

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Ada First United Methodist Church

I. Purpose

As a Christian community of faith, the Ada First United Methodist Church (UMC) will demonstrate our unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all minors, as well as vulnerable adults. We believe that scripture instructs us to offer both hospitality and protection to children, regardless of how these children come to our church or activities. We covenant to commit to their protection from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse, and in doing so to represent God's justice and mercy in our world.

II. Definitions

Minor: Children and Youth under the age of 18

Vulnerable Adult: Person 18 years of age or older who is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation because of physical or mental impairment

Employee: Any individual paid by the church

Volunteer: Any individual not paid by the church, but entrusted with leadership responsibilities

Abuse: Harm or a threat of physical or emotional harm, neglect, an act of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or prostitution as defined by the relevant statutes in the State of Ohio or other relevant jurisdictions

III. Scope

This policy shall apply to all activities sponsored by Ada First United Methodist Church regardless of location. "Sponsored events" are herein defined to include any event where the church commits resources to the event, including promotional resources, except where it is clearly established that the event is sponsored by an outside group.

Additionally, outside groups utilizing the church's facilities shall be required to adhere to this policy according to a procedure determined by the Ada First UMC Board of Trustees.

IV. Policy

As part of our commitment to care for and protect minors, as well as the vulnerable adults among us, we commit to the policy defined herein.

Training, Screening, Selection of Staff and Volunteers

- All volunteers and youth wishing to work with children's ministry shall complete an application including: standard contact information and experience/qualifications for the position
- All volunteers and paid staff working with minors and vulnerable adults may be required to complete a background check prior to serving. All information will be kept confidential and secured in a locked file.
 - Background checks shall include, at minimum:
 - Social Security trace
 - State of Ohio or National criminal check
 - National sex offender registry check, if not included as part of another check.
 - Background checks shall be valid for no more than 5 years from the date the check is completed.
- Safe Sanctuary training will be required, offered by the church and led by a certified trainer annually for all staff working with minors and vulnerable adults. Additionally, volunteers and staff may be asked to complete additional training on unique needs of the group(s) with which they are working.
- Volunteers and paid staff in charge of leading groups of minors and vulnerable adults shall be at least 3 years older than the oldest member of the group(s) with which they are working. Student helpers must be at least 12 years of age, but shall not count towards the two-adult required ratio. Exceptions made on a case-by-case basis.

Supervision of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

- List of minors or vulnerable adults shall be created/updated at the start of each event and quickly available to be used in case of any emergency.
- No fewer than two non-related and non-cohabitating adults shall be present at all times during any church sponsored program or event. This may include an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms.
- Rooms used should have doors and/or windows. If not available doors are to remain open at all times.

- **Volunteers must have been regular attenders in worship for at least six (6) months prior to serving unless this requirement is waived by the Pastor and/or Family Ministry Director.**
- **Names and contact information of persons trained in CPR and First Aid will be posted in each classroom and the sanctuary. This list will be updated quarterly by the Pastor and/or Family Ministry Director.**
- **The Administrative Council and Pastor shall be responsible for ensuring the Safe Sanctuary policies are observed by all persons working with minors and vulnerable adults**

Transportation and Off-Site Events

- **Volunteers and staff driving minors and vulnerable adults to events shall be a minimum of 18 years of age, qualified leaders, and additionally shall provide proof of current driver's license and insurance coverage. An additional adult is required to accompany the driver.**
- **The two chaperones shall be the same gender as the minors or vulnerable adults being supervised during lodging.**
- **Where possible, hotels opening to an interior hallway should be utilized for overnight events.**
- **For any off-site event, the trip's leader must obtain medical information and liability release forms for all participants, and provide the church and parents/guardians with a schedule which includes contact information. Permission for trips with road travel or overnight stays must be notarized.**

V. Response and Reporting

Mandatory Reporting

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. Reporting is required by any clergy, staff or volunteer who personally witnesses an incident or when an allegation is made by a minor or vulnerable adult. The event being reported need not to have occurred at the church. Reporting must be immediate and dealt with as soon as possible.

Reporting of Observed or Suspected Abuse

In the event that abuse is observed or suspected, the leader shall report all allegations to the Pastor immediately, who will then contact appropriate persons: medical assistance, if needed; Department of Human Resources; local law enforcement; and the District Superintendent.

In the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the Pastor, the report shall be made to the Family Ministry Director, if this person is not available the report shall be made to the chairperson of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Committee.

A written record will be kept in a secure file of the incident and all steps taken. If the volunteer is a mandatory reporter, the volunteer shall, at a minimum “co-report” with the pastor.

Faithful response includes taking the allegations very seriously and respecting the victim’s privacy, as well as providing sympathy and concern. The accused should be immediately removed from contact with minors and vulnerable adults until the allegations are investigated and resolved.

Media Response

In the event that an incident receives media attention, the only persons authorized to speak to the media are the Pastor and the District Superintendent. If approached by the media, all others should assist the media find the authorized spokesperson(s).

VI. Review of Policy

God calls us to make Ada First United Methodist Church a safe place, protecting minors, as well as vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse as well as creating communities of faith where all involved are surrounded by steadfast love and are spiritually strengthened.

A Safe Sanctuaries Team shall be responsible for reviewing this policy on an annual basis for adherence to requirements established by the West Ohio Conference and recommending changes.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, _____

Please sign, date and turn this page in at the end of Safe Sanctuary Training.

- I have completed the Safe Sanctuary Training required by the Ada First United Methodist Church.
- I have read and understand the Safe Sanctuary Policy of the Ada First United Methodist Church and agree to abide by all policies contained within.

Print Name: _____

Sign Name: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your time and willingness to work with our youth at Ada First!

