

Claremont United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy
Reviewed and revised by Ed Commission March 25, 2014

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**CLAREMONT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SAFE SANCTUARIES CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Approved by the Education Commission

March 22, 2010

Introduction

I. Theological Foundation

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 includes the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also 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 Principles of the United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse” (paragraph 162C)

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse [“ritual abuse” refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be] have occurred in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problems cut across all economic and cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

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 grow safe and strong.¹

¹ The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2000 (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), 180f.

The Church, above all institutions, is called to welcome and nurture the child. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where children may grow and where those who care for them may minister to their needs in responsible ways.

The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church suggests that churches should, “adopt screening procedures (use of application forms, reference checks, background checks, etc.) for workers (paid and volunteer) directly and indirectly involved in the care of children and youth.” Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

II. Statement of Purpose

The purpose and intent of the Child Protection Policy of Claremont United Methodist Church is to provide a safe and secure environment to teach and care for the children and youth of our congregation. An equally important goal is to protect the physical safety and the spiritual growth of the young people in our care.

Our goal is to protect children and youth from physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and from neglect by staff or volunteers of Claremont United Methodist Church. An equally important goal is to protect the staff and volunteers from false accusations of abuse.

III. Programs that call for the application of the Child Protection Policy

- A. Nursery Care of Infants and Toddlers
- B. Sunday School and Enrichment
- C. United Methodist Youth Fellowship
- D. Sing, Ring and Dance
- E. Confirmation
 - 1. Classes
 - 2. Meetings with mentors
 - 3. Field Trips
- F. Field Trips for Children and Youth
 - 1. Local outings as part of curriculum
 - 2. Overnight trips such as SSP or Youth Retreats
 - 3. Bell or Choir Festivals, etc.
- G. Church functions at which childcare is (or should be) provided
- H. Vacation Bible School
- I. Youth Theater Works rehearsals and performances

Note: Claremont United Methodist Preschool, in accordance with legal requirements, has a child protection policy in place as required by law. The policy is reviewed annually. The Preschool uses the Department of Justice background checks.

CUMC SAFE SANCTUARIES CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

I. Recruitment and Screening

- A. Recruitment – Volunteer leaders and teachers who will work independently and/or unsupervised with children or youth should be considered eligible only after the volunteer has been a part of our church community for at least six months.
- B. Screening – We use Intellicorp to screen both paid staff and volunteers who work with children and youth. This is a Social Security Number-based screening that covers at least the previous seven years using a national database. Records are kept with secured personnel files. We may also require new volunteers to provide two to three references in addition to screening before working with youth or children. A new background check is required every four years, or when an employee or volunteer has a break in their ministry with children and youth at CUMC.
- C. Paid staff and volunteer leaders should receive initial training in our Safe Sanctuaries policy when they first begin their ministry with children and/or youth of CUMC. Thereafter, each leader should participate in a refresher training at least once every two years. Trainings are offered in the spring and fall of each year.
- D. We reserve the right to do a DMV screening of any staff or volunteer who will transport children or youth. Our church policy is to comply with the driver eligibility criteria recommended by our insurance company, Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Co. (See addendum).

II. Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth

- A. **Two Adult Rule** – provides for better teaching by sharing responsibility, adds a second watchful person to provide safe care and helps in the positive interaction with children.
 - 1. Sunday School – Our goal is two teams of at least two teachers for each class. An alternative is to recruit adult members of the congregation to volunteer on an occasional basis to act as the second adult in the classroom providing support for the regular Sunday School teacher. We will always have two adults in each classroom or activity center. If two adults are not available, the class or event will be cancelled or postponed.
 - 2. Field Trips – SSP, Youth Retreats – for these events we will always have at least two adult chaperones or teachers.
 - 3. Local Outings with Sunday School Classes – we will have two or more adults with a group of children. While driving, an adult chaperone should have a minimum of two children or youth in the

car. Children and youth should be dropped off and picked up at church, avoiding the issue of dropping off the last child.

4. Confirmation – Confirmation mentors should meet with their confirmands in a public place where other adults will be around, e.g. in the Narthex or patio area instead of in a classroom, or in the child's home with family members present. Two mentors and confirmands may meet together to satisfy the two adult rule.

B. Managing Children/Youth with Challenging Behavior

1. Teachers will bring to the attention of the Director of Education Ministries children who pose behavior challenges. This will allow for obtaining consultation and development of a plan to provide positive and safe supervision of the child. Training for volunteers will include:
 - a. Methods for positive discipline
 - b. Healthy physical and verbal communication with children and youth

C. First Aid/CPR

1. All teachers working with children are encouraged to have an updated First Aid/CPR certification. CUMC Preschool biennially offers a class to obtain this certification for teachers working in the school. Our staff and volunteers may participate in this class. Paid staff must keep CPR certification current. The church will pay for the cost of the class when required. Volunteers are welcome to participate in the class at their own expense.
2. The Director of Education Ministries will make available a list of other organizations in our area offering CPR/First Aid Training.

D. Bi-Annual Orientation/Training

1. A bi-annual training in our child protection policies is required for all volunteers and staff. Training sessions will be offered in the fall and spring of each year.
2. New volunteers will be trained by the Director of Education Ministries upon assuming new education duties.
3. A pamphlet or handout outlining our child safety procedures will be given to new staff, volunteers and parents. A record will be maintained of participation in training and receipt of the safety policy pamphlet.
4. Orientation/Training should include the following:
 - a. CUMC's policies and procedures for Child Safety (Director of Education Ministries will prepare)

- b. Legal obligations and appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse
- c. Details of the state laws regarding child abuse
- d. Child Protective Services reporting form – CUMC Secretary holds copies in the personnel file cabinet in narthex office.

E. “Five Years Older” Rule

1. Workers with youth should be at least five years older than the youth participants.
2. Workers with youth should be at least 21 years of age.
3. Workers with youth serve at the discretion of the Pastor or Director of Youth Ministries, or the Director of Education Ministries.
4. All lead teachers for children in elementary school or younger should be at least 18 years of age.

F. Windows in all Classrooms

1. All of our rooms comply with this requirement. An adult escorting a child to the restroom should wait outside. When an adult helps a very young child with toileting, the door should remain open.

G. Counseling for Youth - Open Door/Non-isolated

1. When working with an individual youth, adult leaders or mentors shall not be in an isolated environment, one-on-one. Possible locations might include the narthex patio or a corner of the narthex when other adults are present.
2. When volunteers who work with youth arrange to meet with any youth outside of regular programs, the director of the youth programs and the child’s parents shall be informed.

H. Social Networking Guidelines

1. Staff or volunteers may accept youth and children as “friends” within online social networking websites; however, the staff or volunteers shall not initiate those connections. When this “befriending” occurs, the adult bears responsibility to maintain boundaries and provide positive modeling for online communication. This should reflect the same boundaries and behavior that the adult would exhibit in face to face encounters.

I. Procedures for Off-Campus Field Trip

1. Procedure for permission slips, medical release and other forms:

- a. Permission slip signed by the child's parent or guardian is required for all off-campus events
 - b. Each driver will have copies of permission slips and medical release forms for all participants (even those in another vehicle since youth may change cars at a gas or food stop)
 - c. A copy of all permission slips, and a detailed itinerary should be left with the church office prior to departure.
 - d. Participation covenant for responsible behavior for all participants and leaders (for youth events)
2. Other required supplies and procedures:
- a. Each driver will have a stocked first aid kit.
 - b. An individual adult should not sleep in an isolated room with fewer than two unrelated youth other than their own child/ren.
 - c. Leaders must carefully think through all safety, behavioral and medical issues that might arise in all off-campus and especially overnight activities (New Year's Eve, Sleep-overs, SSP type trip where possibility of injury is increased.)
 - d. This group will prepare a checklist for preparation and instruct leaders.
 - e. Written information about all off-campus trips will be left in the church office before departure. This should include schedule, location, participants, and contact phone numbers.
3. The leader must:
- a. Carefully consider all safety, behavioral and medical issues that might arise in off-campus and overnight activities (New Year's Eve, Sleepovers, SSP type trips where possibility of injury is increased.)
 - b. Have a signed annual permission slip/medical release for all off-campus events.
 - c. Have participants sign covenant for responsible behavior for all participants and leaders (for youth events).
 - d. Prepare a checklist for preparation and instruct leaders.
 - e. Assure that an individual adult does not sleep in an isolated room or area with fewer than two unrelated youth other than the leader's own child/ren.
4. Parents are required to receive written information about all off-campus trips before departure, including schedule, location, leaders, and contact information.
5. Church office is required to receive:
- a. Written information about all off-campus trips will be left in the church office before departure. This should include schedule, location, participants, and contact information.
 - b. A copy of all permission slips, medical release forms and a detailed itinerary prior to departure.
6. Each vehicle requires:

- a. Copies of permission slips and medical release forms for all participants and leaders (even those in another vehicle since youth may change vehicles at a gas or food stop.)
- b. Fully stocked first aid kit.

J. Childcare – Two Adults

1. We will have two adults for Enrichment or for childcare for church dinners or meetings where childcare is offered. In case of injury one adult may be needed to attend to the injury or call for help and the other to care for the remaining children. Promotional material about meetings/dinners should specify whether childcare will be provided and require RSVP to confirm.

III. What to do if Abuse or an Allegation of Abuse Occurs

A. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

1. All staff members are mandated reporters of child abuse. Volunteers in our programs are mandated reporters by extension of the staff member's mandate, and are required to report suspected incidents of child abuse. Training materials for staff and volunteers include information about whom to contact with information about suspected incidents of child abuse. A member of the pastoral staff will:
 - a. Remove the accused from contact with children.
 - b. Be pastorally present for both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.
2. When we are faced with a case of suspected abuse of a child or youth in our care, we will:
 - a. Assure the safety of the child
 - b. Report the suspected abuse immediately (see B. below)
 - c. Cooperate with staff or regulatory agencies investigating the incident
 - d. Keep all allegations of abuse confidential in order to protect the personal rights of all involved without in any way attempting to cover up the alleged abuse.

B. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

1. When a member, volunteer or staff member has a suspicion of abuse of a child they should immediately report it to the appropriate staff program supervisor or directly to Child Protective Services. When a staff member is informed of the suspected abuse they will immediately:
 - a. Notify Child Protective Services:
 1. Los Angeles County CPS: 1-800-540-4000
 2. Riverside County CPS: 1-800-442-4918
 3. San Bernardino County CPS: 1-800-827-8724
 4. Kern County CPS: 1-661-631-6011
 5. Inyo County CPS: 1-619-872-1727
2. Notify the Senior Pastor, who in turn notifies our District Superintendent.
3. If the accused is the Senior Pastor, notify the next staff person of authority.
4. The pastor or other staff member will decide whether to suspend the accused during the investigation period.
5. The pastor will notify the Staff Parish Relations Committee [SPRC] which handles executive and confidential matters.
6. SPRC will deal with the situation in closed session and document the case in confidential minutes. Open minutes would simply state, “an allegation of abuse was discussed.” SPRC will determine how the church might best reach out to the alleged victim and the victim’s family, as well as the alleged perpetrator and family.

IV. Maintaining our Child Protection Policy

- A. Periodic Assessment of Existing Policy
 - 1. The continuing role of Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is to manage and approve the process of dealing with allegations of abuse. However, the Education Commission will be responsible to periodically reassess the policy.
 - 2. The Education Commission will annually review the child protection policy at its January meeting. In the case of a violation of the child protection policy the SPRC will direct the Education Commission to reassess the policy to assure that the policy itself was not flawed, leading to the alleged abuse.
- B. Church Council Approval
 - 1. The Education Commission will provide a recommendation of the Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy to the Church Council at its March meeting. The Church Council will be responsible for approving such a plan at its May meeting. We will inform the California Pacific Conference Office of our approved plan.
- C. Adequate Insurance
 - 1. We will inform the Trustees of our child protection policy and any future revisions. Trustees are to advise the church's insurance agent of our policy and with the agent review and maintain adequate insurance coverage for our staff, volunteers, and church.

V. Parent/Family Education

Since most sexual abuse offenders are acquainted with their victims, education in these matters is crucial. The problem of child abuse is more common than most people realize. The risk for children runs beyond the child's participation in our programs. Therefore as a service to our members, we will facilitate an education program for interested parents that will allow them to maintain safe households and help their child be safe outside the home. The Director of Education Ministries will work with the Associate Pastor and the Preschool Director to plan and present educational forums.

Our Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be posted on our CUMC website.