

# ***GUIDELINES FOR CHILD PROTECTION FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN***

*Adopted by the Administrative Board of First United Methodist Church on March 24, 1997  
Revised July, 2009*

## **Statement of Purpose:**

**Our primary purpose is to be a place of safety for all children who come through the doors of First United Methodist Church. Secondly, we strive to protect all workers from false allegation. Finally, First United Methodist Church may be held liable for harm caused to a victim of abuse based on such theories as negligent hiring/screening practices and supervision. Officers, employees and agents of First UMC may be sued individually for negligent acts, errors or omissions. In order to protect itself from instances or allegations of abuse, First UMC has formulated the following guidelines based on recommendations supplied by the Risk Management Department of the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church.**

## **Definitions**

### **Risk Management Committee**

The Risk Management Committee (RMC) is the committee responsible for administering these guidelines. The committee will consist of the two pastors, the Director of Christian Education, the Directors of Junior and Senior High Youth, the Director of Music & Arts, and the Parish Nurse.

### **Church**

"Church" means the First UMC building, First Place or any other location where the church sponsors activities for children.

### **Child**

The word "child" or "children" refers to anyone between the ages of 0 and 18 or to developmentally impaired adults.

## **Guidelines**

1. Adults and youth will be permitted to work with children only after they have been a member or constituent of the church for six months.
2. All persons working with children on a regular basis must complete the "Application For Working with Children" and the "Disclosure Form," which will be reviewed by a member of the RMC and will remain on file in the church office. Applications will be renewed every three years. A felony check will be done on all workers. References may be requested. Persons who help with children's activities fewer than 6 times a year and who are under the direct supervision of a screened person will complete a secondary screening form, which includes a felony check.
3. At least two unrelated adults (age 18 or over) will be present in all classrooms and for all church related children's activities. For nursery care, at least one adult and one youth (age 16 or older) will be present. Adults working with junior or senior high youth must be age 21 or older.

4. Childcare may be provided by at least two youth, who are minimally 5 years older than the children, under the direction of the childcare coordinator. Training for childcare givers will be provided each fall.
5. Adult supervision will begin 15 minutes before children's activities are scheduled to begin. Parents/guardians must make sure that adults are present before dropping their children off. Children must be picked up within 15 minutes after the activity is over. At least two adults will remain until every child is picked up. Children, infant – through grade 2, must be signed in and out at the classroom door by a parent/guardian.
6. If there is a discipline problem, a child shall never be taken into a separate room to talk with him\her. He\she shall be taken into a corner of the same room where the other children are or into a public hallway.
7. Pre-school children may be helped in the bathroom by an adult only if the door is left open. For children who can help themselves in the bathroom, the adult will wait outside in public view.
8. Children will not be allowed to leave the church without the permission of a parent\guardian during scheduled meeting times.
9. Once children arrive at a meeting, they will not be allowed to drive to scheduled events away from the building. Adults who have submitted a drivers license number and are over 21 years of age must drive. The church is not responsible for children once they leave the church after the meeting. All activities will have definite starting and ending times.
10. When traveling off church grounds by car or van, every child must wear a seatbelt. Children under 12 should not sit in the front seat.
11. Children must always have a signed permission slip in order to participate in activities outside the building. If there is no slip, the leaders will call and get verbal permission. If the youth leaders cannot reach a parent, they will leave a message, if possible, and document the call.
12. Children are not allowed in the church kitchen without adult supervision.
13. Children are the responsibility of their parent or guardian when not in scheduled activities (i.e. fellowship time between 10:30 and 11:00 A.M. and after worship.)
14. If there is an accident, the teacher or counselor witnessing the accident must fill out an accident report and give a copy to the parents (or notify by phone) and the RMC and file a copy with the church office. Copies of the report form will be available in every classroom.
15. Staff or volunteers should immediately report any behaviors, which seem abusive or inappropriate to their supervisor. If an incident occurs or if an accusation is made, the RMC will follow the "Procedures for Handling Allegations of Child Abuse.
16. If it is suspected that a child has been abused or that a child may intend to harm him/herself or another, a member of the RMC should be notified.

## ***PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE***

First United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Please note: In this document, the word "child" or "children" refers to anyone between the ages of 0 and 18 or developmentally impaired adults.

1. Any alleged incident of abuse, whether witnessed in the church or disclosed by a child or youth, must be reported to the pastor or a member of the Risk Management Committee (the two pastors, the Director of Christian Education, the Directors of Junior High and Senior High Youth and the Parish Nurse). The RMC will document the incident by speaking to all those involved, including the victim (and parents), and make a written report. Those involved will also make a written report.
2. All actions and discussions will be documented on the report form for suspected instances of sexual\physical abuse.
3. If allegations involve the pastor or lay staff, the RMC will coordinate its review and investigation with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee or the Lay Personnel Committee, and observe the procedural requirements of the Book of Discipline.
4. The RMC will determine whether a teacher\adult acted appropriately. If it is determined that the teacher\adult acted appropriately, the RMC will inform all those involved and keep a record of the incident.
5. If it is determined that the teacher\adult acted inappropriately, the RMC will decide if the teacher should be reprimanded or removed from his\her position.
6. Suspected sexual or physical abuse must be reported to the appropriate governmental authorities as required by law. Where a clergy person is involved, the procedures set forth in the Book of Discipline shall be followed.
7. Every effort will be made to protect the identity and privacy of the all those involved.
8. A suspected incident will not be discussed outside the RMC. Confidentiality shall be maintained at all times.
9. Pastoral care will be extended to all those involved in the incident.

***APPLICATION FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN***  
**First United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Please note: In this document, the word "child" or "children" refers to anyone between the ages of 0 and 18 or developmentally impaired adults.

Our church cares about the children in our programs and desires to ensure their safety while they are under the church's supervision. These application and disclosure forms will be filled out by all paid staff and volunteers working with children. This information is not for public information and is only to be used in making a hiring decision.

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Other First Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. In which children/youth program are you seeking to become involved?

2. What other children/youth work experience do you have? (Please list)

Organization	Program	Dates	Contact
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

3. What specific skills do you bring to this job?

4. Why do you want to work in this position?

5. How would you discipline a child in your care?

6. Where are you currently employed?

7. What church or churches have you attended in the past five years?

## Disclosure Form

Please note: In this document, the word "child" or "children" refers to anyone between the ages of 0 and 18

1. Have you ever been convicted of any crime against children or other persons?
2. Have you ever been found in any dependency action to have sexually assaulted or exploited any minor or to have physically abused any minor?
3. Have you ever been found by a court in a domestic relations proceeding to have sexually abused or exploited any minor or to have physically abused any minor?
4.
  - a. Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the last seven years?
  - b. Have you been released from incarceration for a conviction of the possession, use or sale of drugs within the last seven years?
5. Within the past 30 days have you abused alcohol, legal or illegal drugs?
6. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last seven years?
7. Other than the above matters, is there any fact or circumstance involving you and your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of children?

**I agree to live by the understanding that, as a person in authority, it is my responsibility to avoid sexual contact with children in my care, even if one attempts to initiate the contact.**

**I will find alternative ways to discipline, agreeing that under no circumstance will I use spanking, neck or choke holds, ear or hair pulling or any other corporal punishment as a means of discipline.**

**I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct; if it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for dismissal.**

**I give permission to First United Methodist Church to conduct a criminal background check.**

**I have carefully read the Child Protection Policy of First United Methodist Church and I agree to abide by the policy at all times.**

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECONDARY APPLICATION FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN**  
**First United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Our church cares about the children in our programs and desires to ensure their safety while they are under the church's supervision. This secondary application will be filled out by all persons who wish to help with children or youth activities fewer than 6 times a year. All such persons will be under the direct supervision of a screened worker. Persons wishing to work with children or youth on a regular basis must fill out an Application for Working with Children and a Disclosure form. This information is not for public information and is only to be used in making a hiring decision.

1. Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. Adults and youth will be permitted to work with children and youth only after they have been a member or constituent of the church for six months.
3. Adult volunteers should observe the "two adult" rule. This requires that adults are never alone with children or youth without an adult partner.
4. Adult volunteers should immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate to their supervisor.

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Other First Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you ever been convicted of any crime against children or other persons?
2. Is there any fact or circumstance involving you and your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the care of children or youth?
3. As a church volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with children or youth?

*I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct; if it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for dismissal.*

*I give permission to First United Methodist Church to conduct a criminal background check.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH POLICY STATEMENT ON MISCONDUCT OF A SEXUAL NATURE**

First United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, affirms the 1996 Book of Resolutions, "Sexual Abuse Within the Ministerial Relationship and Sexual Harassment Within the Church," which states that sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church as incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. In accordance with the 1996 Book of Discipline, paragraph 65.F, all human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29 states all are one in Christ, we support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive work environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender. (The Book of Discipline, paragraph 65.I)

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role and exploitation of those who are vulnerable. Similarly, sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue.

Misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interferes with its moral mission. First United Methodist Church stands in opposition to the sin of misconduct of a sexual nature in the Church and society at large and commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any charge of sexual misconduct within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the Book of Discipline. Further, First United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of misconduct of a sexual nature and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Some instances of sexual harassment can be resolved easily and informally between the parties. In all other instances, misconduct of a sexual nature should be reported to the chairs of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee and the Lay Personnel Committee and the pastor in charge. If the conduct involves a clergy person, it should be reported to the district superintendent or the presiding bishop.

*Adopted by the Administrative Board of First United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, on January 20, 1997*