

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH
AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Adopted by TUMC church council on 1/11/11

The purpose of this policy is, first and foremost, to protect children that attend events at Trinity United Methodist Church from suffering neglect or abuse. Secondly, it is to protect both paid and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of neglect or abuse and to protect the church as a whole.

The scope of this policy and its provisions shall apply to all paid staff, volunteers, clergy or lay, who have direct or indirect contact with children or youth in local church, conference or district sponsored events.

This policy and procedures herein are intended to be the MINIMUM necessary precautions for protecting children and youth. Trinity United Methodist Church will endeavor to monitor updates and recommendations by the United Methodist Church Conference and may modify this policy and the procedures herein as deemed necessary.

DEFINITIONS

1. Physical Abuse is any deliberate act that inflicts bodily harm to a participant.
2. Sexual Abuse is the infliction of any sexual act or conduct or sexually explicit language, gestures or images upon a participant.
3. Neglect is failure to provide nutrition, medical, surgical or any other care necessary for the wellbeing of a participant.
4. Staff includes any clergy person, any paid employees of TUMC, the conference or district and any paid employee of any group, committee, team or agency of the conference or district who has the care/supervision of a participant at an event.
5. Volunteer is any non-clergy, lay worker who has the care/supervision of a participant at an event. This may include paid staff members of another local church.
6. Participants are children and youth who are registered, enrolled, attending or other-wise participating in an activity sponsored by TUMC, the conference or district. Participants are also persons over 19 years of age who are considered to be Vulnerable Adults.
7. Vulnerable Adults are persons over 19 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities.

Standards for Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers shall be active participants in TUMC and its ministry for a minimum of six months prior to supervising participants.

Persons who leave TUMC for more than six months shall again submit to the screening procedure prior to returning to a staff or volunteer position with participants.

Careful screening is one way to prevent abuse and neglect of children, youth and vulnerable adults. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of persons who can provide supervision in a safe environment. This may include verification, background screening (including criminal), references and training.

All staff and volunteers will complete an Application form (attachment 1), a National Background Release form (attachment 2) and a General Reference form (attachment 3). For those staff and volunteers who work with participants in church sponsored events only, such as Sunday School, Sunday Club, and annual events like the Easter Egg Hunt or Trunk or Treat, these forms will be reviewed by clergy and/or a screening committee. In this instance, the clergy and/or screening committee will follow the TUMC Background Screening Procedure - Review of Significant Issues (attachment 4). Staff and volunteers who take participants to conference sponsored events, such as the Explosion lock in or WOW, will be required to complete the Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuary certification, which is valid for a term of four (4) years. This training should be done online at the staff or volunteers convenience by visiting the conference website at www.moumethodist.org. From there, simply click on Safe Sanctuaries on the left side of the screen then the blue highlighted online training and forms completion system under online training. The staff or volunteer will be required to pay for the criminal background screening, however, this will be reimbursed by providing the receipt to clergy.

TUMC's clergy and/or screening committee reserve the right to revoke an individual's certification at any time, same as does the conferences Safe Sanctuary certification authority.

All forms, background checks and a copy of the clergy and/or screening committee's certification or the Safe Sanctuary certification will be kept as a part of a staff or volunteer's confidential file.

Reporting of Incidents

Any staff or volunteer of Trinity United Methodist Church who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or who observes circumstances which would result in abuse or neglect must immediately report such facts to the Pastor. If the Pastor is unavailable, the report must be made to the chair, or acting chair, of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee. The person receiving such report *must document the report*.

A call to the Hotline is required to be made by staff or volunteers if there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse of a participant has occurred. When the necessity of reporting occurs, the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults is paramount. Reporting should occur in the following order:

- 1) The State of Missouri through the Division of Family Services *through the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-392-3738.*
- 2) The Missouri Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church through the District Superintendent of the Southeast District at 572-334-8723 and through the office of the Resident Bishop at 573-441-1770.
- 3) The church's insurance agent.
- 4) The church's attorney.

Notification of abuse or neglect must be made as immediately as possible. Notification of sexual abuse must be made to the State of Missouri within 24 hours of receiving the report of such sexual abuse.

Statement to the Media

If an alleged incident occurs, the pastor or his/her designated individual will serve as spokesperson for all media requests. If the alleged incident involves the Pastor, then the chairperson of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee or his/her designated individual will serve as the spokesperson. The following is a suggested media response:

We here at Trinity United Methodist Church are saddened by the allegations that have been brought. We have attempted to create an environment here that is welcoming and safe, whereby all persons might learn of the Good News in Jesus Christ.

We are cooperating fully with local officials who are investigating this incident. Our District Superintendent's office has also been notified and an investigation will be conducted through that office as well. If you desire further information, we will help you get in touch with our District Superintendent.

This is all we can comment on at this time.

Operational Procedures

1. The rules and procedures of the Missouri Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church always prevail over the church's stated policies if they should come into conflict.
2. There are to **never** be one-on-one meetings between staff/volunteers and children/youth/vulnerable adults.
3. Individual programs will develop and implement sign-in, sign-out procedures to provide additional security measures for those children 3rd grade and younger.

4. At least two adults must be present at all events utilizing TUMC facilities that involve children, youth and vulnerable adults. In addition, at any church event off-site involving children, youth or vulnerable adults at least two adults must be present. Adults are defined as those individuals 18 years of age and older who are also at least four years older than the oldest youth being supervised. The only exception to the two adult rule is when the education wing is full of activity (ex. Sunday School).
5. All doors to classrooms and meeting rooms in the church have windows. These windows are not to be covered up at any time.
6. When on fields trips, young children will not be identified with name tags. Tags can be worn which identify the group only.
7. When an event requires that children/youth travel with an adult other than their parent or guardian, written permission must be obtained in advance for each child/youth. An *Event Permission Form* must be signed, dated and collected for the specific event. All children/youth who regularly participate in our church's ministries must have an *Emergency Treatment Permission Form* on file in the church office or in the possession of the adults in charge.
8. When a traveling group contains members of both genders, supervision must also be provided by both genders.
9. Drivers must be at least 21 years of age and copies of their driver's license and proof of insurance must be on file in the church office. In addition, all passengers (including the driver) are expected to wear their seatbelt. Two adults are always required when transporting children/youth.
10. There will be separate sleeping areas for males and females. No adult may share a hotel/motel room or tent with a youth or child unless the adult is the parent of the youth with whom he or she shares the room/tent.
11. The use of alcohol or illegal drugs or abuse of prescription drugs on any TUMC sponsored event involving children/youth is prohibited. The use of tobacco products by adults while supervising children and youth is strongly discouraged.

EDUCATION ON POLICY

For this policy and accompanying procedures to be successfully implemented, annual training will be offered to all staff and volunteers. This training may include education on the policy itself as well as topics related to the safety and well-being of children. Each person who works with children and youth will receive a copy of the "Policy for the Prevention of Abuse of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults" upon its annual review.

APPLICATION FORM

Last Name: _____ First name: _____ MI: _____
Maiden Name (if married in past 36 months) _____ M _____ F

Birth date: ____/____/____ SS# ____/____/____ Email: _____

Permanent address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Length of TUMC attendance: _____ over 19 years old?

STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE-For questions 1-9 provide explanation for "yes" responses on an additional sheet.

1. Have you ever been convicted of any crime against children or any other person? _____
2. Have you ever been found guilty in any dependency action to have sexually assaulted or exploited any minor or to have abused any minor? _____
3. Have you ever been found by a court in a domestic relations proceeding to have sexually abused or exploited any minor, or to have abused any minor? _____
4. Have you been convicted of the attempt to or manufacture, possession, possession with intent to distribute, use or sale of drugs within the last 7 years? _____
5. Have you been released from incarceration for a conviction for any of the above within the last 7 years? _____
6. Within the past 30 days, have you abused alcohol, legal or illegal drugs? _____
7. Have you been convicted of any other felonies? _____
8. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last 7 years? _____
9. Have you ever been found by a court in a protection proceeding or convicted of crimes relating to abuse or financial exploitation were the victim has been a vulnerable adult? _____
10. Have you ever been licensed by a board that licenses businesses/professions? _____
If yes, what board or agency? _____
If yes, have you ever been found by a board that licenses businesses/professions, or any other disciplinary board, to have sexually or physically abused or financially exploited any minor or vulnerable adult? _____

List the county where you have lived the longest as an Adult:

County _____ State _____

Have you lived in a state other than Missouri in the past 7 years? _____

If yes, list the states _____

I affirm that all information provided on this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that by making this application I am waiving any right I may have to inspect or copy and information with the church or conference may use to make its determination. I further understand that the church or conference will only tell me whether my application has been approved or disapproved, and that it has no obligation to disclose to me any of its reasons for the decision it makes, nor do I have nay right to learn the basis for the decision which the church or conference makes.

Applicant Signature

Date

GENERAL REFERENCE FORM

This form must be completed by a person who is not a relative of the applicant. The person providing the reference must have known the applicant for at least two years.

Applicant Name: _____ Date: _____

1. This person uses appropriate verbal and visual language with children, youth and vulnerable adults. (does not use sexually explicit words, does not tell inappropriate jokes, does not speak in ways that might suggest more intimate relationships, does not show sexually graphic or suggestive photo or electronic images)

ALWAYS USUALLY SELDOM NEVER

2. This person uses appropriate forms of physical touch. (does not initiate prolonged or suggestive hugs, makes physical contact with others that is consistent with all persons rather than more intimate or prolonged contact with specific individuals, refrains from touching parts of the body that could cause the other person to feel uncomfortable)

ALWAYS USUALLY SELDOM NEVER

3. This person refrains from all forms of enticement for sexual favors including the promise of money or gifts. (does not promise rewards in return for closer personal relationships, does not foster relationships that maintain secrets or overly private encounters)

ALWAYS USUALLY SELDOM NEVER

4. This person refrains from activities that cause children, youth or vulnerable adults to feel uncomfortable. (does not invade the other person's space of comfort, does not participate in prolonged gazing or inappropriate grabbing or tickling, does not encourage relationships between others that makes them feel awkward or uncomfortable)

ALWAYS USUALLY SELDOM NEVER

5. This person is generally perceived by others to be trustworthy and responsible in interpersonal relationships.

ALWAYS USUALLY SELDOM NEVER

6. Others tend to feel comfortable and safe when with this person.

ALWAYS USUALLY SELDOM NEVER

7. If you were in our position, would you affirm this person as a volunteer with children, youth or vulnerable adults?

I would with no reservations I would with some reservations

I would not recommend this applicant

If you chose a response other than "Always" for any of the above statements, please explain using the back of this page.

Reference Name: _____ Signature: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____

BACKGROUND SCREENING PROCEDURES-REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

1. Applicant is contacted and invited to respond.
2. If the applicants response is deemed to be satisfactory, the procedure is complete, or
3. If response in not satisfactory, and issues indicate immediate refusal, procedure is complete, or
4. If response suggests a need for further documentation said will be sought and additional background information may be requested by Pastor and/or screening committee
5. After thorough review of all information gathered, decision to Approve or Deny applicant will be made by Pastor and/or screening committee.

A. ITEMS THAT IMMEDIATELY DISQUALIFY A PERSON FROM CERTIFICATION, pending response from applicant:

- presence on sex offender registry
- any felony conviction for which person continues to be on supervised probation/parole
- any conviction for child abuse or neglect

B. ITEMS THAT REQUIRE FURTHER DOCUMENTATION PIOR TO CERTIFICATION:

- any issues on background screenings dated within last 7 years
- any references that are less than excellent (always) on every item
- any self-disclosures that indicate previous behavioral mistakes

C. ITEMS THAT TUMC MAY OR MAY NOT CHOOSE TO REQUESTS ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION:

- background screening issues that are more than 7 years old and for which the person has complete probation/parole
- background screening issues that do not indicate convictions or may be misdemeanors

D. APPLICANTS THAT LEAD TO AUTOMATIC APPROVAL, ALL of the following:

- All references indicate excellence in every area
- No issues on background screenings
- Self-disclosure that indicates no previous behavioral problems
- Satisfactory completion of policy training