

**NEW HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAFE SANCTUARY Policy for the Protection of Children**

**INTRODUCTION**

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April, 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls all churches to welcome the children and also to make our churches safe places for children to grow and learn. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and also to protect those volunteers from false accusations. It is also our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children.

**PURPOSE**

New Hope United Methodist of Brunswick purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

**STATEMENT OF COVENANT**

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. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

**PROCEDURES:** We adopt these **minimum** standards for our ministries with children and youth.

**1. Screening and recruiting**

- a. All workers with children and youth will have completed an application listing standard contact information, their gifts for that ministry, & 3 unrelated references.
- b. All workers will be interviewed by the pastor or Youth Director before they begin teaching. References will be contacted. Names will be researched on the National Sex Offender Registry [www.familywatchdog.us](http://www.familywatchdog.us) .
- c. All workers will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least 6 months before being allowed to supervise children.
- d. All workers will complete the Youth/Child Worker Questionnaire annually.
- e. All new workers will be asked to complete a Maryland request for Criminal Background Check & Child Abuse History Clearance.
- f. Volunteer assistant (an impromptu volunteer for VBS, child care, etc) can work once as an assistant, not supervisor and with another Safe Sanctuary trained adult, as long as they complete the Youth/Child Worker Questionnaire and Adult Covenant.

- g. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file in the pastor's office. The Staff Parish Relation Committee (SPRC) will be in charge of keeping the application, contacting references, checking the national sex offender's registry, submitting criminal background checks, maintaining the annual Youth/Child Worker Questionnaires, and storing all confidential personnel file.

## 2. Supervision

- a. Goal: two adult rule. As our program grows we will strive to have 2 unrelated adults in each classroom. If this is not possible, there will be a roving teacher who moves amid the classroom during the program period.
- b. No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the oldest student.
- c. No person under 16 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults.
- d. Each room will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.
- e. Training shall occur at least once a year and teachers shall be trained to recognize the signs of abuse. An appropriate number of workers should be trained in First Aid & CPR.
- f. In order for children to participate in activities outside direct supervision of their parents/guardians, registration materials shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information.
- g. If the participants are old enough to understand, they shall review and sign a covenant of participation listing rules for all trips, overnights, etc. This will be completed yearly.
- h. Field trip rules:
  - i. Room list will be created prior to an overnight trip with parent/guardian approval
  - ii. Girls and boys will sleep in separate hotel rooms
  - iii. One person per bed (exceptions: siblings, relatives, youth family, or parent/guardian consent)
- i. Leadership Role shall be defined as an individual, who serves in a role that coordinates, supervises or facilitates others.

## 3. Reporting

- a. Upon receiving information of abuse, the teacher will report immediately to the pastor or Education Chairman who call Maryland Child Protective Services agency at 1-800-332-6437. If no answer, call Childhelp USA National child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
- b. The SPRC chair will receive Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse Form and the Accident Report Form.
- c. If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner and they shall not be banned from other church ministries.
- d. In addition to the internal notification requirements above, Workers having reason to believe a child has been subjected to Abuse or Neglect by any person are required by state law to make a report to the appropriate local office of the Department of Social Services/Child Protective Services for the State of Maryland ("CPS"). In the case of Abuse, such a report may alternatively be made to an appropriate law enforcement agency. Since such law may be changed

from time to time, the reporting person should contact the CPS or church counsel to ensure that current law covering such reporting procedures is being followed.

- e. The appropriate office of the CPS to contact is the office of the city/county where the allegedly abused or neglected child lives or, if different, where the Abuse or Neglect is alleged to have taken place.
- f. Under Maryland law and the *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church, reporting is mandatory for all Workers, including clergy. There is no obligation (or ability) to maintain the confidentiality of communications which indicate that child Abuse or Neglect has occurred.
- g. Persons who in good faith make or participate in making a report of Abuse or Neglect are, by law, immune from civil liability or criminal penalty in connection therewith.

#### 4. Responding

- a. 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.
- b. The Senior Clergy receiving a notice of an incident of Child Abuse or Neglect shall:
  - i. Immediately contact the Parents of the alleged victim and inform them of the alleged incident. If one Parent is the alleged wrongdoer, neither Parent shall be contacted until after CPS has conducted its initial investigation or determined that an investigation is not warranted.
  - ii. If Worker misconduct is alleged, (1) immediately contact NHUMC's legal counsel and insurance company, (2) consult with the applicable Director to determine whether it is necessary or advisable to suspend the applicable Worker from all positions of responsibility relating to children and youth and take additional steps as necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with the alleged victim or other Protected Persons, and (3) determine if it is necessary or advisable to notify the appropriate representative of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.
- c. The District Superintendent for New Hope United Methodist Church or his/her designee is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Lead Pastor.
- d. If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the District Superintendent will be contacted immediately.
- e. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.
- f. In the event that an individual in a leadership role is alleged to have committed abuse, the individual shall be suspended from this role as an investigation is conducted.
- g. All investigative actions shall be performed by the appropriate legal authorities.
- h. When a Worker accused of Abuse or Neglect has been cleared of all allegations or charges, the Worker may apply for reinstatement of his/her position within the church. If such application is made, a committee shall be formed, consisting of the Senior Clergy, the applicable Director, and the church's legal counsel to evaluate the option of reinstatement. The committee may approve or deny the request for reinstatement in its sole discretion.
- i. When a written and signed grievance of sexual misconduct is brought against a lay person, the pastor of the church, in consultation with the district superintendent, shall immediately suspend the accused lay person from any leadership role and area of responsibility within the local church ("administrative leave"), salaried or voluntary. In the case of salaried personnel, consultation with the SPRC shall also take place (2000 Discipline, 258.2.f.10). When the accused lay person holds positions of responsibility with the Annual Conference, either salaried or voluntary, the

district superintendent and/or the bishop shall suspend the said lay person from all areas of responsibility. All lay persons against whom allegations of sexual misconduct are made shall be suspended for a period not to exceed sixty days while procedures are allowed. Suspension is a “neutral category,” implying neither innocence nor guilt, during which all parties will receive fair process (2000 Discipline, 2701.)

- j. For persons who seek service within the church and who have past cleared allegations or charges of Abuse or Neglect from outside NHUMC, this same committee shall be formed to evaluate the option of allowing this service. The committee may approve or deny the request for service in its sole discretion.

\* Groups affiliated with New Hope United Methodist Church of greater Brunswick, MD like Boy Scouts of America troop # 255, Vacation Bible School, child care, youth group, missions/trips, food bank, and small groups need to also follow the Safe Sanctuary’s screening, supervision, reporting, and responding procedures.

\* The SPRC Committee will address special circumstances and they are the assurance of following through with the Safe Sanctuary Policy.

\* Due Diligence: the Safe Sanctuary Committee will review the policy and follow through with the policy on a yearly basis.