

St. Francis United Methodist Church (SFUMC) Safe Sanctuary Policy

SAFE SANCTUARY APPROVAL AND TRAINING FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Any event at SFUMC involving children, youth or others unable to protect themselves requires the presence of staff or volunteers who have been approved and trained according to the policy.

Requirements: Any adult, 18 years or older, who has been regularly attending SFUMC for at least 6 months can apply to become an approved volunteer.

Approval: An *Approved SFUMC Safe Sanctuary Staff or Volunteer* has agreed to and met the standards for a basic background check.

Training: In order to serve as an *Approved SFUMC Safe Sanctuary Staff or Volunteer*, an individual must attend a SFUMC Safe Sanctuary Training event. These will be regularly led by the Coordinator. Approved volunteers will be expected to attend annual training events.

Background checks must be submitted every 5 years and Training attendance must be completed every 3 years.

APPLICATION AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

The purpose of a background check is safety. Therefore, the checks will be limited to this end and conducted by a third-party provider recommended by the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. The only information that the Coordinator will receive from the provider is an indication that an individual has or has not met the two specific standards that are identified below. No details about the person will be available to the Coordinator or to any other representative from the Church other than the initial signed agreement to do the background check. If the standards are met, the applicant is approved.

Application: Any adult, 18 years or older, who desires to work with our youth, children or others unable to protect themselves should secure a Safe Sanctuary packet from the Coordinator or the church office and submit an application.

Criminal Standard: All *Approved SFUMC Safe Sanctuary Staff and Volunteers* will be clear of any criminal Felonies and/or Misdemeanors involving children and/or violence according to a background check involving the past 10 years. Background checks will be renewed every three years.

Driving Standard: All *Approved SFUMC Safe Sanctuary Staff and Volunteers* who will be driving for church activities will be clear of any driving offenses involving alcohol or reckless driving according to annual checks through the DMV.

Approved Status and Training: Once the Coordinator has determined that the above standards have been met, the applicant will be directed to the next available training event and recognized as an *Approved SFUMC Safe Sanctuary Staff or Volunteer*. The individual will be added to a current list of approved volunteers that will be available through the Coordinator as well as the church's administrative assistant.

Otherwise: Should the occasion arise in which an individual does not meet the standard, the application, along with any accompanying documents (such as the notice from the provider) shall be returned to the applicant.

Documentation: The background checks will be conducted by a third-party provider. Therefore the only documents available to the church will be the initial application and the specific report from the provider affirming that the standards have been met. These documents will remain in the church office verifying that these people have been recognized to serve as *Approved SFUMC Safe Sanctuary Staff or Volunteers*.

Administration: The Coordinator will administer the application and approval process with help from the administrative assistant. The church will cover the cost.

THE POLICY

Whenever possible, there should be two unrelated, safe sanctuary approved adults at all SFUMC church activities involving youth, children or others unable to protect themselves.

1. TWO ADULTS: Two adults, at least one of which is safe sanctuary approved, should be in any room with youth and/or children.

Small rooms connected by a full length window (that gives visibility to all areas of each room) will be considered one room if there is an adult in each room.

A roving superintendent or monitor may serve as the second adult as long as the following conditions are met: the door to the room is open; there are other adults frequenting the area (such as in the case of Sunday school); the superintendent or monitor has no other obligations.

No child or youth can be alone with one adult at any time

OFF SITE EVENTS, RETREATS. AND MISSION TRIPS: If children and youth, of both female and male gender, are present, then there must be an adult of the same gender for each represented.

TRANSPORTATION: Anyone driving youth or children in a church sponsored activity event must be an approved as a safe sanctuary driver.

In addition to the safe sanctuary standard, there should be two unrelated adults in any car with children under the age of 13 whenever possible.

No child or youth should be alone with one adult at any time.

No youth may drive or transport others to church sponsored activities.

AGE LIMITS: Staff and volunteers shall be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/ youth being supervised. No one under the age of 18 shall be given singular supervisory

capacity. However, youth may serve as volunteers provided a safe sanctuary approved adult is present and the youth is at least 5 years older than the children they are helping to supervise

VISIBILITY IN ROOMS: Offices, classrooms, or any other room that is used for child or youth activities will have a window in the door, or a half door, that gives visibility to all areas of that room. The window must be left uncovered. If there is no window, the door must be left open at all times. Walk in closets, other than those in the sanctuary, will also have a window in the door. The closets in the sanctuary will be kept locked except during use, when the door will be left open.

COUNSELING: Staff and Pastoral counseling is expected to be confidential in nature, but it is for the protection of both parties that such sessions take place where other people are nearby.

FIRST AID AND CPR: At least one adult present at every church activity should be certified in basic first aid and CPR. The church will pay for one adult to be trained as a first aid/CPR instructor. The church should offer training annually.

COMMUNCIATION AND ADVANCE NOTICE TO PARENTS: Parents should always be kept abreast of the programs their children, youth are involved in, and be given advance notice and information regarding any activity which deviates from the traditional classroom instruction offered at the church during Sunday school, UMYF, Vacation Bible School, or other regular activities at the church. Permission forms with medical information should accompany children/youth/others unable to protect themselves for such activity.

AGE AND ACTIVITY APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT: Examine the safety and appropriateness of the equipment being used, including the nursery, classrooms, youth room and play ground at least quarterly.

INCORPORATION: St. Francis United Methodist Church will incorporate consistent with the recommendation of and with the approval of its conference.

INSURANCE: St. Francis will maintain adequate insurance coverage, including the premises, liability, and sexual misconduct. Coverage is for activities on and off the premises. Personal vehicles are required to maintain adequate insurance coverage. This will be verified by the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator.

DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON: In case of an incident or allegation of abuse, the only spokesperson for St. Francis shall be the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator. No one else shall make statements or speak for St. Francis, including the Pastor or staff. The spokesperson will only release a prepared statement to the press describing the policy. The District Superintendent and Director of Communications will be consulted with, kept informed and asked for assistance as needed.

REPORTING OF INCIDENTS: In the case of an incident or allegation, the administrator or leader of the event shall be contacted immediately and all relevant parties shall follow the procedures set forth in the *Addendum to Safe Sanctuary Policy: Reporting of Incidents*.

I have read the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures for St. Francis United Methodist Church and I agree to abide by these procedures.

Signed

Date

Addendum to Safe Sanctuary Policy: Reporting of Incidents

When any leader or volunteer of a program, event or activity suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the North Carolina Penal Code has taken place, he or she shall contact the administrator or event leader immediately, and report the suspicion. The child is to be immediately removed to a safe place. The administrator, if convinced that there has been a violation shall: address any medical or other needs the child or youth may have; report to the parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s); report the abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency and/or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (800-422-4453), Department of Social Services (home emergency number 704-336-2273).

The person suspected of abuse (respondent) shall, for the safety and well being of the children or youth, be removed with dignity from further contact with the children and youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The persons reporting the incident must cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

The matter shall remain confidential. If the event leader is the respondent, then the report should be made to that Church's attorney, Church's insurance company and the District Superintendent.

Following the report of an incident, the event leader, or supervisor in charge shall document the report, and then speak with the alleged victim, being careful to use open-ended questions.

All such conversations shall be documented. Careful and confidential documentation is essential. The documentation should include the following:

1. The name of the leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time and place and any action taken by this person.

2. The alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth.
3. Any statement made by the alleged victim.
4. Name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent.
5. Any action taken, i.e. suspension of the respondent.
6. Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of worker spoken to, content of that conversation and case number assigned.
7. Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation.
8. Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.

A “no comment” policy will be in effect. A designated spokesperson will be identified under the advisement of the pastor and/or church attorney to deal with the media. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.

Notify the Conference/District authorities.

The District Superintendent will report the incident to the Bishop’s office.

It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current Book of Discipline, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.