

**STOVERDALE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY**

**FOR THE PROTECTION OF
CHILDREN AND YOUTH¹
(Revised September 2015)**

PREAMBLE:

When the crowd tried to keep the children away from Jesus, he was quick to respond, "Let the children come to me." Jesus taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. Today, the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children and vulnerable adults very seriously. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against abuse. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent abuse of children in every situation, but it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a practical policy of prevention. This policy attempts to do just that for our church in dealing with children and youth. It is based on our understanding of the widespread problem of abuse throughout our country.

Every 15 seconds a child is abused or neglected. Often abuse occurs in settings where children, youth or vulnerable adults should have been able to feel safe - homes, schools, camps, and most sadly the church. In more than three quarters of the reported incidents of child abuse, the victim was related to or acquainted with the abuser.

It is the purpose of this policy to first protect the children and vulnerable adults that come to us; the second is to protect our staff both paid and volunteer from the potential allegations of abuse and third to limit the extent of legal liability of our church.

DEFINITIONS

1. "Adult" means a person 18 years of age or older
2. "Child abuse" as defined under Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law means any of the following:
 - a. Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age.
 - b. An act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
 - c. Any recent act, failure to act or series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.

¹ Adapted from the Central Pennsylvania Conference Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

- d. Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.
 - e. No child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child's welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medial care.
3. For purposes of this Policy, the foregoing definitions of "child abuse" include vulnerable adults.
 4. "Child" means any persons under the age of 18.
 5. "Youth" refers to any persons in 6th -12th grade.
 6. "Children's activities" means any activity or program in which the children are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.
 7. "Church" means First United Methodist Church of Hershey.
 8. "Conference" means the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church.
 9. "Staff person" means any person employed by the Conference or the Church who is responsible for children's activities.
 10. "Volunteer" means a person 18 years of age or older who assists in conducting children's activities under the supervision of a staff person or not.
 11. "Persons required to report child abuse" means persons, who in the course of their employment, occupation, or practice of their profession², come into contact with children. Such persons include, but are not limited to, medical professionals, school administrators, teachers and nurses, social services workers, day-care center workers, mental health professionals, peace and law enforcement officers.
 12. "Vulnerable adult" means any person 18 years of age or older with diagnosed diminished physical, mental or emotional capacities.
 13. "We" means the First United Methodist Church of Hershey.

SCREENING

Staff Members

All staff members are expected to submit clearances, have an in-depth personal interview, submit an application, and provide references to be checked. They are to be trained in the Safe Sanctuary policy, once initially and then a refresher every two years. Staff members are expected to update their background checks as required for volunteers.

² However, Pennsylvania law also includes a "clergy-communicant" privilege, 42 Pa. C.S.A. Section 5943, which states, "No clergyman, priest, rabbi or minister of the gospel of any regularly established church or religious organization...who while in the course of his duties has acquired information from any person secretly and in confidence shall be compelled, or allowed with consent of such person to disclose that information in any legal proceeding, trial or investigation before any government unit." Those Conference or Church staff persons or volunteers to whom this policy applies who believe they have received information regarding child abuse which might be covered by this section of PA law should seek legal counsel.

The following clearances will be required for all employees:

1. PA State Police Criminal History Report
2. PA Department of Human Services Certification (PA Child Abuse Clearance)
3. FBI Criminal History Report (fingerprints required)

Volunteers

All volunteers for youth and children must first show 6 months of active participation in the church. They are not required to be a member after 6 months. Prospective volunteers will submit a background check, an application, and reference to be checked. If there is a record that comes back, the ministry director will follow up with an interview to verify if the record will put youth and/or children at risk. Volunteers will then go through the initial Safe Sanctuary Training and then a refresher training every 2 years.

The following clearances will be required by all volunteers:

1. PA State Police Criminal History Report
2. PA Department of Human Services Certification (PA Child Abuse Clearance)
3. FBI Criminal History Report (fingerprints required), but Volunteers may be excused from this Report if they have been a Pennsylvania resident continuously for previous 10 years, have not committed certain designated crimes, and sign an Affidavit under oath to this effect.

Volunteers who will be driving youth and/or children will need to submit proof of automobile insurance.

Individuals who have been convicted of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, or ritual) or whose name appears on Megan's List, may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

The Safe Sanctuary Coordinator will receive the copies of the background checks, application and reference checks.

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Age Separation

Volunteers must have at least a five year separation between them and the oldest youth or child they are working with. Young adults must be 22 years old before returning to help with the youth.

Supervision of Youth and Children

Youth and children should not be on church grounds without immediate supervision from a parent/guardian or another responsible adult.

Adults who are volunteering to supervise the youth and children must go through the application process and commit to the following rules:

- No adult or anyone over the age of 18 should be alone with any child or youth. In the case of confidential meetings, these should be held within the view of another adult who is aware of the meeting.
- There should be two unrelated adults for every event held with youth and children.
- Windows in doorways should never be covered during any gathering that includes children and youth.
- Doors should always be unlocked during a gathering that includes children and youth.
- A roaming adult is allowed to be the second adult during small group meetings, such as Sunday School.
- There will be male and female chaperones when there is a mixed gender group of children and youth leaving the church grounds.
- For overnight stays in the church, genders will be in separate rooms and supervised by chaperones of the same gender.
- The following ratios should be followed for supervision of youth and children:
 - Nursery: 1 adult for every 5 children
 - Elementary: 1 adult for every 10 children
 - Middle and High School: 1 adult for every 10 children
- When leaving the church grounds, a hard copy of the event plan will be filed in the church office including: Adult in charge, other adults, method of transportation, destination, itineraries, contact information for all adults on the trip, and list of participants.
- All groups using the church for events with youth and children need to follow these rules, including Scouts and other outside groups.

Parent Responsibilities:

It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that the adult in charge is physically present for the event being held before leaving the church grounds. Parents should make sure that staff and volunteers have any information that might be necessary to keep their child safe. This includes notifying the appropriate person of any medical, psychological, behavioral, child custody, or similar issues. Parents should also communicate to their youth and children that the staff and volunteers are acting with the authority of that parent when they are participating in any church event.

Restroom Procedures:

When children need to use the restroom, they should be encouraged to take care of their own needs. Elementary age children should be escorted to the restroom and the adult should wait outside the restroom. If assistance is needed, the door should be propped open and assistance should be limited to unfastening and fastening clothing. For nursery age children, the restroom

door should be left open while the adult is assisting the child. A non-certified adult should never help with restroom needs.

CYBER SAFETY

The internet and portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. However, following basic *Safe Sanctuaries* procedures can help to minimize those risks. There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. Consider anything and everything on the internet as public information. Here are some recommendations:

Receive parental/guardian permission.

In addition to general permission to participate in a ministry, it is advisable to receive advance parental permission for children and youth and personal permission for vulnerable adults in writing for:

1. Posting photos of participants on any websites or sending e-mail or cell phone messages or making videos for any use.
2. E-mailing, Instant Messaging (IM'ing), calling, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by computer, PDA, or cell phone (keep in mind "free" minutes and data plans vary tremendously even with the same carrier).
3. The sharing of any full name or contact information.

Never post easily identifiable information online.

1. If you communicate by e-mail, do not use "broadcast" e-mails. Use the "Bcc" option (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information like event dates, times, locations, or participants.
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names. If someone must know the last name or the mailing address of the individual, have her or him call the church office or a designated contact person.

Limit individual communications with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. (Even though you may be a sounding board for a person having a bad day, the reverse is not true.)
2. Save all communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (i.e. instant messages (IMs), chat room conversations, e-mails, etc.) An electronic "paper trail" can be important.

3. If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an e-mail or an e-mail in general, send a blind carbon copy to a parent/guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.
4. If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.

Safety Measures for sharing photos electronically:

1. Consider obtaining copyrights for any photo posted directly on a ministry website or shared electronically. Keep in mind that copyright laws are not necessarily universal and can get rather complicated.
2. When posting photos, refrain from using names and never use last names or identifiable information.
3. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission. Check to make sure nametags are not distinguishable.
4. Use low-resolution photos whenever possible and slightly blur/pixilate photos.
5. Block “save photo as” options on websites (ask a web savvy person for assistance)
6. Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.
7. Obtain additional permission to use photos elsewhere (i.e. a journal or website, local paper, etc.)
8. Consider or prefer using stock or purchased photos.

Safety Measure for using social networking sites:

Social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, 7Villages, Xanga, Friendster, Plaxo, and others are popular with many people:

1. Set privacy settings to limit who can see your profile otherwise people may still be able to view your full profile.
2. Restrict who can be your friend. It is prudent to use judgment in accepting requests from youth.
3. Never initiate a friend request with a youth
4. Use higher level security features even if you have a restricted profile (such as requiring your approval of all comments posted to your site.)
5. Do not post anything to your social networking site that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church newsletter or bulletin. (The same goes for blogs.)
6. Remove or do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.
7. Encourage youth to follow these same guidelines.

REPORTING:

Once an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. This reporting obligation includes not

only incidents occurring at Church or involving staff persons or volunteers, but includes an obligation to report abusive situations that are reported to Church personnel or staff persons that may have occurred elsewhere. For example, if a child tells a volunteer, chaperone or staff person about abuse at home or in school, that volunteer, chaperone or staff person has an obligation to following these reporting procedures.

1. The staff person or volunteer who observes alleged abuse or signs of alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to Pennsylvania Childline & Abuse Registry (1-800-932-0313). They will also be responsible for completing PA CY47 form and sending it to the local Children and Youth Services agency. This line of reporting shall be followed in all such incidents.
2. If a volunteer observes the alleged abuse or signs of alleged abuse they will also report this to the staff person in charge of the children's activity. The staff person will report to the Pastor.
3. If the allegation is against a Church staff person who would normally be responsible for reporting an incident under, and responding in accordance to, this Policy, the responsibility responding in accordance with this Policy shall be immediately assumed by another Church staff person who is not the subject of a report.
4. The Pastor shall advise the Church's insurance carrier.
5. The Church's Pastor or Safe Sanctuary Coordinator will report the allegation of abuse to the District Superintendent.

Other than as required by the Child Protective Services Law or as directed by law enforcement officials, nothing in this reporting procedure shall prevent the Church from conducting its own investigation of an allegation for employment or volunteer participation purposes.

RESPONSE PLAN:

A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or suspected abuse in a children's or youth activity, the entire staff of the activity shall be at the service of all official investigative agencies.

Persons who are the objects of the report will be required to refrain from all activities involving children until the Church's investigation and the investigation by any outside agency are complete. In such cases, the suspension from participation in activities involving children shall remain in effect until such outside investigation is complete. In any situation where a person is removed from any children's activities, care should be taken to handle the situation in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

The conference spokesperson, is the only person(s) authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the conference spokesperson. A spirit of cooperation in helping the media find the “official spokesperson” is helpful.

In any case, pastoral support will be available to all persons involved with the incident as indicated.

We also recognize that victims of abuse need to be cared for. We will do all that we can to meet the needs of any victims of abuse.

CONSEQUENCES FOR POLICY VIOLATORS:

If an action is observed that violates the policy but does not constitute abuse the following consequences may occur:

1. The volunteer may be taken aside and reminded of the policy.
2. The volunteer may have a meeting with the Lead Pastor regarding their behavior.
3. The volunteer may be suspended from participating in any children or youth ministry events until they have attended a Safe Sanctuary Policy training.
4. The volunteer may be suspended from participating in any children or youth ministry events indefinitely.

LIST OF PROSPECTIVE ABUSE COUNSELORS:

Dr. Jane Weierbach
1630 Manheim Pike
Suite 4
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17601
(717) 469-5911

Mr. Jason Boes
Parenting Solutions
160 S. Progress Ave.
Suite 1c
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17109
(717) 639-2499

Stephen Schuch
801 South Forge Road
Palmyra, Pennsylvania 17078
(717) 229-7295

Mrs. Christina Warfe
New Beginnings Therapy, LLC
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17112
(717) 268-4694

Rehab After Work and Life Counseling
Services
1725 Oregon Pike
Suite 205B
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 1760
(484) 372-0537

Ms. Lynn Brooks
Life'sJourneyTherapySolutions
5006 Lenker Street
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania 17050
(717) 516-5032 x5

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Stoverdale United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Covenant of Conduct

Stoverdale United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving 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 adults who have been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our church's ministers before accepting an assignment.
3. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must be active in our church for six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
- 4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth.**
5. 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.
6. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth?
 YES NO
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times? YES NO
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment?
 YES NO
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?
 YES NO
5. As a volunteer in congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor?
 YES NO

- 6. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to discuss with a minister of this congregation your experience, if any, as a survivor of child abuse?
_____ YES _____ NO _____ Not Applicable

- 7. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform a minister of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse?
_____ YES _____ NO

I have read this Participant Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Print Full Name

Date

Signature of Applicant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

**Stoverdale United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries
Incident Report Form**

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Name of child/youth injured: _____ Age: _____

Address of child/youth: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Parent or guardian: _____

Name of person(s) who witnessed the incident:

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Describe the incident: _____

Stoverdale United Methodist Church's Covenant with Outside Groups

Youth and children should not be on church grounds without immediate supervision from a parent/guardian or another responsible adult. This includes:

- Remaining in designated room with an adult until parent signs/picks up the child
- Accompanying children to the restroom, water fountain, etc.
- Staying in assigned room with adult supervision

Adults who are volunteering to supervise the youth and children must go through the application process and commit to the following rules:

- Reservations must be made in advance with the Pastor and/or one of the Church Officers which will in turn contact Lisa Dalto to ensure it is on the church calendar.
- Rooms will be returned to the state in which they were found (including all furniture).
- No adult or anyone over the age of 18 should be alone with any child or youth. In the case of confidential meetings, these should be held within the view of another adult who is aware of the meeting.
- There should be two unrelated adults for every event held with youth and children.
- Windows in doorways should never be covered during any gathering that includes children and youth.
- Doors should always be unlocked during a gathering that includes children and youth.
- There will be male and female chaperones when there is a mixed gender group of children and youth.
- For overnight stays in the church, genders will be in separate rooms and supervised by chaperones of the same gender.
- The following ratios should be followed for supervision of youth and children:
 - Nursery: 1 adult for every 5 children
 - Elementary: 1 adult for every 10 children
 - Middle and High School: 1 adult for every 10 children

If this agreement is broken, the following consequences will occur:

- A reminder of the agreement
- A written warning stating that if the agreement is broken again, restrictions will ensue.
- Restrictions on activities occurring in the church
- Revoking of rights to hold activities at church

I have read and agree to comply to the above policies.

Signature of Outside Group Leader

Date

Signature of Facility Manager

Date

**Stoverdale United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries
Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**

(Please Print all Information)

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:

2. Victim's name:

Victim's age/date of birth:

3. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim:

4. Victim's statement: (give your detailed summary here):

5. Name of person accused of abuse:

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family, other):

6. Reported to Pastor (name): _____

Date/time: _____

Summary:

7. Call to victim's parent/guardian (name):

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary:

8. Call to local children and family service agency(name):

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary:

9. Call to local law enforcement agency (name):

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary:

10. Other Contacts: Name:

Date/time: _____

Summary:

Signature of Reporter **Date**