





# Safe Sanctuary Memorial Drive UMC

OUR CALLING IS TO ENSURE SAFE SANCTUARY  
FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

Throughout the gospels, Jesus provides teachings on providing a peaceable kingdom for all of God's people, including our most precious gifts, our children and youth (Matthew 5:9, Luke 18:15-17).  
The peaceable kingdom begins with sanctuary.



Thank you for volunteering or working  
with children, youth, or vulnerable  
persons at Memorial Drive United  
Methodist Church




Memorial Drive United Methodist Church recognizes the need to have a policy to help prevent abuse of children and youth and to help protect **YOU**, our volunteers and workers.




# What is Safe Sanctuary?

Safe Sanctuary is an intentional expression in making congregations safe places where children, youth, and elders may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith.



Because we believe that Jesus taught us to care for His children and youth, we commit our church to the practice of safe supervision. A Safe Sanctuary policy sets standards for the supervision of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our care. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt policies for the prevention of neglect and abuse.



Therefore, as Christian communities of faith and United Methodist congregations, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth, and vulnerable adults and those who minister to them.



## Safe Sanctuary Policy applies to ALL Persons

- who have any direct or indirect contact with children and youth
- who participate in any activities or events sponsored by MDUMC
- who sponsor activities or events on church property.

# Screening

In order to volunteer with children or youth, you must

- Submit criminal history and background check
- Submit two references
- Participate in and submit agreement to Safe Sanctuary presentation

By signing the forms, you give MDUMC and its employees permission to contact references and agencies needed to clear you of any convicted crimes against children








✓ In order to be approved to work with children and youth:

- Your references indicate your trustworthiness with children

- You must be clear of any convicted crimes against children





× You will NOT be approved to work with children or youth if you have been

- Found to be involved in any activity that you abused or exploited children or youth
- Convicted of a crime against children or youth



Memorial Drive United Methodist Church reserves the right to deny your application after reviewing references, criminal history and background check. This includes those who may have other offenses. All results are confidential.

# Process...

- All staff and volunteers complete application and consent
- By signing the form, you authorize MDUMC to have your references, criminal history and background check processed
- Application is processed by Memorial Drive UMC
- Background check and criminal history are processed by a third party contractor
- Applicant will only be notified if issues arise
- Application and clearance is valid for two years, in which the applicant must participate in this screening and process again.





# Defining Abuse

In all cases, Abuse includes acts or omissions by a person. **NOT** taking action to prevent abuse from happening is an act of omission. If you see something, **SAY** something.



# TYPES OF ABUSE

VERBAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE

SEXUAL ABUSE



## VERBAL ABUSE:

Any verbal act that humiliates,  
degrades or threatens any child or  
youth.



## PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health.



# SEXUAL ABUSE :

Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for the satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4) romantic involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in church sponsored activities, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content.





# SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

The church is meant to be a place free from sexual harassment.

“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 working environment or intimidating or coercive behavior that threatens or results in a tangible employment action (Book of Discipline ¶161I).”

# Abuse defined by the state of Texas

- Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or conservator that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm.
- Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury or substantial harm to the child.
- The current use by a person of a controlled substance, in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child Causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use a controlled substance.





# As defined by the state of Texas Continued...

- Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- Causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- Sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offense of indecency with a child, sexual assault, or aggravated sexual assault Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene or pornographic Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child



## Who do I go to with questions?

There are several portals of entry for volunteers wishing to serve with children or youth.

Children: volunteers wishing to serve in any area allowing them contact with children (6th grade and younger), will be processed through Children's Ministries, Sports Ministries, Children's Weekday School .

Youth: volunteers wishing to serve in any area allowing them contact with youth (7th grade and older), will be processed through the Youth Ministries or Sports Ministries.



# How to Report an Incident

- If needed obtain emergency medical help. (Call 911 if needed)
- Contact the Director of the department you are volunteering for, or the Chief of Staff as soon as possible. These directors will then contact the parents or guardians or authorities.
- Remove **with dignity** the person suspected of abuse from further contact with children/youth.
- The directors will then make sure an appropriate investigation will take place, including authorities if needed. Directors will carefully document the incident in writing from all parties involved. The goal is to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current United Methodist Book of Discipline, appropriate counseling, referrals and continued pastoral visitation. *Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse will be confidential.* It is the responsibility of each individual involved in an alleged incident to follow all legal requirements. This may include calling 911 when needed. The Department of Protective and Regulatory Services can be reached at 800-252-5400
- DO NOT GIVE OUT ANY INFORMATION. SIMPLY STATE THAT ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE ANSWERED BY OUR SPOKESPERSON (Either a MDUMC director, Chief of Staff or a pastor.)

# SAFE SANCTUARY PROCEDURES

**LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE-** All individuals assuming any position of leadership must be Safe Sanctuary certified.

**TWO BY TWO-** There shall be two leaders present when children are present.

**LINE OF SIGHT-** If for some reason you find yourself in a situation where you are alone with a group of children, make sure that you are visible to others.

**SAFETY IN NUMBERS-** Avoid situations in which you are alone with a child. If for some reason there is no other adult available, make sure there are numerous children in attendance rather than a one-on-one situation. There may be times when a non-trained or non-background checked individual will be allowed to temporarily work with children. This is allowable only when Safe Sanctuary certified individuals are in attendance and monitoring the situation.






# PROCEDURES CONTINUED...

**RESTROOM ASSISTANCE-** Most downstairs classrooms are equipped with a restroom right in the classroom. If a child should need toilet assistance, please leave the door ajar while you assist the child. For classrooms without a restroom, children in 1st grade and up may be sent to the restroom in pairs. If an adult needs to accompany the child, please remain outside the restroom in the hallway while the child is in the restroom. Should a situation arise in which an older child (1st grade and older) needs direct assistance, enlist the help of another adult so that two adults are present with the child. If this is a situation which is likely to be “ongoing,” (such as with a child with special needs), a more permanent system can be put into place.

**FIRE ALARMS-**Take a class roster if available and make a headcount before you exit. Evacuate as directed or simply move as far away from building as possible. Once outside, count heads again. Do not return to building until the all clear signal has been given. (do not go to playgrounds)

**HEALTH EMERGENCIES** First aid kits are located in numerous areas. If you call 911, please try to get word to a staff member or adult volunteer who can go to the parking lot to guide the emergency personnel to the correct location. Even if an accident is minor, please fill out an injury report form and turn it in to the Children’s Ministries Office.



APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE Children should be made aware that appropriate behavior is expected. Gentle reminders are always necessary when dealing with children. When these reminders don't work, then discipline needs to move to the next step. In no case is physical discipline an appropriate measure to deal with problems except in the rare situation of having to gently restrain a child who is threatening harm to him/herself or to other.

## APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Physical-Obviously these boundaries change, as children grow older. A young child sitting in the lap of a caregiver is most appropriate whereas an older child or youth sitting in a leader's lap would not be acceptable. Hugs and kisses from a toddler to a leader are very appropriate and much different than the same from a youth.

Emotional- It is important for those working with children and youth not step outside of those lines and allow the younger person to become too attached to them. When a leader recognizes that there might be an issue with these boundaries they should allow great space to come between them and the child in question. If that does not solve the problem then the Director should be notified.





## REDIRECT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR


- Children should have good behavior recognized and encouraged.
- Children should be taught by example through the use of fair and consistent rules.
- Children's behavior should be anticipated. If children are beginning to become unruly, it is time switch activities or to capture their attentions elsewhere.
- Children should be disciplined in a way that is relevant to the behavior involved.
- Children should be given directions that are clear and on their level of understanding.
- Children should be redirected by stating alternatives when their behavior is unacceptable.
- Children should be helped to understand why their conduct is not acceptable.



# Working with youth

Assume all policies previously listed should be applied when working with youth unless specified otherwise in the next slide.






**SAFETY IN NUMBERS** Understanding that there is safety in numbers, one leader can be in contact with multiple youth (7th-12th grade). One on one contact with youth in a closed environment is of concern.

**SUPERVISION OF YOUTH** proper supervision will demand multiple adults at youth events. However, there are times where small groups divide from the larger group and only one adult will be present with multiple youth in these settings. Remembering that there is safety in numbers, this is permissible as long as there is no one-on-one contact with adults and youth.

**AGE RESTRICTIONS** Students under the age of twenty-one, are not considered adults and will not be considered “in charge” of youth. They will be considered assistant leaders and can work with an adult. Each college counselor will be Safe Sanctuary Certified and will be expected to follow the same guidelines and requirements of an adult

**OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS** At events that require overnight accommodations, at least (2) counselors should be present in every room. When staying in a hotel, adults shall sleep in separate rooms from youth; or if necessary for youth to share a room with an adult, adults shall sleep in separate beds from youth so long as any one adult shall not be alone with any one youth. Recognizing accommodations may be restrictive in some cases one adult is adequate, so long as any one adult shall NOT be alone with any one youth.

# Here are tips for avoiding incidents of harassment:



1. Treat everyone with respect and therefore set a good example for the children and youth of our church.

2. Stick to handshakes. If you are going to hug someone, stick to the side-to-side hug which avoids any frontal contact. Take into account the ages involved. Hugging a preschooler may be the most natural thing in the world whereas hugging an older child, youth or adult can be problematic

3. Ask yourself: Is there equal initiation and participation between me and the person I am interacting with? If not, back away.

4. Read other people's verbal and physical cues. When in doubt about physical contact or what you want to say to another individual, back away or stay silent at least for the time being.

5. Be aware of other people's personal space. Don't lean in too closely or whisper in another person's ear.

6. Avoid the use of any sexualized language such as "sexy," "hot," and even more common language such as "beautiful," "gorgeous," etc. Avoid comments of a personal nature such as "That dress gives you the most gorgeous hour-glass figure" or "You look good enough to eat." It's best to avoid compliments if there is any doubt in your mind at all as to how the compliment will be received.


7. Remember: It's not the intent that matters. It's how it is received that is the issue.





# The Safe Sanctuary Executive Committee

This Committee will be called upon when needed to make tough decisions in adhering to Memorial Drive United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures. Annually, Safe Sanctuary Policies and procedures will be reviewed. Both MDUMC staff, laypersons, and pastors will be on this committee.



Individuals who feel they have been violated or who fear they may have unwittingly offended someone, are encouraged to talk to one of our ministers or to the Director of Children's Ministry, or Youth Director or Chief of staff. 713-468-8356