



Inman Park Church

A UNITED METHODIST COMMUNITY

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

May 2011

Inman Park United Methodist Church

Child and Youth Protection Policy
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I. Child and Youth Protection Policy Introduction:

Theological Basis

In April 1996, The General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution included the following statement: Jesus said, ‘Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me,’ Matthew 18:5. Children are full participants in the life of our church and in the realm of God. Jesus said: “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck, and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Matthew 18:6. Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principals of the United Methodist Church state that “Children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation, and abuse.”

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse (referring to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies of rites; ritual abusers are often relation to cults or pretend to be) occur in churches. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of sexual trauma.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults from safe and strong. (The Book of Resolutions, of the United Methodist Church, 1996). Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist Congregations, Inman Park UMC, adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our purpose for establishing a Child and Youth Protection Policy is to reduce that risk in hopes that we will move closer to the ideal of a safe environment for the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and those vulnerable to abuse.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct our ministries by reducing unnecessary risks to the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, those vulnerable to abuse, as well as those who work with these persons. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events. We will strive to educate all of our staff and volunteers concerning the rights of individuals, and regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods. We will have clearly defined procedures for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conform to the requirements of state laws.

Procedures

I. Scope:

The following procedures apply to those who currently work or desire to work (paid or volunteers) with infant, children, youth, and special needs group ministries.

II. Notice: Recruiting and training workers/volunteers for infant, children, youth, and special needs persons ministries will incorporate notice of the policy and these procedures to the extent appropriate in:

A. Informational materials (brochures, etc.) about infant, children, and youth and special needs groups programs.

B. Regularly scheduled meetings throughout the year to acquaint members with opportunities in working with children, youth, and special needs persons.

C. New Members sessions.

II. APPLICATION AND SCREENING PROCESS

A. Application

1. Applicants for paid and volunteer services must complete a written application.
2. The application must be complete before an applicant is placed for service. As program is facilitated, current workers will be processed to bring up to status.
3. An employee or volunteer application will be reviewed annually to verify continued accuracy of information.
4. The form of the application will be reviewed annually by the Children and Youth Ministry Team.

B. Screening:

There are two levels of screening procedures to reflect the degree and frequency of contact and supervision that the person in a particular ministry role has with infants, children, youth, and/ or special needs persons.

1. **Primary screening:** applies to anyone who has contact with infants, children, youth, or special needs persons more than ten times per year and/or who supervises those subject only to a secondary screening.
 - a. Those subject to a primary screening will include the following:

- i. Sunday morning teachers; any other teachers (who teach more than 10 times per year)
 - ii. Nursery workers (except parents fulfilling their limited obligation)
 - iii. Youth Ministers
 - iv. Chaperones for overnight trips
 - v. Children's coordinators
 - vi. Children's Choir Directors
 - vii. All paid staff
 - b. Those subject to a primary screening will be expected to complete an information packet, which includes the following:
 - i. Statement of Covenant (appendix A, pg 10)
 - ii. Volunteer Application (appendix B, I, II, III, IV, pgs 11-14)
 - iii. Permission for a Criminal background check (appendix C, pg 15)
(All of these documents are located in the appendix of this policy)
 - c. Those subject to a primary screening will participate in an interview as part of the application process.
- 2. **Secondary Screening:** applies to anyone who has contact with infants, children, youth and special needs persons fewer than 10 times per year on a volunteer basis.
 - a. Those subject to a secondary screening include the following:
 - i. Occasional chaperones for day/evening activities.
 - ii. Seasonal volunteers
 - b. Those subject to a secondary screening will be expected to complete an information packet.
- 3. **Confidentiality**
 - a. Completed applications will be available only to selected church members and selected IPUMC Staff: Children's Ministry Team members, Children and Youth Coordinator Staff Person, Senior Pastor
 - b. Files containing background information will be stored in a secure cabinet.
- 4. **Records retention**
 - a. Completed application for those placed in service will be retained and reviewed for as long as the person serves.

III. IMPLEMENTATION & MAINTENANCE OF POLICY/ APPLICATIONS

- A. Designated persons to perform this function: selected church members who have had experience screening and hiring staff; selected ministerial staff.

- B. Selection Guidelines
 - 1. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age and have been a member or longtime constituent of Inman Park UMC for 6 months prior to serving. Exceptions are rare but could occur. (e.g. older youth serving as an assistant in Sunday school, children's worship or other special events)
 - 2. Anyone who has pled guilty to or been convicted of crimes of child sexual abuse or physical abuse, other sex related crimes, or crimes of physical violence are ineligible to serve.
 - a. The types of crimes creating ineligible status include but are not limited to: arson, assault involving a minor, incest, kidnapping, lewd behavior, murder, physical abuse, pornography, prostitution, public indecency, rape, sexual abuse, exploitation, molestation, sodomy.
 - b. This prohibition applies to anyone who has entered a plea of "nolo contendere" (No contest) or "first offender" to any of the crimes described in this section.
 - c. Further inquiry will be made in those instances where an applicant has been accused or charged but not convicted of the foregoing.
 - 3. Adult survivors of child abuse are advised to meet with the pastor or church designated counseling professional before working with infants, children or youth.

- C. Until this entire process has been completed, a person is not eligible for service: application review, reference check, criminal background check, and interview for primary screen.

- D. As program is facilitated, current workers will be processed and screened to bring up to status.

IV. PROCEDURES TO PROTECT WORKERS AND PARTICIPANTS

A. Supervision

1. Two Adult-Rule: two adults who have been selected for service should be present for any church sponsored activity. There may be some exception (e.g. on campus activities with others in vicinity; home Bible Study with at least 3 youth present). Risk will be reduced even more if the two adults are not related.
2. Written parental permission is required for participation in church activities such as field trips and overnights.
3. Classroom doors should remain open unless there are uncovered windows in the doors.
4. All adult chaperones and supervisors should be cleared in advance of the activity following the primary and secondary screening procedures.
5. Staff and volunteers should use discretion when counseling children, youth, and those with special needs who have significant problems or concerns; students should be referred to a suitable professional if and when appropriate.

B. Suspicious situations (appearances of impropriety) should be discussed immediately.

1. Inappropriate conduct between an adult volunteer and a member of the children, youth, or special needs ministries, should be addressed immediately.
2. The volunteer will be removed if further infractions occur or if a single infraction warrants a removal.
3. Removal will be addressed by pastoral staff.
4. All workers will be trained and notified of the consequences of improper conduct.

V. REPORTING PROCEDURES

A. When a report should be made:

1. When there is reasonable cause to believe that an infant, child, youth or special needs person has been subjected to sexual or physical abuse during a church-sponsored activity.
2. When there is reasonable cause to believe that a person who serves in some capacity with the infant, children, youth, or special needs ministries has committed an act of physical or sexual abuse of an infant, child, youth, or special needs person even if the alleged misconduct may not have occurred during a church sponsored event.
3. When conduct by an adult with an infant, child, youth, or member of the special needs group creates the appearance of impropriety.
4. When there is suspicion of any sexual or physical abuse or neglect.

B. To Whom the Report should be made:

1. In regards to A 1. or A. 2 the *written* report should be made to the senior pastor who would in consultation with appropriate staff, if warranted, report to the Department of Family and Children Services, the police, and/or the district attorney. The parents of the alleged victim should be notified. Staff members should also report immediately to the insurance company and seek legal advice.
2. In regards to A.3 and A. 4, the report should be made to the appropriate church leaders. (Senior Pastor, Education Ministry Team Leader, Children's and Youth Coordinator, or other appropriate leaders).
3. The accused will be confronted after the safety of the infant, child, youth or special needs individual is secured.
4. Every allegation will be taken seriously.
5. Care and support will be shown to the alleged victim and family.
6. The accused will be treated with dignity and support.
7. A public statement will be prepared to answer press inquiries and to inform the congregation. The suggested media statement is "No Comment." All statements can be used in court. Suggested congregation statement is: give no details but assure the congregation that care is being given to the child/youth involved and that appropriate steps are being taken.

8. The church designated attorney will be notified and may be present while a church representative is answering any investigative questions from police or social services.
9. Any church based investigation shall be conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.

VI. DOCUMENTATION OF AND RESPONSE TO THE INCIDENT

A. A person will be designated by Staff Parish or ministerial staff to complete the report of “Suspected Incident.”

1. Anyone who is involved must make a written report of their observations or contact with victim or accused.
2. Document report to DFACS/ police: when, by whom, what was reported.
3. Document what procedures had been taken to maintain the safety of the activity.

B. Confidentiality of these records shall be maintained.

C. Report immediately to the insurance company.

D. Seek the advice of the church designated attorney.

VII. PERSONS DESIGNATED TO DEAL WITH RELATED MATTERS

A. Congregation: The congregation shall be notified by the senior pastor, if possible before the matter is publicized by the media. (See VI. Report Procedures, B-7 for details.)

B. DFACS/Police: Senior Pastor

C. Media: Senior Pastor (or refer to Section VI. B-7)

D. Only those with discernable need-to-know identities and details.

VIII. TRAINING

A. Training should be conducted at least annually for church leadership and workers to:

1. Define abuse
2. Explain potential danger
3. Describe the symptoms
4. Explain what constitutes inappropriate conduct
5. Explain civil and criminal consequences.

6. Explain reporting procedures
7. Explain application/selection/supervision procedures
8. Monitor workers to be certain they know and follow procedures

B. Training should be provided for families.

1. Define the problem.
2. Explain the consequences
3. Explain what the church is doing
4. Offer a program for families that will assist them in educating their children about abuse and how to avoid it

C. Inform the Congregation

1. Define the problem
2. Explain what the church is doing.
3. Maintain accurate records that document the adoption, implementation, and notices of these procedures.
4. Review these procedures annually.

Sources:

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, published by the United Methodist Church Publishing House, Nashville Tennessee, 1996.

Child Abuse Prevention Primer for Your Organization, by John Patterson with Charles Trempe and Pam Rypkema, published by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1995.

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church by Richard R Lammar, Steven W. Klipowicz and James F. Cobble, Jr. published by Church Law and Tax Report, Christian Ministry Resources, 1993.

Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church, by Joy Thornburgh Melton, published by Discipleship Resources, 1998.

Selecting and Screening Church Workers by James F Cobble, Jr. and Richard R. Hammar, published by Church Law and Tax Report, Christian Ministry Resources; Matthews, NC, 1996.

McKenndree United Methodist Church, Reducing the Risk Packet, 2000.

Epworth United Methodist Church Reducing the Risk Safe Sanctuaries Packet for Employees and Volunteers, 2008/ 2010.

PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of Inman Park United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, special needs individuals and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy reflect our congregation’s commitment to preserving the 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 Christ through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (with sexual, physical or emotional) should volunteer to work with children, youth or special needs individuals in any church-sponsored activity or program.
2. 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, youth, or special needs individuals is encouraged to discuss his/ her willingness with our Pastor or Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator before accepting an assignment.
3. All adult volunteers involved with children, youth, or special needs individuals of our church must have been members or constituents of the congregation for at least 6 months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Exceptions can be made in some circumstances on an individual basis at the discretion of the Education Ministry Team and Pastor.
4. Adult volunteers with children, youth and special needs individuals shall observe all procedures in the IPUMC Safe Sanctuaries Packet.
5. Adult volunteers with children, youth and special needs individuals shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state law regarding child abuse.
6. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteers in the congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministry with children, youth, and special needs individuals? Yes [] No []
2. As a volunteer, do you agree to observe the “Two-Adult Rule”? Yes [] No []
3. As a volunteer, do you agree to abide by the “Six Month Rule” before beginning a volunteer assignment. *exception considered on an individual basis. Yes [] No []
- 4 As a volunteers, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment? Yes [] No []
5. As a volunteer, do you agree to inform the Pastor or Children and Youth Coordinator of this church if you have ever been accused or convicted of child abuse?
Yes [] No []

I have read the Participation Covenant and IPUMC Safe Sanctuaries Packet, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Print full name

Signature of Applicant Date

Inman Park United Methodist Church
VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.” Romans 12:6

Taking the time to complete this form will assist in the placement of volunteers at Inman Park United Methodist Church according to their gifts. We appreciate your willingness to be a partner in our ministries.

This document contains confidential information that may only be reviewed by ministerial staff. Unauthorized access is prohibited.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (C) _____

Area (s) of interest:

Occupation: _____

Previous Volunteer Experience:

List any other training or experience you have had that would assist you in volunteer service, including any licenses or certifications: _____

Would you be available for annual volunteer training sessions? _____

Appendix B III
PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENT

Confidential

Section III must be completed by anyone volunteering to work with infants, children, youth, and special needs groups on more than 10 occasions in a calendar year.

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony [including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft or motor vehicle violations (does not include parking tickets, but does include DUI, speeding, etc.)]

Yes [] No []

Both of these questions refer to any charges to which you may have pled “nolo contendere” or received “first offender” status. Give approximate date of charges; disposition of the case; and the nature of the incident including the jurisdiction in which it occurred (use additional pages and attach, if necessary).

Have you ever been accused of an act of child abuse, child molestation, child cruelty, pornography, sexual exploitation of a minor, and act of inappropriate touching of a minor, and act of public indecency, or any other similar conduct?

Yes [] No []

If yes, provide details of the accusation, including name(s) of the accuser, witnesses, the date and place that the alleged events occurred and how the matter was resolved. (please use additional pages, if needed)

Were you the victim of child abuse or neglect? Yes [] No []

Would you talk with the Senior Pastor or Youth and Children’s Ministries Coordinator regarding these matters?

Yes [] No []

Print Name

Signature

Date

REFERENCES

Section IV must be complete by anyone volunteering to work with infants, children, youth, and special needs groups on more than 10 occasions in a calendar year.

Church Reference

Name of Church: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Pastor's Name: _____
Length of Time at this church: _____

Personal Reference (if you have no church references):

Name : _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Relationship to Applicant: _____

The information I have provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the above named church or person to furnish any information, which they have regarding my character and fitness to work with children. I release and hold harmless Inman Park United Methodist Church, its pastors, employees and staff from any and all claims of liability what so ever, arising from any communication with the above named references. I understand and acknowledge that this application and any information provided to Inman Park United Methodist Church in connection with this application shall remain strictly confidential.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix D
AGREEMENT

I certify that I have read and understand the policies set forth in the Inman Park United Methodist Safe Sanctuaries: Child and Youth Protection Policy.

Print Name

Signature

Date