

Youth Safety Policy

for First United Methodist Church of Pflugerville

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk of abuse to youth in our local church, on church sponsored trips, at district and conference events, and to keep them otherwise safe. The policy has the additional purpose of protecting workers with youth. We live in a time when people who would abuse youth come to churches seeking contact with youth for sexual purposes. The intimate nature of relationships established between youth and youth workers require a definite line to be drawn between appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

DEFINITIONS

Youth Sponsor - any person so designated by the Youth Director and Pastor with approved documentation on file with the church. Except as otherwise delineated, the Youth Director shall be held to the standards of a youth sponsor. A married couple shall constitute a single youth sponsor.

Church Sponsored event - any activity where a youth sponsor or Youth Director and a youth are gathered

APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

When possible, this policy shall apply to all youth ministries activities, gatherings, meetings, trips, sleeping situations and outings conducted or facilitated by our local church, Youth Sponsors under the direction of the Youth Director shall make efforts at meeting and exceeding safety standards prescribed herein when such efforts are deemed reasonable and practical to the Youth Director.

NATURE OF THE POLICY

This policy is to be applied uniformly. This policy attempts to set a minimum standard for conduct. Additional standards may be set by the Youth Director and/or Pastor. Necessary forms and documents to implement this policy shall be uniform and obtained from the church secretary.

SELECTION AND SCREENING OF WORKERS WITH YOUTH

For purposes of this policy, workers with youth are those persons with direct contact and supervision of youth. This does not include those persons who may function as drivers, kitchen workers, etc., who have no sustained contact with and supervision of youth, The approved workers with youth are responsible to see that such non-approved workers behave in an appropriate and responsible manner. All persons wishing to work with youth, whether paid or volunteer, shall fill out an application that contains the following information.

- A. Identification (photocopied and on file).
- B. Address.
- C. Employment history for the past 5 years.
- D. Volunteer work during the past 5 years.
- E. Record of church membership during the past 5 years.
- F. Personal references with complete address (minimum of 3).
- 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 held by the church.
- I. A statement that they have never been arrested or convicted of a criminal offense 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.
- L. All paid staff, part time and full time, are required to have a criminal history background check. The Southwest Texas Conference of United Methodist Church is the agency that will obtain these background checks.

The Youth Director, Pastor, or in the case of a paid worker, the Staff Parish Relations Committees may accept or deny an application based on any of the above requirements. Only after the screening process is complete can the Youth Director and/or Pastor confer the status of youth sponsor. Once the status is conferred, the designee may begin working with youth.

SUPERVISION OF YOUTH

- A. There must be at least a five (5) year age difference between youth sponsors and the youth with whom they work. Youth sponsors must otherwise be a minimum of eighteen (18) years of age.
- B. Youth are not permitted to visit a youth sponsor's home without prior consent being given by the Youth Director and/or Pastor.
- C. Youth are never permitted to visit the Youth Director's home.

The ratio of youth sponsors to youth must be such as to assure the safety of the youth, bearing in mind the age level and type of activity. On campus, the sponsor/youth ratio must be no less than two sponsors to thirty-five youth.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES REGARDING TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Two youth sponsors are required for all trips, special events, and outings. Coed overnight activities require male and female sponsors.

All drivers of vehicles must be 21 years of age or older, have a valid Texas drivers license and proof of current liability insurance. Drivers must not be using medication, which may impair their ability to operate a vehicle, and if a driver has had recent surgery or illness, he/she must be released by his/her physician as capable of driving a vehicle, Driver's must provide a list of any medications currently using,

On trips, the adult sponsors shall designate a specific location where all people will meet and depart. They shall prearrange a schedule of checkpoint stops for the group where they meet and see that all are accounted for and safe. There shall be a daily destination point.

The safety rule of four is to be followed. No fewer than four persons shall go on an overnight trip, If an accident occurs, one stays with the injured and two go for help.

Unmarried male and female sponsors require separate sleeping facilities. Male and female youth participants will not share the same sleeping facilities.

On rustic outings, using tents, no youth will stay in a tent without adult supervision. On overnight outings, which take place in a hotel/motel, no youth will stay in a room without adult supervision.

For all off-campus overnight trips, written permission of the parent or guardian must be obtained.

The parent or guardian shall also sign a release for medical treatment,

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Requirements of the State of Texas:

1. The state of Texas deliberately defines child abuse in a vague manner. The code states a report should reflect the reporter's belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected.
2. The state of Texas considers anyone who suspects abuse to be a mandatory reporter- Institutions who in the normal course of events have direct contact with youth are

considered in the category of professionals and are obligated to report any suspected abuse within 48 hours.

3. The report must contain the name and address of the child and the name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody or welfare of the child, Any pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.
4. The report is to be made to any state or local law enforcement agency or Child Protective service,
5. Failure to report is a class B misdemeanor with a fine of up to two thousand dollars and/or ISO days in jail. Failure to report also exposes the individual and the church to risk of civil liability, and the Senior Pastor/leader of the local church.
6. 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.
7. Those who report are entitled to confidentiality except that their identity may be released to law enforcement officials who are investigating the allegations.