

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

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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. Response Plan

Part 4. 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 leaders, 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 –someone aged 18 and over, who due to age, illness or a mental or physical condition, is less able to take care of himself/herself, or less able to protect himself/herself against harm or exploitation, emotional or psychological mistreatment, Vulnerable adults are also those adult who work with children and youth who can be in a position where accusation of abuse could mistakenly arise; or adults who have been abused either as a child or an adult.

Mandated Reporter - Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child abuse or maltreatment when, in their professional capacity, they are presented with reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or maltreatment. At St. Pauls, only the paid childcare staff are mandated reporters. Pastors are NOT mandated reporters in New York State.

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

A. Hiring and Screening Staff

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1. All applicants will be interviewed by the Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Children's Ministries, and/or Childcare Coordinator.
2. All applicants shall be required to fill out background screening information (developed by SPRC) that shall include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Standard contact information (full name, address, phone number, email)
 - b. Experience and qualifications for the position.
 - c. Employment and volunteer history for the past 5 years.
 - d. Prior church membership (if any)
 - e. 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 prospective staff shall be allowed to work in any capacity at St. Paul's UMC, the following must be completed by the Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Children's Ministries, and/or Childcare Coordinator (the person responsible will be the direct supervisor of the staff candidate);
 - a. A personal interview will be conducted (either 1:1 or a group interview)
 - b. contact both references.
 - c. check the candidate's identity using form I-9.
 - d. complete a criminal background check using a professional service as recommended by the Conference.
 - f. Complete the form that relates to voluntary disclosure of past criminal history, including any criminal charges and/or convictions.
 - g. Background check authorization form
 - h. Check for a valid social security number
 - i. Complete statement of a waiver of any right to confidentiality and of any right to pursue damages against the church/charge caused by the references' responses, and certification that the information provide is true and correct.
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 Children's Ministries, and/or Childcare Coordinator. Background checks will be repeated for all staff every 2 years.
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 who are not paid employees 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, youth or vulnerable adults. In the case of new staff hires, references meeting the above background check requirements and deemed adequate for

this type of supervisory role by the Pastor, a representative of SPR, Director of Children's Ministries, and/or Childcare Coordinator may replace the six month waiting rule.

8. All staff shall be provided with a position description that includes the essential functions of the job.

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 preschool/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, 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.

3. All adult staff and volunteers and clergy shall be trained on behaviors and observant for unusual behaviors and signs of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse and shall report them immediately to the appropriate supervisor.

4. Attendance records shall be kept for all ministry events/activities involving children and youth. These records shall include at a minimum, the date and names of all participants and shall be kept indefinitely.

5. Ministry activities involving transportation shall require a written permission slip/form and signed by a parent/legal guardian. Drivers of children, youth and vulnerable adults must be 21 years of age. The ministry supervisor shall be required to keep a copy of their current license and proof of insurance card on file with the appropriate ministry program.

6. Every clergy in an active status or relationship with the Conference whose appointment is set or approved by the bishop, every person serving as a supply pastor (assigned by the district superintendent) and retired clergy performing ministerial functions shall regularly review and be familiar with public sex offenders registries maintained by New York State Law enforcement agencies. This is done by accessing http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/SomsSUBDirectory/search_index.jsp

7. Attendance records for programs that involve children and/or youth should be kept by the programs supervising staff member in a secured location in the church. These records shall be kept indefinitely.

I. Procedures Specific to Childcare

1. In the childcare room (or any room being used for the purpose of childcare), 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 person's 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 should provide hands on assistance to children in the bathroom (such as unfastening belts, buttons, etc) and 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. Efforts should be made so that volunteers do not need to 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, an effort should be made to find the child's parent(s).

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 legal 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 if both male and female youth are present.
 - b. If the overnight event is taking place at St. Paul's UMC, once all youth and supervising adults 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 leader 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 interviewed 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: on:1 role.

2. When a vulnerable adult is receiving pastoral care, the door to the room shall be left part way open.
3. Gadabout drivers should also take special precautions transporting vulnerable adults. Specific policies and procedures for Gadabout drivers/riders will be held with the Loving Care Ministries Coordinator.

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.

E. Education

All adults who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be Safe Sanctuaries trained prior to direct contact and have ongoing refreshers. Topics should include but not be limited to the need for Safe Sanctuaries, types and signs of abuse, recognizing signs of abuse and neglect, basic procedures in hiring/selecting workers, basic procedures in supervising workers and program participants, responding when abuse or neglect is disclosed or suspected, and reporting abuse. All adults who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall have an annual orientation that includes but is not limited to the church's/ministry's Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures as it applies to the ministry/event. The Upper New York Annual Conference shall make available a standardized training program to assist each charge, district, agency, and ministry to fulfill the covenant to "educate all of our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods".

Part 2a. Policies regarding incidents of abuse toward Children and Vulnerable Adults – NON Mandated Reporters

(includes all volunteers – even if they are a mandated reporter in their paid job – Pastor, program staff at St. Pauls, all music staff)

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 legal guardian or vulnerable adult's guardian *and then*;

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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.

Part 2b. Policies regarding incidents of abuse toward Children and Vulnerable Adults – Mandated Reporters

(Includes all childcare workers)

1. Any staff, who is acting in the capacity of a mandated reporter, 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.
2. As mandated by state law, they must report promptly their concerns to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. The number is 1-800-635-1522.
3. The staff must then immediately notify the person in charge (Childcare Coordinator) that a report has been made.
4. Once the report is made, the person in charge is responsible for all subsequent administration necessitate by the report.
5. A signed, written report (LDSS 2221A Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Maltreatment Adobe PDF LDSS 2221A / Microsoft Word LDSS 2221A) must be filed by the Childcare Coordinator within forty-eight hours of an oral report. Persons should submit written reports to the appropriate local child protective services. This form can be accessed at www.ocfs.state.ny.us. Click on forms, then Child Protective Services to access LDSS-2221A.

Part 3. 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

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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 or 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 4. Recommendations

1. Update our Gadabout policies and procedures. Debbie Allen working on.
2. Consider whether or not space use renters need to have their own version of a Safe Sanctuaries policy as part of a rental agreement. John working on.
3. Provide regular Safe Sanctuary training to all staff, volunteers, and interested church members every other year.