

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

for

First United Methodist Church
Pflugerville, TX

100. Purpose

110. Although Pflugerville First United Methodist Church, hereafter referred to as PFUMC, cannot foresee all incidents and circumstances that may be harmful to children, the church is committed to providing an environment which is as safe as possible for the children who attend our church or any PFUMC-sponsored programs or activities, and to take the necessary precautions to protect church leaders from unfounded accusations and suspicions. A primary goal in the establishment of this policy is to help prevent the opportunity for, or the appearance of, abuse to a child. The purpose of this policy is to protect the following:

- The children of PFUMC from child abuse or injury due to unsafe conditions,
- The workers of PFUMC from the risk of unfounded accusations of abuse,
- PFUMC's integrity both internally and within the community.

PFUMC will not tolerate any occurrences of child abuse and, upon indications of such, will report violators or suspected violators to legal authorities.

120. This document is intended to be in accordance with the Child, Youth and Adult Safety Policy of the Southwest Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, adopted May 31, 2002.

200. Definitions

Child: A child refers to all minors from birth until promotion to the PFUMC youth program. (For policies related to older minors, see PFUMC's Youth Safety Policy.)

Adult: Any person 18 years of age or older.

Staff: All regular, part-time or temporary employees paid by PFUMC, who have any contact with children. Each staff person shall meet the Staff screening requirements.

Primary Volunteers: All volunteers whose work requires contact with children on a consistent and regular basis. Primary Volunteers include, but are not limited to, children's program sponsors and Sunday School teachers. Primary Volunteers shall meet the Primary Volunteers' screening requirements.

Secondary Volunteers: All volunteers who occasionally interact with children or only serve a few hours each year on an as-needed basis. This category may include, but is not limited to, parents of participants who supervise activities, vehicle drivers, and persons who volunteer on an infrequent basis to assist in the nursery or classroom. Secondary Volunteers will not serve in

leadership roles. Secondary Volunteers shall meet the Secondary Volunteers' screening requirements.

Workers: All persons, regardless of age, who function as paid staff, primary volunteers or secondary volunteers.

Custodian: A person who has been given possession and custody of a child on a temporary basis with the permission of the child's legal parent or guardian.

Contract Worker: Any employee of a firm or independent individual contracted to perform services for the church who is not an employee of the church.

Facilities: Includes PFUMC buildings, grounds, equipment, furnishings, and materials.

On-Site Activities: Activities for children that are sponsored and/or supervised by PFUMC and are conducted on the PFUMC property.

Off-Site Activities: Activities for children that are sponsored and/or supervised by PFUMC and are conducted at a location or locations other than the PFUMC property, including church-arranged transportation.

300. Application of the Policy

310. These policies shall apply to all activities involving children that are sponsored and /or supervised by PFUMC. All workers assigned to such activities by PFUMC shall comply with and conduct themselves according to these policies. Failure to comply shall subject the worker to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal from employment and /or work with any children.

400. Nature of the Policy

410. This policy is to be applied uniformly. This policy attempts to set a minimum standard for conduct. Additional standards may be set by the assigned paid staff worker and the senior pastor. Necessary forms and documents to implement this policy shall be uniform and obtained from the church secretary.

500. Exceptions

510. **Child Care Facilities Subject to State Requirements:** PFUMC operates childcare programs that come within the purview of the State. Nothing in this policy is meant to alter or change any requirements imposed by the State. PFUMC childcare programs under State regulation shall follow all State requirements.

520. **Scouting Organizations Chartered by the Church:** Adult leaders for all scouting groups chartered by the church shall be subject to and fulfill all of the policies and requirements of their respective organizations regarding child safety.

530. **Contract Workers:** Contract workers performing services for the church either on-site or off-site when children are present should be managed by the general contractor, and should not have any one-on-one contact with children without the supervision of a staff person or Primary Volunteer.

600. Waiver of Policies

610. The goal of PFUMC is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in children's ministries. Policies may be waived only for exceptional circumstances or instances outside of its control (example: PFUMC's affiliation with outside organizations on mission projects or Conference/District events). Waiving of policies will only be authorized by the Administrative Council. Parents will be informed of known variances and must provide written permission for their children to participate.

700. Selection and Screening of Staff

710. All staff of PFUMC who have any contact with children are subject to the hiring procedures specified in the Personnel Manual of PFUMC including the following screening requirements:
1. Verified review of a position description.
 2. Submission of an application containing the following information:
 - A. Identification (photocopied and on file)
 - B. Address
 - C. Employment history for past 5 years.
 - D. Volunteer work during past 5 years.
 - E. Church membership during past 5 years
 - F. Personal references with complete addresses.
 - G. Consent to verify all information and to contact references.
 - H. Waiver of any right to confidentiality and of any right to pursue damages against the church caused by information collected by the church and improperly released.
 - I. A statement that they have never been arrested or convicted of a criminal offence involving a minor.
 - J. Certification that the information provided is true and correct.
 - K. Affirmation of willingness to be subjected to random drug tests paid at the church's expense.
 3. Personal interview conducted by the person or persons designated by the senior pastor and/or the staff member given supervisory responsibility by the Staff Parish Relations Committee.
 4. Signed statement that the Child Safety Policy has been read and will be observed subject to hiring.
 5. Criminal background and reference checks completed before hiring.
720. The supervisory staff person, the senior pastor, or the Staff Pastor Relations Committee may accept or deny an application based on any of the above requirements. Only after the screening process is complete can employment begin.

800. Selection and Screening of Primary Volunteers

810. All persons who are involved with children as Primary Volunteers are subject to the following screening requirements:
1. Verified review of a position description.
 2. Submission of a Volunteer Information Form including:
 - A. Identification (photocopied and on file)
 - B. Contact information
 - C. Driver's License information
 - D. Has the prospective volunteer had First Aid training and at what level?
 - E. Proof of current liability insurance (if driving is involved in position)
 3. Completed criminal background check in accordance with PFUMC's Background Review Policy.
 4. Completion of Child Safety Training.
 5. Signed statement that the Child Safety Policy has been read and will be observed while serving as a Primary Volunteer.
820. The supervisory staff person, oversight committee or its representative, or the senior pastor shall ensure that all primary volunteers satisfy the above requirements before beginning their service.

900. Selection and Screening of Secondary Volunteers

910. All volunteers who occasionally interact with children or only serve a few hours each year on an as-needed basis shall be subject to the following screening requirements:
1. Submission of the following information:
 - A. Contact information
 - B. Driver's License information (if driving is involved)
 - C. Proof of current liability insurance (if driving is involved)

1000. Responsible Supervision of Children

1010. *General*

Workers shall not be alone with a child behind a closed door without a window. Ideally, if a worker is counseling with a child behind a closed door with a window, at least one other unrelated adult should be in the immediate area, even if not within listening distance. Home visits are not allowed without the written permission of each child's parent or guardian.

1020. *Team Approach*

Whenever possible, a minimum of two workers who are not married to each other will be present during any activity for children. At least one of these shall be an adult Staff Member/Primary Volunteer. Persons from ages 14 to 18 may be asked to work with children as either Primary or Secondary Volunteers, but only under the supervision of an

adult Staff Member/Primary Volunteer in a ratio of one adult per one youth. In a Sunday School class or similar educational environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes or groups with only one adult or a married couple present as workers, provided a second unrelated adult worker is in the area to periodically monitor class or group activity and provide assistance as needed.

1030. ***Worker/Child Ratio***

Beyond the minimum standard noted in 1020, whenever possible, the Worker/Child Ratio for on-site activities shall be one worker to five children and for off-site activities as follows: 1:4 for ages 0-2; 1:5 for ages 3-5; 1:6 for ages 6-promotion to youth program.

1040. ***Other Off-Site Policies***

1. Permission slips, including a medical release, shall be used for all off-site events.
2. All drivers of vehicles for off-site activities must be at least twenty-one years of age and possess a current, valid driver's license and not be otherwise disqualified from driving (i.e. under medication, physical impairments, and the like). A driver must have proof that the vehicle he or she is driving is insured at the State minimum limits.
3. Whenever possible, there will be at least one, and preferably, two adults assigned to each gender group for overnight stays. The adults will be the same sex as the children they are assigned. At no time will there be only one adult and one child sharing a room, unless it is a parent/child situation.

1050. ***Rules of Behavior***

1. The following behaviors are prohibited for all workers:
 - A. Threatening or inflicting physical injury upon a child, other than by accidental means;
 - B. Committing any sexual offense against a child, or engaging in any sexual contact with a child;
 - C. Making any kind of sexual advance, making a request for sexual favors, or engaging in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature;
 - D. Physical discipline, such as spanking;
 - E. Use of profanity.
2. Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something dangerous is permitted. Affirmation and encouragement are always appropriate.
3. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the parent/legal guardian and to the supervising Staff Member.
4. Physical affection should be used appropriately. Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Workers shall not touch children in genital areas except as necessary to change a diaper or to assist a child in the restroom. Children in the fourth grade or older should not sit in the lap of workers.

1060. ***Consequences of Non-compliance***

Any person who refuses to comply with these policies and procedures, or continues to violate them, shall be prohibited from further work with children.

2000. Worker Training

2010. 1. All Staff Members and Primary Volunteers will be required to complete a Child Safety Policy training seminar within six months of beginning their service. Workers who do not attend this training will be relieved of their service until training is completed.
2. The training seminar will include, but not be limited to, the following:
- A. Written information describing Texas laws regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse.
 - B. Training in identifying and reporting suspected child abuse.
 - C. Recognizing inappropriate behavior and situations open to problems or misunderstandings.
 - D. Fire and building safety.
 - E. Instruction on all aspects of the Child Safety Policy.
3. First Aid/CPR training shall be offered annually. All Staff members and volunteers are encouraged to participate.
4. Written records of worker participation in training seminars shall be carefully maintained and updated as needed.

3000. Facilities and Equipment

3010. PFUMC is committed to doing its best to ensure that all facilities and equipment used by children are safe. When practical, hazardous conditions should be corrected immediately. Children should be protected from such conditions until they are made safe. All hazardous conditions or any damage to the facilities or equipment should be reported to the church office and/or the supervising Staff Member as soon as possible.

4000. Reporting Abuse

4010. *The Obligation to Report*

1. In all cases where any worker has reasonable cause to believe that a child may be abused or neglected, the worker is obligated by Texas law to make a report to a law enforcement agency (call 911 in the event of a life-threatening emergency) or to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDPFS) using either their Child Abuse Hotline (800-252-5400) or their secure web site at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>. If the Hotline is used, the worker will make a written record of the name and title of the counselor with whom he or she spoke and the recommendation made by the counselor.
2. The worker shall contact TDPFS within 48 hours of first learning of possible child abuse.
3. The report must contain: (1) the name, age and address of the child, (2) your name and contact information, (3) brief description of the situation and the child, (3) current injuries, medical problems, or behavioral problems, (4) names of parents and siblings in the home, (5) and explanation of how you came to know about the situation.
4. Failure to report is currently a class B misdemeanor with a fine of up to two thousand dollars and/or 180 days in jail. Failure to report also exposes the individual, the

- church, and the Senior Pastor, to risk of civil liability.
5. Those who report suspected abuse are immune from civil or criminal liability as long as that person did not knowingly or intentionally make a false report.
 6. Those who report are entitled to confidentiality except that their identity may be released to law enforcement officials who are investigating the allegations.

4020. ***Notification to Supervising Staff Member/Senior Pastor***

1. A worker who becomes aware or suspicious of any incident of abuse or neglect through involvement in on-site or off-site activities should immediately report (in writing when possible) the incident or suspicions to the appropriate supervising Staff Person or the Senior Pastor who will document the report in writing.
2. Should allegations of child abuse or neglect occur, workers will:
 - A. Respond to each allegation in a serious manner;
 - B. Treat each allegation with confidentiality and respect for the privacy of all involved persons;
 - C. Cooperate fully with civil authorities;
 - D. Extend genuine care to all victims of child abuse or neglect.

Amendments to Child Safety Policy

200. Definitions

Youth: All minors qualified for participation in PFUMC's youth program up to 18 years of age.

1020. ***Team Approach***

Whenever possible, a minimum of two workers who are not married to each other will be present during any activity for children. At least one of these shall be an adult Staff Member/Primary Volunteer. Persons from ages 14-18 may **be hired to work with children in a nursery setting**, but only under the supervision of an adult Staff Member/Primary Volunteer in a ratio of one adult per one youth. In a Sunday School class or similar educational environment **such as Vacation Bible School**, it is acceptable to have individual classes or groups with only one adult or a married couple present as workers, provided a second unrelated adult worker is in the area to periodically monitor class or group activity and provide assistance as needed. **In these educational settings, youth may also be recruited to assist with children as Primary or Secondary Volunteers, but only under the supervision of adult workers in ratios that are reasonable for maintaining the safety of both the children and the youth workers.**