

## St. James United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy

The congregation of St. James United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth 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:

- a. All staff and volunteers will complete a Covenant Application Form. By signing this form, the applicant will give permission for a Background check through agencies of the State of Missouri.
- b. No adult who has 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.
- c. 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 an assignment.
- d. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must have been members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
- e. 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.
- f. No one shall serve the congregation who, in the belief of the Administrator of children / youth ministries may represent a potential threat of committing abuse or violating this policy.
- g. 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.
- h. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.
- i. The adult to child ratio will be 1:9 for activities outside of the church.
- j. Registration materials for activities in which children/youth activities are outside of the Church shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate.
- k. Outside groups will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging the compliance with St. James United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy.

## Responsibility

The Senior Pastor and/or a representative from the Staff Parish Relations Committee will be responsible for screening all staff.

The Administrator of Children/Youth Ministries will be responsible for all volunteers of their ministries.

Outside groups will not be screened by SJUMC, but are responsible for ensuring compliance with our Safe Sanctuary policy while using our facility.

## Procedures

1. The persons noted above will be responsible for receiving, reviewing, confirming and processing applications.
2. A Background check will be made for all applicable people, performed by the person noted above.
3. The maintenance of such documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet in the church office.

## Definitions:

1. Physical Abuse is abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child.
2. Emotional Abuse is abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and / or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty.
3. Neglect is failure to provide nutrition or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the well-being of the child, or youth.
4. Sexual Abuse is any sexual contact or sexually explicit language, gestures, or images by a staff person, volunteer with or directed to, a participant.
5. Ritual Abuse is abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare.
6. Volunteer is any non-clergy, lay person who has the care/supervision of a child or youth.
7. Child, Children or Youth refer to a person less than 18 years of age.
8. Staff includes any paid employee of St. James United Methodist Church.
9. Administrator means staff directly responsible for supervising and overseeing the specific ministry.

## Reporting of Incidents

Incidents may involve inappropriate behavior and call for corrective action, or may involve abuse and require reporting through the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-392-3738).

When an incident involves abuse, the protection of children and youth is paramount. In such cases, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. When staff/volunteer suspect that abuse is taking, or has taken, place, he/she shall **immediately report the abuse to the Administrator of the program/ministry**. If the alleged abuser is the administrator, the report shall be made to that person's supervisor. If the alleged abuser is clergy, the district superintendent and/or Bishop shall be notified immediately.
2. The staff/volunteer shall immediately document the conversation shared with the child/youth.
3. The person suspected of abuse should, for the safety and well being of the child/youth involved, be removed from further contact with the children/youth. The matter should not be discussed with anyone else.
4. Upon receiving the report of an incident, the administrator shall document the report, then speak with the alleged victim, being careful to use open-ended questions. The administrator shall document this conversation immediately.
5. The administrator shall inform the Senior Pastor that an incident has been reported and the process of reporting has begun.
6. If a call to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline is deemed necessary, the staff/volunteer in whom the child/youth initially confided is strongly urged to make that call (1-800-392-3738). The administrator shall insure that a call is placed to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline and that the following information is provided to them:
  - the age of the child/youth involved;
  - if the alleged abuser has care, custody, or control of the child/youth;
  - if the alleged abuse is having an adverse effect on the child/youth; and,
  - specifics regarding the nature of the alleged abuse.
7. The administrator shall speak with the person accused of abuse, using open-ended questions and document the conversation immediately.
8. The administrator shall inform the district superintendent and the Missouri Conference Youth Coordinator that an incident has been reported and the process of reporting has begun.
9. The incident should be reported to the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the alleged victim at the earliest possible time, provided the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) are not the alleged abuser(s).

10. All conversations should be documented and include the following:
  - the name of the staff/volunteer observing the incident or receiving the initial disclosure of abuse, including date, time, location, and any action taken;
  - the alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth;
  - any statement made by the alleged victim;
  - the name of the accused person, the date, time, place, and content of any conversation with the accused;
  - any action taken with regard to the accused, i.e. suspension, etc.;
  - date and time of call to alleged victim's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and the content of that conversation;
  - date and time of call to accused person's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and the content of that conversation;
  - date and time of call to pastor(s) of alleged victim and/or accused person and if permission had been given for that call;
  - date and time of call to Missouri Child Abuse Hotline, name of worker receiving call, content of that conversation, and case number assigned; and,
  - date, time, and content of any other contacts made regarding this incident.
  
11. Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential SJUMC and conference file for purposes of future screening and certification.