



# SAFER SANCTUARIES

Nurturing Trust within Faith Communities

## **2024 West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church Recommended Guidelines for Creating a Safe Sanctuaries™ Policy for Local Congregations**

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Jesus cared about the vulnerable among us – children, elderly, those in poverty, immigrants, people in prison, widows and orphans, people with physical and mental illness. As a Church and denomination, we have not always lived into our commitment to minister with the marginalized without causing harm. Acknowledging this an important step toward reconciliation while ministering to those Jesus calls us to requires us to create safe spaces for all of God’s people. In doing so we create policies that are specific to the congregations and communities in which we serve.

The intent of any Safe Sanctuaries Policy should be to:

- prevent abuse from happening in our churches;
- create environments where children, youth, and vulnerable adults can feel safe in disclosing abuse; and
- protect volunteers and employees who minister with vulnerable populations.

This document sets forth the recommended practices and procedures in the areas of:

- Introduction
- Statement of Covenant
- Definitions
- Screening
- Supervision
- Responding & Reporting
- Safety of Facilities
- Liability Insurance & Policy Review
- Best Practices & Sample forms

All local churches within the West Ohio Conference are required to have a Safe Sanctuary policy which outlines how each of the above-mentioned areas are cared for.

## **INTRODUCTION & STATEMENT OF COVENANT**

It is recommended that each local church provide an introduction which outlines the purpose of the local policy. The policy to which a local congregation agrees to abide should connect directly to their context, including awareness and acknowledgment of previous harm to vulnerable populations by the Church. The covenant is to create a ministry that is life giving for all people involved.

## **DEFINITIONS**

It is recommended to include any definitions which may be helpful for individuals to understand your local policy. The list below is not exhaustive to what could be used for individual contexts.

- **Abuse** means harm or a threat of physical or emotional harm to another person.  
Abuse includes:
  - The infliction of physical or emotional injury by other than accidental means
  - The creation of a risk or allowing the creation of risk
  - Committing or allowing to be committed, an act of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or prostitution.
- **Adult** means any person at least eighteen years of age.
- **Appropriate** means conduct that one understands would be acceptable and permissible by a parent or guardian.
- **Child** refers to a person under eighteen years of age.
- **Parent or guardian** means any parent, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent, or appointed guardian with general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.
- **Sexual contact** means the intentional touching of the intimate parts or the clothing covering the intimate parts of a youth, child, or vulnerable adult.
- **Sexual exploitation** means allowing, permitting, or encouraging a vulnerable adult, child, or youth to engage in prostitution, photographing, filming, or creating electronic or computer-generated images depicting a child, youth, or vulnerable adult engaged in actual or suggestive sexual conduct.
- **Sexual harassment** means any sexual advance or demand either verbal or physical, which is perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive.
- **Staff** means any employee of the ministry. This can include both paid and unpaid staff members but is particularly used in reference to pay employees.
- **Volunteer** means a person who participates as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any event or ministry without compensation.
- **Supervision** means to oversee or direct a ministry or ministry activity or event.
- **Unrelated Adults**-Adults who are not biologically related, spouses, or individuals in a cohabitating environment.
- **Vulnerable Adult** means a person eighteen (18) years of age or older who is unable to protect him or herself from abuse, neglect, or exploitation by others because of physical, mental, or emotional impairment.
- **Youth** refer to a person between the ages of thirteen and seventeen.

## **SCREENING**

Careful screening is one potential way to prevent the abuse and exploitation of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Background screenings have the capacity to create peace of mind by showing that the staff and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, have no known record of abuse. It is recommended that staff and volunteers may have regular or direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults:

1. Complete a volunteer application including:
  - a. Standard contact information
  - b. Experience/qualifications for the position
    - i. It is recommended that volunteers 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 may replace the six-month waiting period.
    - ii. Full disclosure of past criminal history, including any criminal charges and/or convictions.
    - iii. Authorization allowing the church to secure a criminal background screening to be conducted and/or to contact references.
    - iv. Listing of two non-relative references. This list should have complete contact information for all references. (This portion of the application process is considered incomplete if full contact information for the references is not provided.)
2. Complete a criminal background screening.

\* Background screenings should include a criminal records check and may include review of other desired records including county, motor vehicle, employment, alias names, and a search of the national sex offender's registry.

  - i. West Ohio suggests the following measures of completion:
    - Good: State-level criminal records check.
    - Better: National criminal records check.
    - Best: National criminal records check with fingerprinting.
  - ii. Each conviction should be evaluated in view of all the facts, including the date of the conviction, the nature of the offense, the position sought, applicable law, and the obligations imposed by Amended Senate Bill 187.
  - iii. It is recommended that criminal records checks be repeated at least every five years (better every three years) for all staff, including clergy, and volunteers. Persons who have a break in volunteer or paid service of one or more years may be required to undergo a new background screening.
    1. A national criminal records check is highly recommended if the volunteer/staff person has lived outside the state within the past 5 years and/or lives near the border of another state.
    2. It is important that all records be kept in a secure location that is accessible to church leadership. It is recommended that these records be kept securely by the church in perpetuity.

## **SUPERVISION**

Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse or exploitation of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and to protect staff and volunteers from unfounded accusations. The following are recommended as useful guidelines both onsite, offsite, and within digital spaces. Careful judgment should be exercised in all supervisory situations.

1. Annual training is recommended for all staff and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. An initial educational component of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, including its procedures and practices, is to be implemented prior to any adult having direct supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Thereafter, it is recommended that when criminal records checks are repeated (at least every five years, or better every three years) volunteers re-take the educational component of the Safe Sanctuaries policy training.
2. Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are to be supervised while attending a ministry activity or event.
  - a. Those providing supervision of children, youth and vulnerable adults should be at least eighteen years of age and at least five years older than children or youth being supervised.
  - b. Minimum supervision standards include the “two-adult rule” and/or the “rule of three:”
    - **The ‘Two-Adult Rule’**  
The two-adult rule states there will be at a minimum at least two unrelated adults present for any ministry event. This may include the presence of an assigned adult ‘roamer’ who moves in and out of rooms and spaces where ministry events occur.
    - **The “Rule of Three”**  
The “rule of three” states there will always be a minimum of three unrelated people together for ministry events; this can be two youth and one adult, or one youth and two adults. The “rule of three” can be followed for ministries with youth, age 12 and older.
3. Alignment with best practices for determining appropriate ratios for sufficient care of children, youth, and vulnerable adults during ministry events are strongly encouraged.
4. Hosting Events
  - a. Before the start of every activity or event, appropriate contact information should be collected.
  - b. All ministry activities and events should occur within an unobstructed view. Each room or space where ministry activities or events occur should be open to public view. For example, enclosed spaces such as classrooms could have a viewing window, a glass panel in the door, a ½ door configuration, or an open door.

5. Transportation & Overnight Accommodations
  - a. When transporting children, youth, or vulnerable adults for a church ministry event or activity, an additional unrelated adult should accompany the driver in the vehicle.
  - b. Ministry activities and events involving transportation should require written and signed permission from parents or legal guardians.
  - c. When a ministry involves an overnight situation, a ministry plan including travel plans and sleeping arrangements should be made available in writing to and should be signed by the parents or legal guardians prior to the event.
6. Counseling
  - a. Those who are not professionally licensed counselors in the State of Ohio should limit confidential conversations to three sessions. These sessions should follow all aspects of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy. If the problem has not been resolved after three sessions, the child, youth, or vulnerable adult should be referred to a professional licensed counselor.
  - b. All clergy will abide by Ohio law in relation to providing pastoral counseling (ORC 4757.41).

## **RESPONSE PLAN**

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to a reported incident of abuse is expected. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies. The following are recommended steps to be taken when responding to an incident. Realize that some of these steps may be managed simultaneously.

1. Take all allegations seriously.
2. Care for Victim: If the victim is in immediate need of medical attention, appropriate medical care will be obtained.
3. Attend to Alleged Perpetrator: If the alleged perpetrator is onsite and danger is perceived, call local police authorities.
  - a. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults and advise the accused 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 removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from a ministry activity or event, care should be taken to manage the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.
4. Make the Report: Every person covered by the Safe Sanctuaries policy is mandated by the policy to report known or suspected abuse up the chain. It is crucial that reporting be immediate, and the allegation(s) dealt with as soon as possible to the incident or disclosure. The pastor (or church council leader) will ensure Child or Adult Protective Services (CPS/APS), respectively) are contacted.

- a. All clergy, staff, and volunteers are included in mandatory reporting in the cases of suspected abuse or neglect as required by The Book of Discipline and Ohio law.
  - b. For volunteers who are mandatory reporters by profession, the first phone call may be to CPS/APS, then the Chain of Notification will be activated.
  - c. Mandatory reporters by profession, in the State of Ohio, include: clergy, attorneys, occupational therapists, counselors, teachers, nurses, and doctors, childcare workers, social workers and so forth.
  - d. When making a report by telephone, it is advisable that it be conducted in the presence of an objective witness. The witness can verify the report that has been made and who made the report. All reports should be documented and securely filed.
5. Activate Chain of Notification: Activate the Chain of Notification immediately to prepare the local church, district, and conference to provide the best care and support to the victim and their family. The Chain of Notification is as follows:
- a. The staff person or volunteer is to report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the ministry or event providing reason for suspected abuse and any other helpful information.
  - b. The person in charge of the ministry will immediately contact the senior pastor or church council leader. At this point in the Chain of Notification a report to Child or Adult Protective Services should be made (see #4).
  - c. If the pastor is the alleged perpetrator, the church council leader will be notified in place of the pastor.
  - d. The pastor (or church council leader) will immediately call the superintendent of the district in which the church resides and report the allegations.
  - e. The district superintendent will immediately report the situation to the Assistant to the Bishop and Communications Director at the West Ohio Conference office, as set forth in the Crisis Communications Guidelines for the West Ohio Conference.
  - f. Notify the parents or legal guardians of the victim. Take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the victim until the parent or legal guardian(s) arrive. However, if one or both parents/legal guardians is the alleged perpetrator, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification.
  - g. If notification of the allegation has not yet been communicated with the alleged perpetrator, do so at this point in the notification process. When it has been alleged that a staff member or volunteer, has committed an act of abuse or exploitation, the staff member or volunteer will be required to refrain from all ministry activities and events with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate civil authorities and in accordance with The Book of Discipline.





## 2. Outside the Building

- Parking areas should be well marked.
- Any outside area should be well lit.
- Outside structures should be kept locked when not in use. Any keys to such structures should be documented.
- Clear and visible signage should be in the parking area and at the entrances of the building.

## 3. Building Usage

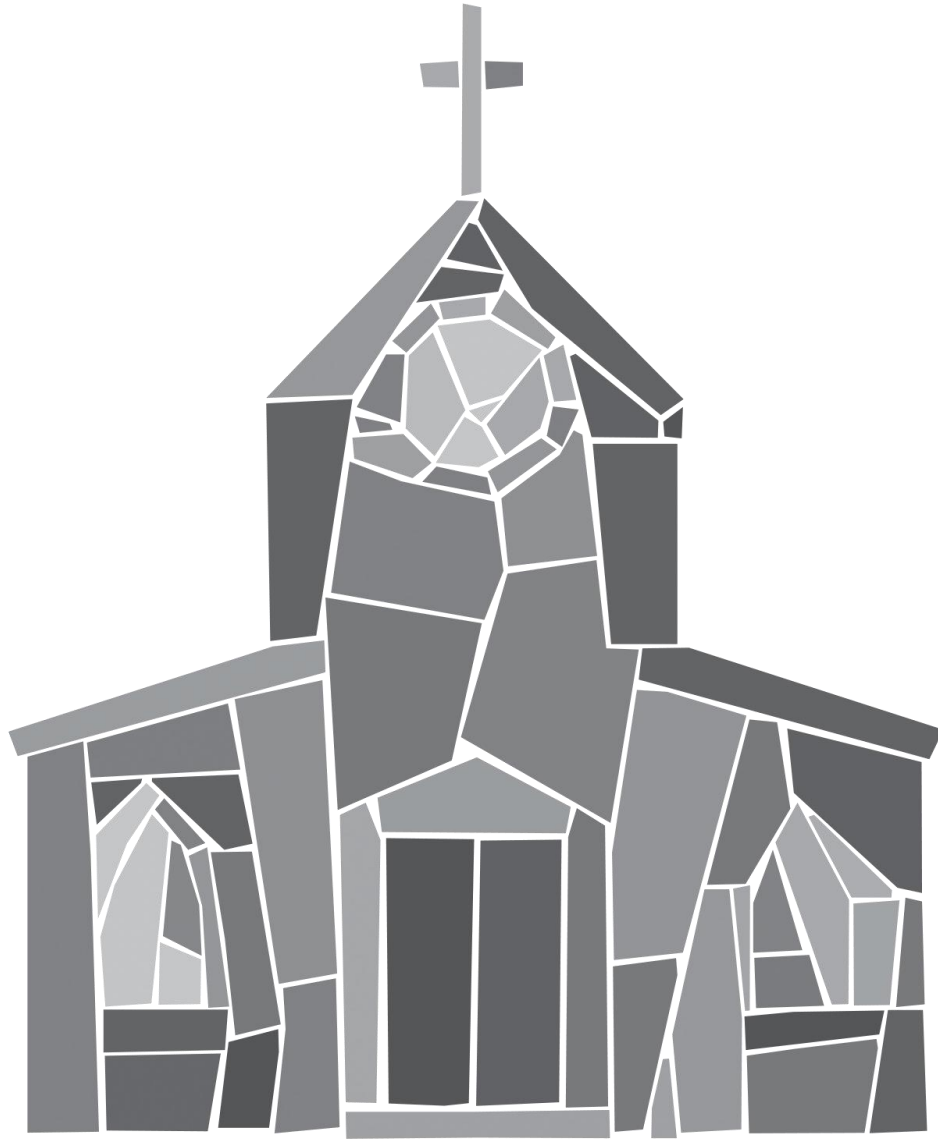
- A schedule of building usage should be available to staff/key volunteers.
- Procedures and agreements for both ministry groups and outside groups should be maintained and kept on file.
- It is recommended that all outside groups should sign a lease agreement which includes:
  - Name of group and 501(c) (3) status
    - Certificate of insurance naming the local church as the place of event.
  - Exact location and time facility is being used by the group.
  - Names the person who will be given access to keys or who will lock and unlock the facility for use by the outside group.
  - Agreement to follow Safe Sanctuaries policy.
  - A copy of the local safe sanctuaries policy should be provided as well as training on the local policy.
  - Signature of the responsible party of outside group and local church representative.

## **LIABILITY INSURANCE & POLICY REVIEW**

1. The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church requires the trustees of each local church to secure adequate liability insurance to cover the risk associated with its ministries. The Board of Trustees shall review annually the adequacy of the property, building, and personnel coverage. Upon review, it is recommended that local policies provide the name of the insurance company as well as contact information and level of liability coverage.
2. The West Ohio Conference requires churches to submit information on new and updated Safe Sanctuaries policies annually via the Annual Policy Review Form. It is recommended that each local policy includes a date of adoption as well as the latest review date if no changes are made.

# **Best Practices & Sample Forms**

**It is recommended that local church policy contain practices, procedures & forms specific to a local context**



## **Recommended Best Practices for Living Into A Local Policy**

1. Only write policies you are going to follow. Your policy should match your actions, including practices and procedures.
2. All supervising adults who are working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults should pass a background check prior to working or volunteering.
3. Any time staff or volunteers work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults there should be open-sighted and sound lines for all participants.
4. All release forms, including medical, transportation, photo/video, and communications releases should be kept up to date for all participants (staff, volunteers, children, youth, and vulnerable adults).
5. Staff and volunteers should have training on:
  - a. Local Safe Sanctuary Policies
    - i. Including updates when applicable
  - b. Mandated Reporting
    - i. Reporting is not investigating suspected abuse
    - ii. Having an objective witness present if a report is made to verify when & who made the report
  - c. Signs of abuse in various age-ranges
  - d. Age-appropriate healthy touch
  - e. Age-appropriate harm from within (self-inflicted harm and bullying).
  - f. Contextually appropriate accessibility awareness and etiquette around:
    - i. Physical disabilities
    - ii. Mental health
    - iii. Dietary restrictions
    - iv. Medical events and first aid
    - v. Transfers and mobility assistance
6. Children and Youth specific
  - a. Clear check-in and check-out procedures should be in place and always followed.
  - b. Age-appropriate behavior expectations should be clear
  - c. When working with minors, the supervising adult should be five years older than the oldest participant.
  - d. Appropriate and safe ratios of staff/volunteers should be maintained with children and youth:
    - i. 0-12 months-2 adults, 8 kids max (1:4)
    - ii. 1-3 years-2 adults, 12 kids max (1:6)
    - iii. 3-4 years-2 adults, 20 kids max (1:10)
    - iv. School-age-2 adults, 24 kids max (1:12)
  - e. No adult should ever be alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. This includes while traveling off-site.

- f. No child or youth should be left without a supervising adult
- g. Supervising adults should not be related.
- h. The rule of three should always be used. Staff, volunteers, and youth should never be alone or in a group of two. There should always be at least one other non-related person always present.
- i. Separate shower and bathroom facilities should be maintained for each gender.
- j. Separate sleeping quarters should be provided for each gender.
- k. Each person should have their own space for rest.
- l. If communication with youth is required, the rule of three should be applied.
  - i. When communicating the platform used should be accessible after communication has ended.

7. Environmental Safety

- a. Complete an accessibility audit ([UMC Annual Accessibility Audit](#))
- b. Make a safety assessment (unsafe items include: toxins, sharp objects, uncovered electrical outlets).
- c. Implement a fragrance-free policy (sensitivity to fragrances are increasing).
- d. Conduct a sensory assessment (things that can impact those with sensory issues include flickering lights, annoying noises, too many colors or items on walls).
- e. Infection control and universal precautions (be aware that vulnerable populations).
- f. Clear lighting throughout facilities.
- g. Clear signage throughout facilities.
- h. All doors should have windows.

# Sample Safe Sanctuaries Task Force for the Local Church

*\*If developing a policy, the following individuals should be a part of the conversation. This is a sample form to collect the information of each leader involved.*

## **Pastor**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Member of Staff-Parish Committee**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Member of Board of Trustees**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Lay Leader**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Director of Youth Ministries/Youth Minister**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Director of Children’s Ministries/Children’s Minister**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Director of Weekday Program for Children (if applicable)**

*(This would include any daycares, preschools, or private schools that use church facilities during the week.)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Representative of Each Ministry Working with Vulnerable Groups**

*(The number of members listed here will depend on the number of ministries in your congregation. For instance, children, youth, and so forth.)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

# Sample Employment Application

*\*This is a sample. This type of application should be completed by anyone who seeks any role that will involve the supervision and/or custody of children or youth. You should tailor the application to the specific circumstances in your congregation. At a minimum, this should include sections for personal identification, job qualifications, experience and background, references, and a waiver/consent to conduct a background check.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pronouns: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you over the age of 18?       Yes     No

Present address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Best method of contact:       Email     Phone     Text message

Position applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

Date you are available to start: \_\_\_\_\_

## Qualifications

Academic achievements (Schools attended, degrees earned, dates of completion)

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Continuing education (Courses taken, dates of completion)

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Professional organizations/other qualifications (List any additional relevant information)

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First aid training?       Yes     No

CPR training?           Yes     No

**Previous Work Experience:** Please list your previous employers from the past five years. Include the job title, a description of duties and responsibilities, the name of the company/employer, the name of your immediate supervisor, and the dates you were employed in each position.

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**Previous Volunteer Experience:** Please list any relevant volunteer positions you have held and list the duties you performed in each position, the name of your supervisor, the address and phone number of the volunteer organization, and the dates of your volunteer service.

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Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)?  Yes  No

If yes, please explain:

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References: Please list three individuals who are not related to you by blood or marriage as references. Please list people who have known you for at least three years.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_





# Sample Volunteer Application

*\*This is a sample form. Please tailor your congregation's form to comply with your congregation's Safe Sanctuaries policies.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pronouns: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Best method of contact:  Email  Phone  Text message

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Job Responsibilities and Schedule: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Previous relevant work experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous volunteer experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special interests, hobbies, and skills: \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week are you available to volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Days \_\_\_\_\_ Evenings \_\_\_\_\_ Weekends

Can you make a one-year commitment to this volunteer role? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have your own transportation? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have liability insurance? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be available for periodic volunteer training sessions?  Yes  No

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children and/or youth?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What qualities do you have that would help you work with children and/or youth?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)?  Yes  No

If yes, please explain:

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**References:** Please list three individuals who are not related to you by blood or marriage as references. Please list people who have known you for at least three years.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Applicant

Date



# Sample Form for Reference Check

*\*This is a sample form. Please tailor your congregation's form to comply with your congregation's Safe Sanctuaries policies.*

Applicant name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference address: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference email address: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to the applicant?

How long have you known the applicant?

How well do you know the applicant?

How would you describe the applicant?

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities?

How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth?

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.

Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.

Please list any other comments you would like to make.

Reference inquiry completed by \_\_\_\_\_ (Sign/Date)

# Sample Volunteer Covenant Statement

*\*This is a sample form. Please tailor your congregation's form to comply with your congregation's Safe Sanctuaries policies.*

The congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, workers, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to pre- serving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
2. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must have been members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
3. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall always observe the two-adult rule so that no adult is left alone with children or youth on a routine basis.
4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Place your initials next to the following statements to confirm your agreement.

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth. \_\_
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to always observe the two-adult rule. \_\_
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment. \_\_\_\_\_
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to my volunteer assignment. \_\_\_\_\_
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to my supervisor. \_\_\_\_\_
6. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to inform a minister of this church if I have ever been convicted of child abuse. \_\_\_\_\_

I have read this volunteer covenant statement, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Print full name

# Sample Childcare Worker Position Description

*\*This is a sample form. Please tailor your congregation's form to comply with your congregation's Safe Sanctuaries policies.*

**Position:** Childcare work in the church nursery

**Reports to:** Nursery supervisor/coordinator

## **General qualifications required:**

1. All childcare staff members shall be of good character and be of the Christian faith.
2. All childcare staff members shall
  - a. Be physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.
  - b. Have a basic understanding of children and their needs.
  - c. Be adaptive to a variety of situations.
  - d. Be willing to grow in their knowledge of children through periodic education and training events.
3. All childcare staff members shall have a physician's report stating that the staff member is in good health and has presented the result of a current tuberculin skin test.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ hires without regard to race, sex, or national origin.

## **Educational qualifications required:**

1. All childcare staff members shall have completed the equivalent of a high school diploma.

## **Duties of childcare staff member:**

1. Provide physical, emotional, and intellectual support and stimulation to each child in your care, as appropriate for the circumstances.
2. Provide appropriate guidance to each child in your care.
3. Develop a relationship of trust and continuity with the children in your care, which will enhance each child's development of a positive self-image.
4. Provide support and assistance to parents when they arrive with their child.

**Performance expectations of a childcare staff member:**

1. Be punctual. Notify the nursery supervisor in advance if you must be late.
2. Be dependable in your attendance. Notify the nursery supervisor in advance if you must be absent.
3. Attend periodic training and education events provided by the church.
4. Be polite, friendly, and courteous to others, both children and adults.
5. Do not engage in physical punishment or discipline of any child.
6. Cooperate with other childcare staff and with parents.
7. Abide by and apply the childcare policies of \_\_\_\_\_ at all times.

I have read the position description for childcare staff members at \_\_\_\_\_ and understand its contents. My signature below indicates my agreement and covenant to abide by the requirements set forth above.

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Signature of Applicant

Date



# Sample Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse

*\*This is a sample form. Please tailor your congregation's form to comply with the reporting requirements of the laws of your state and your congregation's policies.*

Name of worker (staff or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of abuse:

\_\_\_\_\_

Victim's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Victim's age/date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Victim's statement/detailed summary of observations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person accused as perpetrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship of accused to victim (staff, volunteer, family member, other): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Report to Pastor

Person making report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of report: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Report on Victim’s Parent/Guardian**

Person making report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of report: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Report to Local Children’s Services/Family Services Agency**

Person making report: \_\_\_\_\_

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of report: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Report to Law Enforcement Agency**

Person making report: \_\_\_\_\_

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of report: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other Contacts (list all other parties who have been informed of suspected incident of abuse)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary:

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Signature of Incident Reporter

Date

# Sample Accident Report Form

Date of accident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of accident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of accident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child/youth injured: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of child/youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian contacted: \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) who witnessed the accident

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the accident: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Accident Reporter

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

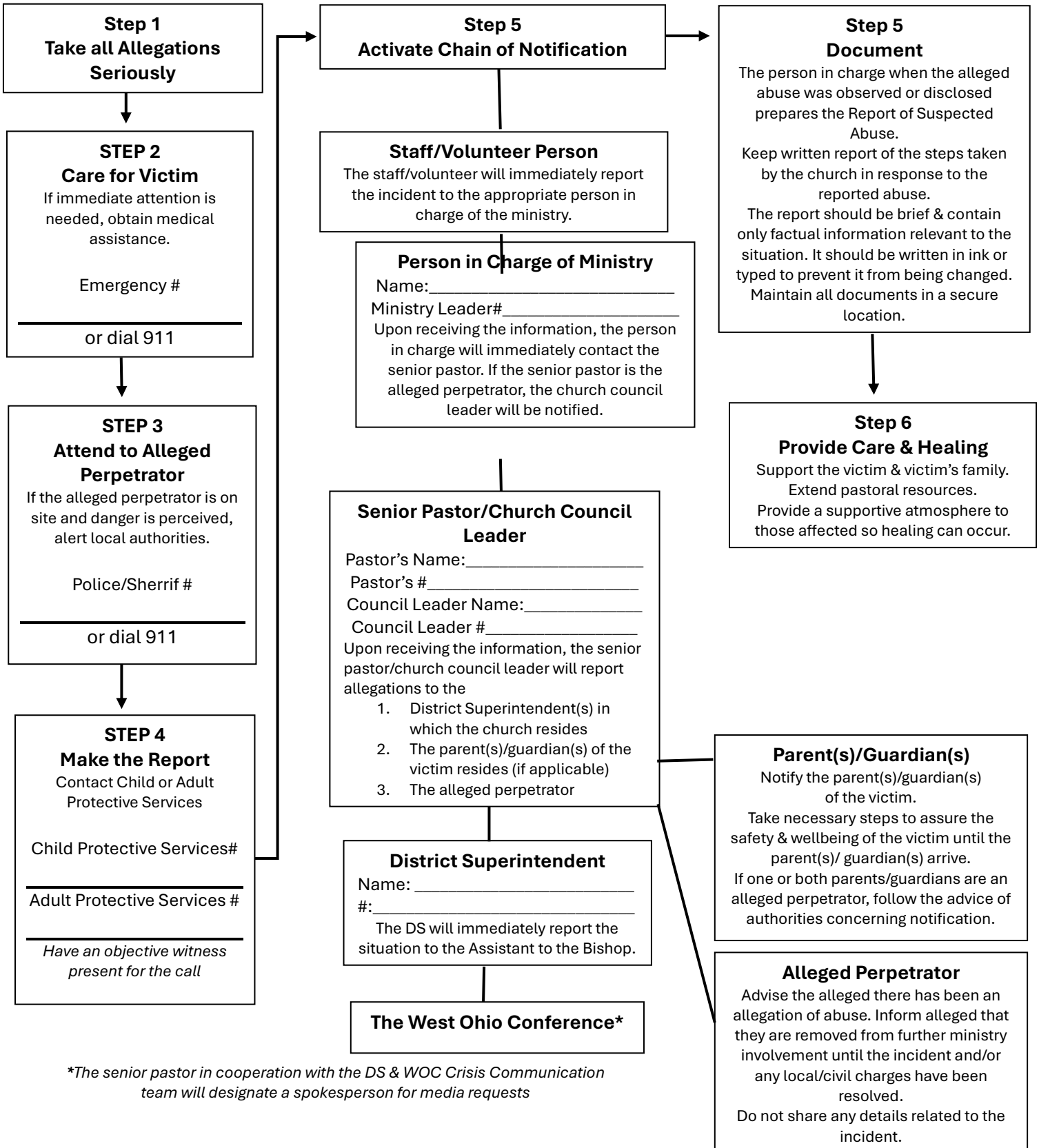
## **SAMPLE GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING, BLOGGING, & INTERNET CONNECTION BETWEEN SUPERVISING ADULTS AND STUDENTS**

*The following is a sample policy. It is highly encouraged that individual congregations adopt a similar that relates to their context, safe sanctuaries policies and values.*

In general, our congregation views social networking sites (such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and so forth) personal websites, and blogs in a positive light and respect the wishes of staff members and volunteers to use them as a medium for self-expression. If a paid staff member chooses to identify himself or herself as an employee of our congregation in these venues, we are aware that some readers may view this employee as a representative or spokesperson of the congregation. Considering this possibility, our congregation requires, as a condition of employment, which paid staff members observe the following guidelines when referring to the congregation, its programs and activities, its members, and other paid staff or volunteers, on social media, personal websites, or blogs. Furthermore, we highly recommend that volunteers at the congregation abide by these same guidelines.

- Staff/volunteers must be respectful in all communications and blogs related to or referencing the congregation, its members, and other staff members or volunteers.
- Staff/volunteers must not use obscenities, profanity, and vulgar language or images.
- Staff/volunteers should not use social media, personal websites, or blogs to disparage the congregation, members, or other staff members or volunteers.
- Staff/volunteers must not use social media, personal websites, or blogs to harass, bully, or intimidate others, particularly members of the congregation and other staff and volunteers. Behaviors that constitute harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, comments that are derogatory with respect to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, color, or disability; comments that are sexually suggestive, humiliating, or demeaning; and threats to stalk, haze, or physically injure another person.
- Staff/volunteers must not use social media, personal websites, or blogs to discuss engaging in conduct that is prohibited by congregational policies, including, but not limited to, the inappropriate or illegal use of alcohol, the use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment, and bullying.
- Staff/volunteers must not post pictures of congregation members, other staff members, or volunteers without obtaining written permission.
- Staff/volunteers found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

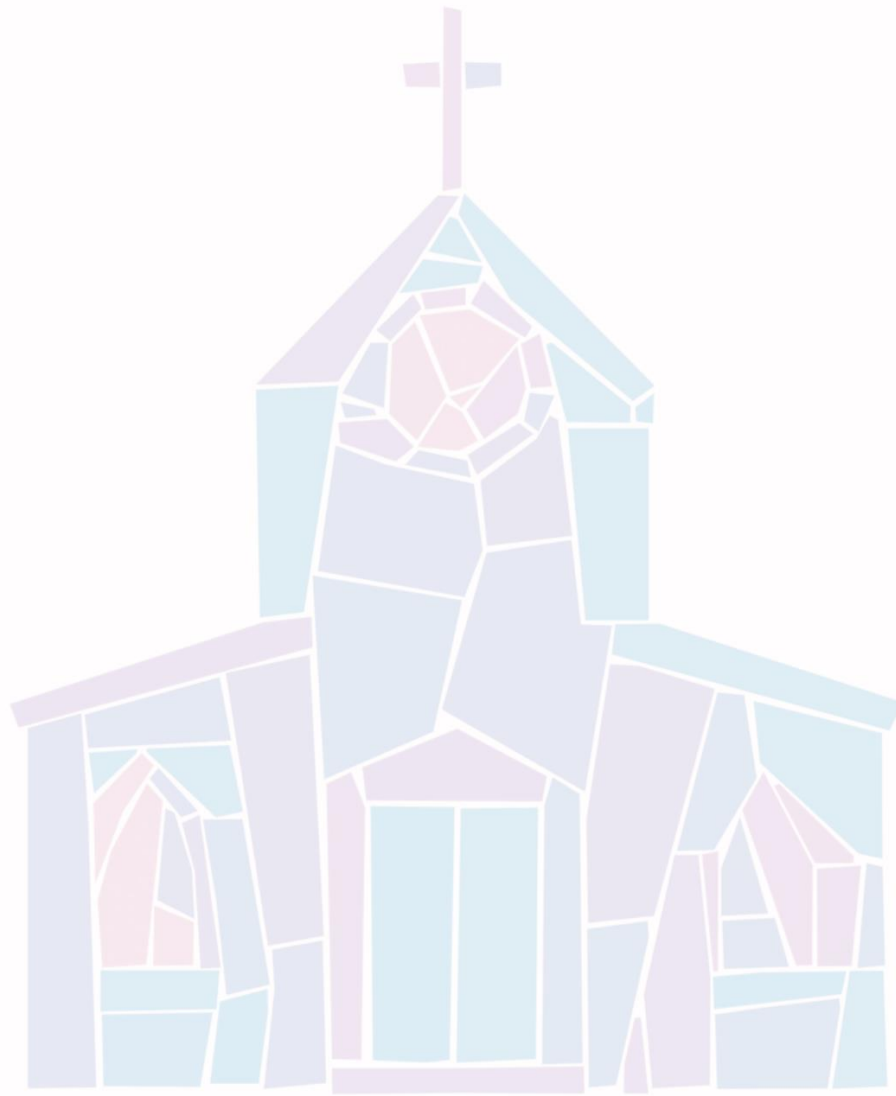
## SAMPLE FLOW CHART FOR REPORTING ABUSE



*\*The senior pastor in cooperation with the DS & WOC Crisis Communication team will designate a spokesperson for media requests*

The recommendations, processes, guidelines, and sample forms in this packet were adapted from the Safer Sanctuaries resources published by Discipleship Ministries (2023).

If you have questions about anything in this document contact Director of Camps,  
Retreats, and Next Gen Engagement for the West Ohio Conference,  
Rev. Ann Marie Carley [amcarley@wocumc.org](mailto:amcarley@wocumc.org) (380) 223-9369



# **West Ohio Conference**

The United Methodist Church

**2024**