SAFE SANCTUARY

Policy & Program for Reducing the Risk of Abuse to Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

jamestown
united methodist

Jamestown United Methodist Church, Inc. is committed to maintaining a safe and secure place for our children and youth. This commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of our children and youth is absolute and unwavering.

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is fully committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child and youth will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, ... established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (from "Baptismal Covenant II", in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

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Indicators of Abuse in Children

People suffering from abuse often will not tell anyone about it. Therefore, it is important to be able to recognize signs of abuse. The following characteristics may be indicators of abuse, although they are not necessarily proof. Individually, any one of the indicators may be a sign of several other serious problems. When these indicators are observed, they can be considered as warnings and lead you into the situation further.

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse may include, but are not limited to:

1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others.
2. Fearfulness of parents, caregivers and/or other adults.
3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and/or property.
4. Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for a child's developmental stage or a vulnerable adult's activity level.
5. Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises.

Possible Signs of Neglect may include, but are not limited to:

1. Failure to thrive.
2. Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate.
3. Begs or steals food, chronic hunger.
4. Depression.
5. Untreated medical conditions.
6. Poor hygiene.

Recognizing Physically Abusive Behavior from an Adult

1. The adult shows little concern for the child in their care.
2. The adult denies the existence of or blames the child for the child's problems.
3. The adult asks other caregivers to use harsh discipline if the child misbehaves.
4. The adult expresses that the child is bad, worthless, or burdensome.
5. The adult demands a level of physical or academic performance that the child cannot achieve.
6. The adult looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction.

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse may include, but are not limited to:

1. Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal.
2. Exhibits severe lack of self-esteem.
3. Failure to thrive.
4. Threatens or attempts suicide.
5. Speech and/or eating disorders.
6. Goes to extremes to seek adult approval.
7. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns.

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse may include, but are not limited to:

1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and developmental stage.
2. Depression – cries often for no apparent reason.
3. Promiscuous behavior.
4. Runs away from home and refuses to return.
5. Difficulty walking or sitting.
6. Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas.
7. Exhibits frequent headaches, stomachaches, and extreme fatigue.
8. Sexually transmitted diseases.

In addition to these indicators, children who have been sexually abused at church may exhibit some of the following:

1. Unusual nervousness or anxiety about being left in the nursery or classroom.
2. Reluctance to participate in church activities that were previously enthusiastically approached.
3. Comments such as "I don't want to be alone with _____" in reference to a childcare worker or teacher.
4. Nightmares including a childcare worker or teacher as a frightening character.
5. Unexplained hostility toward a childcare worker or teacher.

Recognizing Sexually Abusive Behavior from an Adult

1. The adult is unduly protective of the child in their care.
2. The adult severely limits the child's contact with other children.
3. The adult is secretive and isolated.
4. The adult is jealous or controlling toward family members.

Indicators of Older Adult Abuse

For many older adults, the church is a focal point of life, and this leaves many congregations well-positioned to provide support, education, and other resources to older adults and their caregivers to make sure that older adults are safe and well-cared for. Churches should be on the lookout for signs of abuse in the older adult members of the congregation. Warning signs of abuse include the following:

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse may include, but are not limited to:

Slap marks; unexplained and repeated injuries and bruises; welts, lacerations, or bite marks; and certain types of burns or blisters, such as cigarette burns.

Possible Signs of Neglect may include, but are not limited to:

Poor personal hygiene; untreated bed sores; unsafe or unsanitary living conditions; lack of medical care; and malnutrition or dehydration.

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse may include, but are not limited to:

Withdrawal from normal activities; lack of communication; unexplained changes in alertness; and other unusual behavioral changes, such as depression or talk of suicide.

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse may include, but are not limited to:

Bruises around the breasts or genital area; pain or itching in the genital area; and depression or talk of suicide.

Possible Signs of Financial Abuse and Exploitation may include, but are not limited to:

Sudden change in finances and accounts; altered wills and trusts; unusual bank withdrawals; checks written as “loans or gifts”; mail redirected to new locations; loss of property; unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions; and “new best friends.”

Possible Signs of Abuse in Care Facilities may include, but are not limited to:

Inappropriate restraints, over-or under-medication; severe weight loss; disappearance of personal items such as dentures, hearing aids, money, and mementos; and long periods of time during which residents are left alone.

Definitions

For this policy, we will use the following terms:

Abuse

Harm or threatening harm to the health and welfare of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by any person responsible for the health and welfare of that child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Adult

Any person 18 years old or older and no longer attending high school.

Child, Youth or Student

Any person under the age of 18 and those persons attending high school over the age 18.

Leader

Any adult—paid or volunteer—who has supervision or management responsibilities for the event, program, or ministry.

Parent or Guardian

Any parent, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent, or appointed guardian with general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.

Sexual Contact

Intentional touching of the intimate parts of a persons body or the clothing covering the intimate parts of a youth, child, or vulnerable adult

Staff

Any employee of the ministry. This can include both paid and unpaid staff members but is particularly used in reference to paid employees.

Volunteer

A person who participates as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any event or ministry without compensation.

Vulnerable Adult

Persons who are 18 years of age or older who are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Youth Helper

Children or youth under the age of 18 who assist with ministries.

General Supervision Guidelines

Exceptions to these rules may be made only by a Staff Member in their respective ministries.

Minimum Age Rule: It is highly recommended there be a minimum difference of five years between the age of the youngest supervisor or counselor and the age of the oldest child in the group being supervised. The minimum age for those supervising children and youth is eighteen. Younger teenagers may assist adults, but must work under the immediate, direct supervision of a qualified adult and may not independently supervise children and youth.

Two Adult Rule: No fewer than two adults **who are not related** should be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children and youth. Additional adult "roamers" who periodically move in and out of rooms are desirable. This is to not only prevent abuse, but to reduce the likelihood of false accusations. When using the elevator, the two-person rule is required. It is preferable to use the stairways, when possible.

Never Alone Rule: Supervisors and ministry leaders should take every precaution to never be alone with a child or youth in an inaccessible area. These circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Automobiles or vans, when picking children up or taking them home
- Classrooms, offices or areas without windows or half-doors
- Classrooms, offices, or areas with locked doors
- Cabins at camp, or tents or hotel rooms at overnight events

If specific circumstances ever create a situation requiring an adult or leader to be alone with a child, such as the need to take a child home or other place by personal automobile, parental notification must be given, and permission received in advance before the trip takes place. If permission is obtained over the phone, a second adult must verify the approval, or the parent is to be asked to text the parent and/or ministry area leader to acknowledge that permission was given. This helps ensure notification and permission were given and minimizes the likelihood of false accusation.

Open Door Rule: All activities involving children and youth should take place in open areas that are clearly visible. Classrooms shall either have windows or half-doors for continual visibility. Offices shall have windows, or the door shall remain open while the office is in use.

Counseling: All counseling sessions with children or youth shall take place in rooms or offices with sufficient windows so that visibility is unrestricted and continual. Keep the door of the office or meeting room open, and have the other adult or floater sit outside the office where that person can see the pastor and hear what is being said.

After three counseling sessions concerning the same issue, ministry staff will refer the student and family to a professional counselor. All incidents of suspected abuse and neglect revealed during the session will be reported in accordance with this policy and North Carolina law.

Visitors: Visitors must be authorized by a supervising staff person. A visitor is defined as someone who is not the parent of a child/youth in the group.

Six Month Rule: All volunteers wishing to give service in the areas of children, youth or vulnerable adult ministry should demonstrate an active relationship with JUMC for a minimum of six months. Persons not meeting this requirement may only serve in an assistant capacity with two other non-related adults.

Advance Notice & Permission: Parents/Guardians should always be given advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. This shall specifically include notification regarding any event in which a worker/supervisor will be alone with a child. Written permission must be given by the parent/guardian for their child's participation.

Teacher/Child Ratios: To provide adequate supervision for the safety and well-being of children/youth participating in the programs and activities of JUMC, the following ratios (adults: children/youth) are recommended:

0 – 12 Months	1:4
1 – 3 Years	1:6
3 – 5 Years	1:10
Kindergarten – 12th Grade	1:12

For large group activities on campus, such as concerts, youth fellowship and special speakers: 1:20 ratio, with chaperones spread throughout and around all areas of the event.

If a volunteer finds themselves in a circumstance where ratios are not being met, the volunteer needs to notify the person in charge and make every attempt to resolve the situation. If at the end of a class, one adult must leave before all the participants have been picked up, the remaining adult must leave the door open, move the class to a high traffic area, or into a room with another adult.

Guidelines for Physical Contact: Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family background, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical affection to children or youth shall only be in the presence of others. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:

> **Encouraged List:** Hugs (one-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact); appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children five and younger; handshakes for greeting and congratulations; congratulatory and assuring pats on the back; walking hand-in-hand; an arm around the shoulder; casual/gentle contact during activities may be on the child's/youth's head, shoulders, arms and hands; brief hugs of greeting, congratulations, encouragement or consolation.
>
> **Discouraged List:** Avoid ***initiating*** full contact, body-to-body hugs or kisses; discourage lap sitting with school-age children (rather, encourage them to sit next to you); backrubs; any touching that involves even the slightest possible sexual connotation is forbidden; touching in anger, disgust or aggression is forbidden, as is tickling, hitting, slapping or shaking a child or youth; *physical punishment will not ever be used.*

It is recognized that the physical needs and emotional nurturing of infants and toddlers require more touching and holding than would be appropriate for older children and youth.

Clothing: Adults, children and youth shall be fully, modestly, and appropriately clothed at all times. Swimwear of adults, youth and children shall be modest.

Nametags: ALL volunteers working with children/ youth should wear a name tag.

Bathroom Rules: Never send a child into the restroom alone without checking the restroom first.

1. Preschool classrooms with bathrooms: if a child needs assistance in the bathroom, an adult may enter to assist, leaving the door propped open.
2. For classrooms without bathrooms: an adult should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom.
3. If only one child is taken to the bathroom, and the child does not need help, the supervising adult should prop open the bathroom door and wait outside the main bathroom door.
4. If a child needs assistance in the bathroom, one adult should stand at the stall with the child while the other adult stands at the open bathroom door watching the interaction between the child and attending adult.

Sign-In and Sign-Out Procedures: Children, ages infant through 12th grade, must be checked in when they are away from their parent/guardian. Children and youth should not be roaming the church buildings or premises without adult supervision. Parents must pick up child from the group leader. Parents are responsible for children and youth when not part of the church's scheduled event.

Sick Children/Youth: For the health and well-being of all, children/youth who have vomited or had a fever in the previous 24 hours should not attend church programs. Children who become ill after arriving should be isolated but never left unattended. Parents or guardians should be contacted immediately.

Appropriate Discipline: A *One, Two, Three* discipline policy will be adhered to.

One: Leaders will TALK to a child who is not following rules, being disrespectful or being disruptive. The child will be given the chance to change behavior.

Two: If the inappropriate behavior continues, the leaders will SEPARATE the child from the group for a short period of time. (Rule of thumb – one minute for each year of age.) Children should never be unattended.

Three: If the inappropriate behavior continues when the child returns to the group, CONTACT the ministry supervisor to assist. Supervisors will make decisions about the next steps to be taken.

Corporal punishment and shaming are strictly prohibited.

Required Information on Minors: Appropriate personal data shall be obtained and maintained on file in the applicable ministry office and shall include: parental/Guardian consent and emergency contacts; medical release and insurance; medical conditions, restrictions and physician contacts; behavioral problems, psychiatric treatment or alcohol/drug rehab.

Nursery Procedures

Paid staff will follow all Safe Sanctuary Guidelines. The nursery should always be attended by two adults. Rooms that are subdivided into sections (i.e., #107 and #109) and easily visible to the person supervising may have one leader in each section.

Diapering

- Diapers may only be changed when at least two adults are present.
- Inform parents/guardians if supervising adult notices anything out of the ordinary or concerning while changing the infant's diaper.
- A child is never allowed to be left alone while on the changing table.
- The changing table pad should be wiped down after each diaper change, and the cover replaced if it becomes soiled.

Feeding Children

- Parents must write down feeding and napping instructions on the sign in sheet. All bottles and sippy cups must be labeled with the child's name.
- Bottles may be fed to infants by volunteers only according to the instructions given by the parents.
- Volunteers must abide by all dietary requests given by the parents.
- The nursery staff and volunteers will not administer any medication.

Cleaning Toys

- The toys used are to be sprayed with sanitizer or wiped down with Clorox wipes at the end of each day the nursery is used by the nursery workers.

A Parent Should be Called When

- An infant has cried hard for longer than fifteen minutes.
- A child is injured and needs medical attention.
- A child's behavior is disruptive to the entire class or harmful to other children.

Reporting Accidents and Incidents

- In the event a child is injured or injures another child, an incident report form will be completed by the nursery staff, and the Nursery Coordinator will contact the parents and Ministry of Faith Formation. A copy of the Incident Report will be given to the Facilities Manager and Minister of Faith Formation for insurance purposes.

Maintaining Cleanliness in the Classroom

- All tables, countertops, highchairs, and booster seats should be sprayed with sanitizer or wiped down with Clorox wipes at the end of each day the nursery is used by the nursery workers.
- All supplies should be put away at the end of each day the nursery is used, and counters, shelves, drawers, cabinets, tables, and floors should be free of clutter.

Transportation

Whenever vehicles, including vans, and private vehicles are used to transport children, the following rules apply:

- Staff should not transport minors alone or in their personal vehicles.
- All Church rules governing the use of Church vehicles shall be followed, including the use of seatbelts and, if required, passenger lists.
- Owners and drivers of private vehicles must demonstrate proof of insurance and have a valid driver's license. The minimum age of drivers is 21. Youth may not drive to off-campus events.
- The number of persons being transported in each vehicle may not exceed the number of available seatbelts, and seatbelts shall be used at all times the vehicle is in motion.
- If possible, children under twelve may not be transported in the front seats of cars equipped with passenger-side airbags.
- Passenger lists should be used to verify the presence of all children when vehicles are loaded and unloaded. Copies of the entire group's emergency forms will be in each vehicle or will be available digitally.
- When children are transported, two persons shall check to be sure that each vehicle is empty of all children when unloading.
- Drivers will obey the speed limits and all the laws of the roadway. Fines for any traffic violation, including parking violations, are the sole responsibility of the driver. The church will not reimburse drivers for these fines.
- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving church vehicles, owned or rented, unless in an emergency.
- For any drive outside of the local area, two authorized JUMC drivers adults must be in each vehicle.
- All accidents involving youth and/or church property (no matter how minor) must be reported to the Ministry Area Director, Facilities Manager and Chair of Trustees.

Overnight Activities and Off-Site Events

- Children & youth participating in extended church-sponsored programs, events or ministries, such as overnight events, canoe trips, mission trips and retreats should be well-known to the church staff and volunteer supervisors. The desire for fellowship and outreach notwithstanding, if a child or youth wants to invite a guest friend who is not known, the recommendation of a known parent who will vouch for the friend is necessary. Members of the ministry staff, in their discretion, may deny an invitation to a guest friend.
- Children and youth known to be hostile, difficult to control, resistant to authority, rebellious, aggressive toward others or prone to outbursts of anger, physical violence or unpredictable behavior may not be permitted to participate. The Ministry Area Director will have the final say.
- Children and youth exhibiting inappropriate behavior as described above or who are discovered to be using or in the possession of alcohol, illegal drugs, the use/abuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs, or weapons will be sent home immediately at the expense of their parents. Their parents shall be notified, and they shall be forbidden from participation in future events until approval is given for their participation by the Ministry Area Director.
- During church sponsored events, supervisors, counselors, and chaperones will not be in the possession of alcohol or illegal drugs, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs or they will be immediately relieved of the supervision and custody of minors and be removed from proximity to minors. They (Volunteers) may not return to service until approval is given for their participation by the Ministry Area Director and Senior Pastor.
- Chaperones, counselors, and supervisors shall remain present with and visible to those youth and children assigned to their care throughout the trip or event. When not specifically assigned, they should make every effort to be well distributed among the children and youth.
- A signed Release of Liability Form is required for all children, youth and adults attending an overnight activity or any off-campus trip.
- All supervising adults should be Safe Sanctuary approved volunteers.
- Offsite events for children and youth require the appropriate adult to children/youth ratios, as indicated previously in this policy.

- Overnight trips require the following ratios:
    - Grades 1 – 3 1:6
    - Grades 4 – 8 1:8
    - Grades 9 -12 1:8
- Youth Ministry Staff will strive to provide mixed/non-gendered housing for overnight youth trips. Youth Ministry staff will strive to communicate in advance with retreat centers and mission partners about accommodations.
- There will be a minimum of three people when youth and adults are housed in the same room.
- No youth and adult shall share the same bed. In some instances, we use motel-style accommodations with two double beds per room. The youth will share one bed: the adult(s) the other bed.
- When tent camping, adults should not sleep in tents with children.
- Appropriate, modest sleeping attire must be worn by leaders, children, and youth, especially outside of the sleeping quarters.
- All participants will change clothing discreetly in privacy. Nudity and disrobing in front of others is prohibited.

Digital Safety

When posting online, avoid using commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous towards Jamestown United Methodist Church or the United Methodist Church, clergy, staff or members. Behaviors and actions online are also a reflection of how other Christians and people associated with how JUMC may be portrayed. All participants and church leaders shall adhere to the following guidelines, particularly when working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults:

- Images and names of children, youth and vulnerable adults shall not be utilized on any website or application without explicit consent.
- Clergy and laity are accountable to one another and have a shared responsibility for living the gospel in all relationships, including those online.
- Leaders shall never initiate a social media connection (friend, follower, link, etc.) If a child, youth, or vulnerable adult initiates such a connection with a leader, weigh the advisability and potential risks of such an online relationship.
- To maintain confidentiality, under no circumstance should pastoral concerns be shared on social media unless given permission by the individual or family.

We recognize that texting and social media is the primary form of communication for many children and youth today, so in a desire to meet them where they are while simultaneously keeping them safe, consider the following:

- Private text messaging is allowed. When possible, it shall be shifted to a group text that shall include two authority figures.
- No messaging shall take place on a platform where messages automatically disappear (i.e. Snapchat, Vanishing Mode in Instagram)
- Church staff may message students individually, particularly in regard to offering pastoral care, with the acknowledgement that text and other digital communication should be saved for review at any time. Additionally, it is advised that church staff stay in communication with each other about who they are texting.

When gathering online with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, be sure to use a “ministry-based” account. If more than one adult cannot be present, share with another adult when the gathering will take place and for how long in addition to video recording and saving the chat.

Bullying Prevention Policy

Jamestown United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe, caring, nurturing environment for all our children. We have zero tolerance for bullying and will handle any incidences that occur according to the policy detailed herein.

Definition of Bullying: Bullying is a pattern of behavior in which a person is "exposed, repeatedly and, over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons." Negative action is when a person intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another person, through physical contact, through written, verbal, or electronic expression or in other ways. The intent is to make fun of, embarrass, or exclude others. There is an imbalance of strength and the child who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending him/herself and is somewhat helpless against the student or students who harass.

Bullying can take on many forms:

- Saying hurtful and unpleasant things
- Making fun of others
- Using mean or hurtful nicknames
- Completely overlooking someone from a group of friends
- Attempting or threatening to inflict injury on another person
- Spreading false rumors
- Sending mean notes, texts, etc.
- Using any type of social media to make fun of, embarrass, or exclude others
- Trying to get other students to dislike another person
- Damaging a student's property

Reporting Procedure:

1. Any person who believes that he or she has been the victim of bullying, or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying, shall report alleged acts immediately.
2. Reports are made by completing the JUMC Bullying Report Form.
3. Reports should be made to the staff member in charge of the ministry area when the alleged bullying took place.

Church Action:

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, the appropriate church staff shall:

1. Talk with any volunteers who were present to determine the validity of the complaint.
2. Meet with the Senior Pastor to discuss situation and determine consequences.
3. Contact parents of both parties to inform them of the alleged incident.
4. Forms will stay on file with the Minister of Faith Formation/Youth Director until children/students involved complete high school.

Determining the line between teasing and bullying:

We live in a society where teasing is part of our culture. Teasing, however, should not cause pain or hurt to another. Teasing is considered playful and okay when …

- It is done by someone you have a relationship with.
- It is used as a way of fitting in or when talking with friends and everyone involved is getting an equal piece of the "teasing pie," one person does not get more than their fair share of the teasing, and a group does not gang up on one person.
- Comments are not making fun of someone's disabilities, ethnicity, faith, or characteristics that are out of the person's control.
- Comments are not meant to harm in any way and if when asked, the person would stop making them.
- It is a one-time behavior, not repeated.

Considerations for Persons Identifying as LGBTQ+

We acknowledge the sensitivity of this topic, particularly in the Methodist Church at large, and recognize that the church is filled with a diversity of thought and perspective. The following are the best practices and procedures to allow accommodations to assure that each person is included in our community:

- Make no assumptions about a person's sexual orientation or identity. Approach each conversation openly and without assumptions.
- Educate leaders on proper terminology. There will be no tolerance for exclusivity or language that is homophobic, bullying, judgmental or dismissive by a child, youth, or leader. Leaders should be prepared to intervene in such scenarios and should report to the appropriate staff member for follow up.
- Support trans youth by normalizing the sharing of pronouns and acknowledging their own chosen name and pronouns.
- If an individual shares their sexual orientation or gender identity with a leader in confidence, honor and respect that confidence by sharing this information only with those who need to know this information to care or minister to them. Do not share with or assume other leaders, students, or parents in their life know. If a leader is unsure whom the student is "out" to, ask them. Encourage students to share with their parents, but keep their confidence unless they are at risk, as described under "Indicators of Abuse."
- During programs and activities, youth and leaders should strive to make groups randomly or based on shared interests, rather than sorting by gender or sex exclusively.
- When "male" and "female" restrooms are the only available options, church leaders will communicate a designated "all-gender" restroom.

We will always err on the side of compassion when making decisions regarding LGBTQ+ persons.

Screening, Training, and Selection of Volunteers

Screening: All persons serving in leadership with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall be:

- An active participant in the church for at least six months or partnered with someone who has been an active participant in the church for at least six months.
- At least 18 years of age and no longer attending high school
- At least five years older than the oldest person they are supervising/leading. (Exception: This does not apply to adults in ministry with vulnerable adults.)

As part of the selection process, volunteers must:

- Attend and complete Safe Sanctuary Training. If you are unable to attend a training, you must watch the recorded training, and read the full JUMC policy. Each staff member and adult volunteer must sign a statement certifying that they have attended a Safe Sanctuary training session and have read, understood, and will abide by this policy.
- Complete a confidential Ministry Service Application which requires the provision of various biographical and background information.
- A background check will be ordered. Background checks are conducted by a third-party private investigative service under contract with the Church. This does not include a credit check. Volunteers are asked, but not required, to pay $8 to cover the cost for their background check.
- The Ministry Service Application, Background check information and the reference responses will be reviewed by the appropriate Ministry Director and the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator.
- Volunteers may be requested to meet with the Senior Pastor or Ministry Director to discuss information on the Ministry Application.
- If not approved, volunteers will receive a letter stating why they have been declined as a volunteer.
- Each volunteer has the right to view the information gathered as well as the opportunity to dispute any of the information gathered by JUMC.
- Youth under 18 years of age will not have a background check; however, they will need to complete a Student Volunteer Application Form.

Past Abuse: Jamestown UMC recognizes that some people have experienced abuse in their past such as alcohol abuse, substance abuse or have been a victim of sexual abuse. We affirm that our God is a God of Healing, Wholeness and Peace. It is our prayer and hope that these persons have received counseling for such abuse and treatment, if necessary. Our concern is that the absence of counseling may have a negative impact on the way a person relates, teaches, and responds to children and youth. It is Jamestown UMC's recommendation that such people not apply to work with children and youth until they have received sufficient counseling and can demonstrate an ability to safely and effectively interact and work with children and youth. We also would appreciate the opportunity to talk with you and help you find counseling. While these past experiences are tragic, they do not prevent a person from volunteering with children and youth.

All information obtained from applications, interviews, references, and background checks will be held in strict confidence. All information related to volunteers will be maintained in a locked file under the supervision of the Minister of Faith Formation or the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator. Information will be kept on file until membership is transferred to another church, the applicant moves out of town, or the applicant is no longer actively involved with the ministry. The information will be shredded at that time. If a volunteer comes back to the church, they must begin the application process again. *If a volunteer has been convicted of any abusive offense, including, but not limited to, any sexual assault, indecent liberties with a minor, armed assault, simple assault, assault inflicting serious injury, simple affray, communicating threats, stalking, or any other like offense, then there is no reason to continue in the process of applying to volunteer with children and youth. Their application will automatically be declined as one who can work with children or youth at Jamestown United Methodist Church.*

Training: All volunteers must attend and complete the JUMC Safe Sanctuary training every other year. If you are unable to attend a training course, you must watch the recorded training, read the full JUMC policy and sign a statement in which you agree to abide by all guidelines as explained in the policy. Ministry Directors are discouraged from allowing new volunteers to serve prior to the completion of initial training. A Safe Sanctuary "full" Training should be done **every other year**. Background checks will be done **every other year** (unless the volunteer has left the church and comes back, then they will begin the application process again). *Ministry Directors are responsible for seeing that initial and annual refresher training is completed by each approved volunteer serving in their respective ministries.*

Reporting and Response Procedures for Suspected Occurrences of Abuse

Reports of abuse shall be made promptly, thoroughly and taken seriously. Discernment and discretion are important, as is the safety of the abused. False accusations can be as devastating to families and individuals as the discovery of actual abuse.

When to Report: Possible circumstances to report would include:

- When a report or complaint *is received from a child or parent*
- When a paid or volunteer staff member *becomes aware of* a possible incident or activity
- When a paid or volunteer staff member *observes* an act or incident of abuse.
- When a paid or volunteer staff member *suspects* abuse is occurring elsewhere, such as at home or school.

How to Report: Procedures to follow if you are made aware of, suspect, or observe an incident:

1. Provide for the protection, physical safety, and emotional security of the child. If you observe an act of abuse or exploitation, you should intervene on behalf of the child to stop the abuse, to the extent that you are not placed in physical danger.
2. Complete an Incident Form. An incident report should be prepared to ensure all essential, needed information is obtained. Listen carefully. Write down everything, including all details, circumstances and witnesses so there will be less chance for misunderstanding later.
3. If your information comes from any other source, remember that you cannot question the child without the permission and presence of the parents or guardians. You are to report, not investigate.

Reporting Process: Procedures to follow once you have gathered the information:

1. Discuss the circumstances with and report your suspicions to your Ministry Area Director. Also give them the original incident report (be sure to keep a copy for yourself).

a. If an allegation of abuse is made against a clergy member or staff person, the report shall be made to the chairperson of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

2. Treat the incident and all information about it with strict confidentiality and privacy. Do not speak with the media on behalf of the Church. That is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor. Please remain available for questions and action as needed.

The following will happen after the above procedures have been done:

The matter will be immediately reviewed by the Ministry Director (Executive Staff member) for appropriate action, law enforcement reporting and follow-up.

1. A Response Team will be assembled within 24 hours. A Response Team is established for the purpose of evaluating, investigating, and responding to reports of known or suspected child abuse. The Response Team consists of persons in the following positions:
    a. Senior Pastor, Chair
    b. Applicable Ministry Director
    c. Administrative Council Chairperson
    d. Executive Staff or Ministers
2. The parents of the victim shall be notified immediately. (Care must be taken when a parent is suspected. In those cases, another relative or the police may be called.) Parents and family will generally assume responsibility for the immediate care of the victim as soon as possible.
3. Until the family can assume care, staff members must see to the safety, security, and protection of the victim. This may include medical care if needed. It will almost always include seclusion from the group and the provision of continuous attention by two staff members.
4. In most cases, the Senior Pastor and applicable Ministry Director will meet immediately with the family of the victim.
5. As soon as possible after the incident is reported, interviews of all persons involved, witnesses, staff and adult supervisors, counselors and chaperones will be conducted by members of the Response Team.
6. After the initial report, children should not be interviewed without the permission and presence of their parents or guardians. This assumes that a parent has not been accused of abuse.

7. The results of all interviews will be delivered verbally and in writing to the Response team.
    a. The Senior Pastor will inform the district superintendent.
    b. The Response Team, upon advice of legal counsel, will determine if the church's insurance carrier is to be advised.
    c. If warranted, the person who initially reported the suspected incident of abuse will notify law enforcement.

Person Accused: Procedure to follow in handling the accused person:

- If the known or suspected abuser is a volunteer that person shall immediately be relieved of all supervision or custody of children and dismissed pending the outcome and resolution of the situation.
- If the known or suspected abuser is a paid staff member, that person shall be immediately suspended from work with pay, pending the outcome and resolution of the situation.

Counseling: In cases of reported, alleged, or known abuse, when the abuse is associated with a church sponsored event or activity, pastoral care will be made available to the victim, family of the victim and family of the alleged abuser.

Media: The Senior Pastor, or his designee, shall serve as the sole contact with the media and address congregational concerns. *If the Senior Pastor is the alleged abuser, a member of the Response Team will serve as the sole contact. This person will be decided by the Response Team.*

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