanently)

Part 1. Policies for the reducing the risk of abuse in the Church

A. Hiring and Screening Staff

1. All staff will be interviewed by the Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Church Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries and/or Childcare Coordinator.
2. All staff shall be required to fill out background screening information that shall include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Standard contact information
 - b. Experience and qualifications for the position.
 - c. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history, including any criminal charges and/or convictions.
 - d. Background check authorization form
 - e. Valid social security number

- f. Listing of 2 non-relative references with complete contact information (addresses and phone number). If staff position includes direct work with children or youth, 1 of these references must be related to the staff's previous care of or work with children.
3. Before any staff shall be allowed to work in any capacity at St. Paul's UMC, the following must be completed;
 - a. Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Church Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries and/or Childcare Coordinator will contact both references.
 - b. Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Church Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries and/or Childcare Coordinator will check the candidate's identity using form 1-9.
 - c. Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Church Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries and/or Childcare Coordinator will complete a background check.

The person primarily responsible for a, b, and c (above) will be the direct supervisor of the staff candidate.
 4. Any staff that has a break in service of more than 1 year shall resubmit the background screening information and will re-interview with the Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Church Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries and/or Childcare Coordinator.
 5. All staff, with the exception of Childcare staff, must be at least 18 years old. Childcare staff must be at least 16 years old.
 6. All records shall be kept in a secured location in the church.
 7. Persons shall demonstrate an active relationship with St. Paul's UMC for at least six months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in activities for children or vulnerable adults. In the case of new staff hires, references deemed adequate by the Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Church Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries and/or Childcare Coordinator may replace the six month waiting rule.

B. Supervision of Children and Youth (all persons under the age of 18)

1. Two Adults Rule
 - a. No fewer than 2 persons (at least 18 years of age) should be present during all church sponsored programs, events, or ministries involving children and youth. If only 2 adults are present for the event or program, they should be unrelated (including unmarried/unpartnered).
 - b. If a properly screened and compensated staff has to be alone in a room with children and youth (including, but not limited to Thursday evening childcare, Children's and Youth choir rehearsal) they shall be in a room where either;

- i. The door will remain fully open
- ii. The door will have the top half open (on half doors configurations such as those in the nursery/childcare rooms)
- iii. The door will have a clear glass window which shall remain unobstructed.

In a situation where a properly screened and compensated staff has to be alone in a room with a child, they shall not be alone in the church building.

- c. If 2 persons over the age of 18 are not able to be present, an adult 'roamer' should move in and out of the childcare, education, or youth rooms (or wherever the program is taking place).

2. Five (5) year older rule

All staff and volunteers in a supervisory role must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child or youth attending the event, program, or ministry.

1. Procedures Specific to Childcare

- 1. In all 3 childcare rooms, the half doors will be used (bottom half closed, top half open) any time there are one or more children in the room.
- 2. Other adults
 - a. Only properly screened and compensated childcare staff will supervise children in the childcare rooms.
 - I. The exception to this is a child's parent(s), grandparent(s) or other direct relative may volunteer in their child's childcare room.
 - b. Only persons directly supervising children (see part 'a' above) shall be present in any of the childcare rooms during times when children are also present.
- 3. No child will be left unsupervised while attending a church event or program.
- 4. Diaper Changing/ Bathroom Usage
 - a. All diaper changes for babies/toddlers will take place in an open area (such as the changing table in the nursery).
 - b. If a child needs to use the bathroom during an event or program, a properly screened staff member (preferably one of the same gender) shall accompany them and wait outside of the bathroom for the child to return (if the child is independent in using the bathroom).
 - c. Only properly screened staff may provide hands on assistance to children in the bathroom (such as unfastening belts, buttons, etc) but hands on assistance should be as minimal as possible.
 - d. Children being assisted or supervised in the bathroom shall only use the preschool (across the hall from the preschool childcare room) bathroom.
 - e. Volunteers will not provide supervision or hands on assistance to any child in the bathroom (with the exception of their own child or grandchild).
 - f. If a situation arises where a child needs to use the bathroom and no screened staff are available, the child's parent(s) should be located and notified.

II. Procedures Specific to Youth (Middle and High School)

1. Supervision during off-site travel
 - a. All regular supervision rules will apply (where appropriate) if a group of youth are at a St. Paul's UMC sponsored event or program
 - b. No youth will ride in a vehicle alone with any staff or volunteer without written permission from a parent or guardian.
 - c. The "Two Adult Rule" and "Five Year older Rule" will apply if a group of youth are at a St. Paul's UMC sponsored event or program.

2. Supervision during overnight events
 - a. At any overnight event (both at St. Paul's UMC, overnight mission trip type events, Church retreats, etc.) both male and female leaders will be present.
 - b. If the over night event is taking place at St. Paul's UMC, once all children have arrived, the exterior doors to the building shall be locked.
 - c. Youth will be separated by gender into different sleeping quarters with at least one same-sex leaders overseeing each group.
 - d. If 2 sleeping quarters are not available, boys will sleep on one side of the room, girls on the other with leaders sleeping in between the groups and near the exits.
 - e. All regular supervision rules will apply (where appropriate) if a group of youth or vulnerable adults are at a St. Paul's UMC sponsored event or program
 - f. Middle school youth and high school youth will not have joint overnight events.

3. Other
 - a. Due to the nature of Youth Group (grades 6-12) activities (including off-site and overnight trips), any person who wishes to volunteer with this group in a supervisory role will submit their personal information (social security number, home address) to the Youth Ministries Coordinator for a background check.
 - b. Only person who have been properly screened (both paid staff and volunteers) will supervise a group of youth, regardless of if the event, activity, or ministry area is on or off site.

C. Special Policies for Vulnerable Adults

Special care should be taken when staff or volunteers are working with vulnerable adults. Volunteers often go to a vulnerable adult's place of residence or hospital as part of that specific ministry area.

1. Any volunteer that carries out this work in the name of St. Paul's UMC should be screened by the Pastor and/or the Loving Care Ministries Coordinator and should be active in the church for at least 6 months before working with a vulnerable adult in a 1:1 role.

2. When a vulnerable adult is receiving pastoral care, the door to the room shall be left part way open.

D. Counseling

1. Any one-on-one counseling with a person under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult, regardless of who is providing counseling, shall take place in a room with a partially open door. The door should remain partially open during the entire counseling session.
2. Ideally, counseling sessions with a person under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult will take place when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
3. If a person under the age of 18 requests 1: on: 1 counseling, the parents/guardians should be notified as to where and when counseling sessions will be taking place.

Part 2. Policies regarding incidents of abuse toward Children and Vulnerable Adults

A. Reporting Witnessed, Allegations of, or Suspected Abuse

1. Any staff or volunteer who directly witnesses a child, youth, or vulnerable adult being abused in any form should take immediate steps to assure the safety of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult. They should then immediately report the incident to the person in charge of the ministry or activity.
2. Any staff or volunteer to whom abuse is reported should immediately report the incident to the person in charge of the ministry or activity.
3. Any staff or volunteer who suspects abuse should immediately report the incident to the person in charge of the ministry or activity.
4. Upon receiving the information, the person in charge of the ministry or activity shall notify the child's parents or vulnerable adults guardian *and then*;
5. The person in charge of the ministry or activity shall immediately call the New York State Child Protective Services Hotline at 1-800-342-3720. The Pastor and immediate staff supervisor are to be informed immediately before or subsequent to the making of a report.
6. After the person in charge of the ministry or activity has reported the incident to the proper authorities, the Pastor is to report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.
7. The person in charge of the ministry or activity must keep a written log of the steps taken by St. Paul's UMC in response to the witnessed, alleged, or suspected abuse. This report should contain all factual information relevant to the situation. This report should be kept in a secure location.
8. If the accused is the appointed pastor or member of his/her family, the allegations should be reported to the District Superintendent. The District Superintendent will then report the incident to the New York State Child Protective Services Hotline. The District Superintendent will take responsibility and act according to the stated rules in The Book of Discipline with respect to claims against the pastor. If the District Superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.

B. Response Plan

1. All media requests for statements should be directed to the Conference Director of Communications.
2. Immediately, and with dignity and respect of the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from future involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Advise the accused that there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of the removal. In any removal of a staff or volunteers, care should be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner.
3. Any staff or volunteer who is alleged to have committed abuse against a child, youth, or vulnerable adult shall be required to refrain from all direct ministry or direct activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with The Book of Discipline. Any staff or volunteer who is alleged to have committed abuse against a child, youth, or vulnerable adult MAY still participate in ministry or activities where there is no direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
4. Take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well being of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Note: If one of both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.
5. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victims' family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
6. The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected.

Part 3. Recommendations

- A. Replace door to 'Jungle Room' with a half door configuration in order to properly supervise youth group activities.
- B. Replace door to the 'Carpenters Shop' with a door that has a window at the top in order to properly supervise children's and youth activities.
- C. Conduct a training seminar for all staff and volunteers who have contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in regards to this policy and response plan.
- D. Conduct a training seminar with interested parents (of children and youth) and caretakers of vulnerable adults in regards to this policy and response plan.