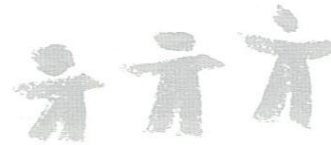


# **Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Procedure**



## **Introduction**

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me." Matthew 18:5. Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to those who cannot protect themselves. In response to this call and action of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, we hereby commit ourselves as a community of faith to this policy of safety for children and youth.

## **Purpose**

This policy is designed to provide safety and openness: to provide protection for our children while maintaining an atmosphere that welcomes all seekers. By providing many avenues of service with varying levels of supervisory responsibilities and screening requirements, we are striving to meet the spiritual needs of all congregational members. By developing and implementing safety procedures and precautions, we are trying to ensure that the spiritual growth and development of our children is not disrupted by the preventable malevolence of child abuse.

## **Statement of Policy**

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us, as well as all those who work with them. It is our policy to:

- follow reasonable safety measures in the election and recruitment of workers;
- implement prudent procedures in all programs and events, including adequate supervision and support for workers as they are in ministry on our behalf;
- Conform church facilities to meet reasonable safety standards to reduce risk of harm or injury;

- Provide for workers adequate training regarding the implementation of our policies, procedures, and preferred methodologies;
- Have in place basic procedures for recruitment, screening and selection of leaders for children/youth ministries;
- Educate parents and others in our congregation as to our policies and procedures;
- Have in place a clearly defined procedure for reporting instances of injury, harm or abuse that conforms to requirements of state law, and be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs;
- Respond with compassion and integrity to needs as they present themselves following incident of harm, injury or abuse;
- Regularly review our policies and procedures to assure that they conform to current legal, health, and safety standards.

### **Requirement of Staff and Volunteers**

- All paid staff and volunteers will be interviewed and written permission will be received for a background check prior to that person assuming the position.
- Volunteers working with children (birth to 18 years) must attend Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church. for 6 months before they are eligible to begin a direct contact care provider position. Individuals may begin the application, background check process and any required training prior to the 6-month grace period.
- Volunteers will be required to become familiar with safe sanctuary training and recommended to attend CPR and First Aid Training.
- Whenever reasonable, the "Two Adult Rule" will require that no fewer than two adults will always be present. This may be the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms. At least one of these adults should have some training in sanctuary policies and procedures. Emergency situations may arise when the "Two Adult Rule" is not feasible. However, at no time will an adult be one on one with a child in an isolated or closed situation. In emergency situations, childcare will be relocated to a room near a meeting area and the doors will be left open.

- No person in charge of children's activities shall supervise a group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the children with whom he/she is working.
- No one shall serve the congregation who, in the belief of the leader, sponsoring agency or event director may represent a potential threat of committing abuse or violating this policy.
- No one shall serve if he/she is known to have been previously convicted of, pleaded guilty, or no contest, to any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act or guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, and assaults involving adults, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the physical abuse of an adult with special needs.
- No one shall work or serve as a care provider to children, who has had a verdict or judgment rendered against him/her in any civil action arising out of any personal act or conduct related to sexual abuse of an adult or child. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict occurred and judgment was rendered.
- First Aid Kit's will be available (in the church and traveling vehicles, etc.) and a plan implemented to keep them stocked.
- Outside groups will not be screened by Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church. and will be asked to sign a user agreement.
- Outside groups are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Safe Sanctuary policy while using our facility.

**Responsibility for Screening Process:**

- The Pastor and a representative from the S/PPRC will be responsible for screening all paid staff employees and volunteers not otherwise specified.
- The Superintendent of Sunday School will be responsible for screening all Sunday school and Children's Program volunteers.

- The Worship Committee Chairperson is responsible for screening worship/alter guild volunteers.
- The Coordinator of Youth Ministries will be responsible for all volunteers within the youth programming area.
- The Director of Music Ministries will be responsible for all volunteers in the music ministry area.

### **Screening Process:**

- The persons noted above will be responsible for receiving, reviewing, confirming and processing employment or volunteer applications.
- References will be requested on all applicable groups noted above and it will be left to the discretion of the screeners (noted above) to follow up on specific references listed.
- The interview questions may vary depending on the interviewee and the recipient's responsibilities within the church. The results of the interview, especially when sensitive areas have been discussed, should be kept confidential and only discussed with those persons needing this information in order to make a decision as to whether the applicant should be accepted as a volunteer.
- A background check for arrest and convictions will be made for all applicable people, performed by the S/PPRC. The application form and background check process will be the responsibility of the S/PPRC with the consent of the Safe Sanctuary Task Force.
- The maintenance of application, background and other forms shall be maintained and secured by the S/PPRC. The documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet in the office of the Pastor.

### **Safe Sanctuary Task Force:**

- Members should include the Pastor and the chairpersons of the following committees: Church Council, Staff Parish Relations, Finance, Sunday school and Worship. Membership can also include other person(s) with training in Safe Sanctuary Practices or deemed necessary by task force.

- Members will be responsible for meeting regularly to review the policy and procedures to compliment the Child Abuse Prevention Policy of the Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church.

### **Reporting:**

- Upon receiving information of child abuse, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. The person who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the child's activity area. The incident also must be reported immediately to the Pastor and S/PPRC Chairperson.
- The Pastor, S/PPRC Chairperson or other person designed by the Pastor shall call the State of Maryland Child Abuse Hotline and Registry 1-800-342-3720.
- If the abuse happened on church property, by church volunteers or staff, the person(s) shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident report has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner and they shall not be banned from other church ministries.

### **Responding:**

- A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously, nothing will be covered up.
- Notify parents and/or other legally responsible adult.
- Assess needs for emergency care for the victim.
- Take precautions to secure the area if applicable.
- Maintain the integrity of the area and protect all evidence for the professional investigation.
- Assist the Victim and Victim's Family.
- Notify legal authorities as required.
- Immediately contact church's insurance carrier.
- Inform the Board of Trustees, any other appropriate church body, and church legal counsel.
- Cooperate fully with civil authorities under the guidance of church attorney.

- The Pastor, S/PPRC Chairperson or designated representative will be informed of all details of the incident and will release any information that is to be disseminated to the media. alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to
- All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor.
- Inform Church staff of incident on a " need to know" basis (to ensure privacy of the victim and/or accused) and their support enlisted as needed.
- If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the District Superintendent will be contacted immediately.
- Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.

## **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person is "surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal", Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44.