**MOSCOW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICIES, REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES**

***Introduction:*** The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. In our covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we the people of the Moscow United Methodist Church (MUMC) adopt this policy with procedures for the prevention of abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our church.

***Purpose:*** The Moscow United Methodist Church (MUMC) institutes the following Safe Sanctuaries Policy to assure the physical and emotional wellbeing of children, youth, and vulnerable adults while nurturing their faith and making disciples for Jesus Christ with us.

***Statement of Covenant:*** Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation:

* We pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
* We will follow reasonable safety measures in recruiting and selecting workers for ministry programs.
* We will provide training for workers and use appropriate procedures in conducting programs and events for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
* We will have clearly defined procedures for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law and for responding to potential media inquiries if an incident occurs.
* Through relevant building safety measures, we will work proactively to provide a safe, secure, trustworthy environment.

***Conclusion:*** In all our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults this congregation of the MUMC is committed to showing the love of Jesus Christ so that each child of God will be “…surrounded by steadfast love,…established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (Congregational pledge in the Baptismal Covenant, *UMH* page 44).

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**RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

All employees and volunteers in the church who have direct, unsupervised access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults in any ministry setting where unsupervised intervals may occur are required to be recruited and selected using the following procedures. Additionally, any adults convicted of child abuse (sexual, physical, ritual or emotional abuse, neglect), or named perpetrator in a child abuse report through a designated state or county agency, or who are under investigation for, or who have charges pending for child abuse, or whose name is listed on Megan’s Law, will not be accepted as employees or volunteers to have direct, unsupervised access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any church sponsored activity or setting.

1. Sign the Safe Sanctuaries Covenant Statement/Signature Form.
2. Obtain a PA State Criminal Record Check ***every five*** years. If anything occurs or your status changes in regard to this clearance, you must notify the church in writing within seven days of an alleged occurrence.
3. Obtain a ChildLine and Abuse Registry PA Dept. of Human Services Check. If anything occurs or your status changes in regard to this clearance, you must notify the church in writing within seven days of an alleged occurrence.
4. Follow the regulations set forth in the *Notification of New Requirements under Child Protective Services Law dated December 11, 2014. (NNR)*
5. Be consistent in attendance of worship and/or activities for a minimum of six months prior to serving.
6. Attend the annual meeting to review this policy.
7. Attend a “Nuts and Bolts” training session every three years.

 

8. Sign job description. 8. Provide three written references – one

9. Submit a job application, provide from within the congregation and two from

 three written references – none of which outside, none of which can be related to the

 can be related to the applicant, and prospective volunteer and interview with the

 properly interview. pastor and designated church leader. (DL)

10. Obtain a Federal Bureau of 9. Obtain a Federal Bureau of Investigations

 Investigations (FBI) Criminal (FBI) Criminal Background Check (if lived in

 Background Check and ***every five*** PA for less than 10 years), otherwise sign and

 years thereafter. notarize the Susquehanna Conference Affidavit

 and every FIVE years thereafter.

**TRANSPORTERS**

1. ***Provide background check of State Motor Vehicles Records. (Can be completed at*** [***https://apps.pa.egov.com/IDR***](https://apps.pa.egov.com/IDR)***, choose the 10 year option. The cost is 9.00).***
2. Provide a copy of their valid driver’s license.
3. Provide current proof of auto insurance, (if using personal vehicle.)

\*\*If anything occurs or your status changes in regard to this record or license and insurance information, you must notify the church in writing within seven days of alleged occurrence.

**SAFETY REGULATIONS**

**Two Unrelated Adult Rule**: Adult employees and volunteers are asked to observe the “minimum of two unrelated adults rule” at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth at a church-sponsored event or activity.

**Adult “Roamers”:** who move in and out of rooms or areas may be used as a second adult.

**Age Requirements:**  Adult volunteers are those who are at least 18 years of age and who are five years older than those children whom they are leading, ministering to or supervising. Youth “Helpers” must be at least three years older than those they are helping. However, the Youth Helper is not to be considered an adult for the “Two Adult Rule”.

**Observing Behavior:** All employees and volunteers are asked to be observant for unusual behaviors and signs of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse.

**Leave Doors Open or Meet in Rooms which have Doors with Windows**

**Overnight Accommodations:** No adult should ever sleep alone with a child (or children) or youth in a room. When traveling, adult chaperones must reserve separate rooms from children or youth. Only children/youth of the same sex are allowed to sleep in the same room. If sleeping in an open space in the church, divide the boys from the girls and be sure the chaperones are located near doors and between the boys and girls. It is appropriate at an all girls or all boys event to have the same sex chaperones only. However, at any event where there will be boys and girls sleeping, there must be both male and female chaperones.

**Transportation:** Whenever traveling, be sure all children/youth in the vehicle have turned in a signed permission slip by their parent/guardian. Drivers and all passengers will wear seat belts. Drivers must be a minimum of 25 years of age or older. If the Two Non-related Adult Rule is not feasible to maintain, drivers will make reasonable effort to not transport less than two (2) participants at a time. Each vehicle should have a first aid kit, and one (1) seatbelt per occupant. Drivers will practice safe driving procedures such as assuring that all passengers remain properly secured throughout the trip, and by obeying all posted speed laws and regulations. The event’s coordinator should provide as necessary any appropriate maps, directions, and emergency contact numbers to each driver, as well as a communication plan for contacting assistance should an emergency arise.

**First Aid/CPR:** It is recommended that event coordinators attempt to secure at least one (1) adult with current certification in First Aid and CPR for each trip or event, and that all adult leadership participating in the trip or event is aware of the identity of such person(s).

**Adult/Youth Ratio:** Enough adults should be present at church sponsored activities to ensure adequate safety supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We the MUMC, follow the Staff/Leader Supervision Minimum Ratios for onsite activities as set forth by the Susquehanna Conference – Nursery – Two Years of age 1:4, Three – Four years of age 1:6, Kindergarten – Sixth Grade 1:8, Seventh Grade – Twelfth Grade 1:10, Special Needs 1:2 and for Off Site Overnight Activities/Events (in addition to the two adult rule) – Nursery – Four Years 1:3, Kindergarten – Sixth Grade 1:5, Grades Seventh – Twelfth 1:8, Special Needs 1:2.

**Appropriate Attire:** Clothing is expected to be modest and appropriate for a Christian environment.

**Proper Display of Affection:** Physical touch is an important element in the communication of love and care. It is an essential part of the nurturing process that should be characteristic of our ministry. Adults need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the special and differing needs and preferences of each individual child. Physical contact should be age and developmentally appropriate.

1. Appropriate Touch – The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine, and positive displays of God’s love:
2. Meet the child at eye level by bending down or sitting.
3. Listen to him/her with your eyes as well as your ears.
4. Hold the child’s hand while listening or speaking to them or walking to an activity.
5. Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when confronting or quieting is needed.
6. Pat a child’s head, shoulder, or back when redirecting the child’s behavior. This helps the child focus on what you are saying and is helpful with children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
7. Hold a preschool child who is crying.
8. Inappropriate Touch – The following types of touch must be avoided:
9. Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you.
10. Extended hugging and tickling.
11. Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit. (exception: properly assisting a child in the rest room as set forth within this policy).
12. Carrying an older child or sitting them on your lap.
13. Being alone with a child.
14. Giving a full contact, body-to-body hug.

**Bathroom Procedures:**

Non toilet trained children will be changed by their parents only. If the need arises, staff or volunteers are to notify the parent/guardian immediately to come and change the child.Young children may be escorted by an adult to the restroom. Children are to remove and replace their own clothing. Adults may assist with closures only in open doorway. Older children should inform an adult when they leave the room to use a restroom and when they return.

**Privacy:** If circumstances arise in which there is a need to speak to a child/youth alone, do so in as open manner as possible. If the situation calls for immediate attention, meet in a room where people walking by can see the two of you talking. Always leave the door open and be sure you are meeting in a location where there are other people nearby and in sight.

**Discipline:** Use discipline techniques that show respect and care. Corporal punishment is never to be used.

**Parental Permission:**  Permission forms for church sponsored events and trips should include participant’s name, address, birthday, parent/legal guardian information, telephone number, emergency contact information, pertinent information about the participant such as medical history and insurance information, are required. Permission for pictures to be taken and used in any and all promotional materials is required.

**Others:** Additionally, all other conditions that pose a safety or health hazard should be eliminated.

**Facility Usage Agreement:** Non-MUMC organizations who utilize church property for their programming shall complete a Facility Usage Agreement. In the event that the activities offered by a non-MUMC organizations will place children or youth under age 18 in the care and supervision of persons other than their own parents/guardians, the person in charge of the non-MUMC organization must comply with this policy.

**Gender Non-Disparity:** Overnight events attended by child(ren)/youth(s)/vulnerable adults(s) of both genders must be adequately chaperoned by adults of both genders.

**Medications:** All medications and medication instructions shall be given to a designated adult prior to the trip for disbursement as appropriate, and will be enclosed in its original container (including prescription medications). [Exception: Epipens and inhalers may be carried by child(ren)/youth(s)/vulnerable adult(s), with the understanding that they will be secured and out of sight unless needed. Due to the nature of these medications, adult leaders will be aware that the child(ren)/youth(s)/vulnerable adult(s) is carrying medication, and will be familiar with how to use an Epipen and inhaler in case of emergency]

**Buddy Systems and Check-ins:** Appropriate buddy systems, check-in times, and appropriate male and female adult supervision need to be established for each ministry or event. The staff person or volunteer in charge of the ministry or event will assure the setting (and any equipment used) is appropriate for the event, and by implementing the above-named measures, will minimize risk of incident or injury to all participants. Events where direct adult supervision of child(ren)/youth(s)/vulnerable adult(s) is not feasible (e.g. *Creation*, amusement parks, youth rallies and other large-group public events) will, at the minimum, incorporate a 3-5-person buddy system and check-in for all participants as part of appropriate adult supervision.

**Record-Keeping/File Management:** All documents and forms that are signed by employees, volunteers and participants must be kept in appropriate, locked files on church property. Permission forms for participants must be taken with leaders on any and all off-site events/trips and kept in a safe, private place.

**SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

Obtain written parent/legal guardian permission through Moscow UMC’s opt in/opt out form (Appendix B). In addition to general permission to participate in a conference ministry or event, obtain written advance parent/legal guardian permission for children and youth, and personal permission for vulnerable adults, in writing for:

1. Taking and using photos of participants. Use includes, without limitation, posting on any websites, sending them in e-mail or by cell phone messages, making videos for any use or reproducing them in brochures, posters, or newspapers.
2. E-mailing, Instant Messaging (IM’ing), calling, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by computer, PDA, or sell phone (keep in mind that “free” minutes and data plans vary tremendously, even with the same carrier); and,
3. The sharing of any full name or contact information.

Never post easily identifiable information online.

1. Do not use “broadcast” e-mails. Use the “Bcc” option (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information such as event dates, times, locations, or participants.
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult on an electronic prayer list, use only first names and only then if you think a name is necessary.

Sharing photos electronically.

1. Obtain permissions to use photos or other content (poems, songs, etc.). Keep in mind that intellectual property laws are not necessarily universal and can get rather complicated.
2. Consider using stock or purchased photos.
3. When posting photos, refrain from using names, and never use last names or identifiable information.
4. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission. Check to make sure nametags are not distinguishable.
5. Use low-resolution photos whenever possible and slightly blur/pixilate photos.
6. Block “save photo as” options on websites. (As a web savvy person for assistance.)
7. Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.

Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, 7Villages, Xanga, Friendster, Plaxo, Twitter, SnapChat, etc) and others (Refrain from using personal social media presence for ministry. Use group social media site e.g. Facebook site for the youth group).

1. Restrict who can be a friend.
2. Do not post anything to the social networking site that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church newsletter or bulletin. (The same goes for blogs.)
3. Do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc. and monitor and remove such material.
4. Encourage children, youth, and vulnerable adults to follow these same guidelines.
5. Consider including terms and conditions of use on the site, advising that inappropriate content must not be posted and will be taken down, etc.

Limit individual communications with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and then only if you have obtained advance written parent/legal guardian permission.

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner.
2. If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.

**Prayer Requests:** We will limit private information or situations when sharing prayer requests for a minor or vulnerable adult. Specifics such as full names, locations, etc. will not be used unless given permission.

**Deletion:** Any inappropriate material posted to a church related social media site, group or page must be deleted and addressed.

**COPPA:** Do not collect online, or allow third parties to collect online, personal information from children under the age of 13. See Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (“COPPA”) and Federal Trade Commission Rules implementing COPPA (the "Rule"). COPPA and the Rule require specific permissions and privacy policies if a website or online service collects, or allows third parties to collect, personal information if the service is directed to children under the age of 13. Restrictions also apply if the site is directed to a general audience and the organization has actual knowledge that it collects personal information from children under 13 years of age.

**REPORTING PROCEDURES**

**Observing Behavior:** If you have reasonable cause to suspect a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is a victim of abuse a report must be made without exception.

* Immediately call **Childline at 800-932-0313** to make the required report and immediately report to the Designated Leader (DL0 verbally and fill out the Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse Form.
* The written report must be done by the employee/volunteer who observed the alleged abuse.
* The employee/volunteer and the DL will immediately follow through by reporting the concerns to the appropriate municipal, state, or police agencies.
* In addition, a written report on CY-47 Form must be made to the county Children and Youth Agency within 48 hours of your oral report to Childline.

**Emergency Contacts and Confidentiality:** Employees and volunteers are never, under any circumstances, to discuss the allegations of abuse or known abuse situations with anyone beside the Pastor or DL, law enforcement or designated state investigators. It is the duty of the Pastor and/or the DL to handle these matters in a professional and caring manner and to notify the District Superintendent who along with the Conference Director of Communications will handle most inquires about the alleged abuse. The District Superintendent is authorized by the Conference to activate the Crisis Communication Plan. If the Pastor or the DL is unavailable, the District Superintendent is to be directly notified. Let the office administrator or person answering the phone know that this is a confidential emergency. If the person or child is in need of medical attention, appropriate medical professionals or 911 should be contacted for assistance. The parents/guardians of any alleged victim of abuse should be notified immediately, although it is not appropriate to contact the parents/guardians immediately if they are the alleged perpetrators of the abuse. In such circumstances, guidance should be sought from appropriate conference personnel on who should contact the parents/guardians and when this should occur.

**Record-Keeping:** The Pastor, DL, and adult who initially reported allegation should jointly keep a detailed, written record of the steps taken by the church in response to the allegations of abuse.

**RESPONSE PROCEDURES**

**Caring for the Alleged Victim:** Assure the alleged abused person they are genuinely concerned for their safety and wellbeing and will act accordingly and in compliance with this policy. Have someone safe and familiar stay with the alleged victim at all times. If they are in the abuse setting, remove them, take them to a safe, open area in view of other people and contact the pastor or DL immediately. If potential victims are in the abuse setting, remove them; take them to a safe, open area in view of other people. Keep them in the communication loop at all times in an age appropriate manner.

**Caring for a Victim of Known Incidents of Child Abuse:** Assure the person abused and their family (parents/guardians of a child/youth, if appropriate) that the church is committed to their safety and wellbeing and will act accordingly and in compliance with this policy. Have someone safe and familiar stay with the victim at all times. If they are in the abuse setting, remove them, take them to a safe, open area in view of other people and contact the pastor or DL immediately. If the abuser is on site, remove all other children from his or her presence. Keep them in the communication loop at all times in an age appropriate manner.

**Caring for an Alleged Perpetrator and His/Her Family**

Do not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility. Treat the accused with dignity, but immediately remove him or her from further involvement with the youth or children. Share with the alleged perpetrator that he/she is a child of God and should continue with devote prayer throughout and after this allegation. Share with the alleged perpetrator’s family that the accusations will be dealt with in a Christian manner which involves taking the proper steps, both legally, and, following the conference guidelines, to assure timely and compassionate action/resolution for all parties involved. Offer the accused and his/her family options for assistance with counseling services, if needed.

**INQUIRY AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES**

**Personal Inquires:** Write down the name, date, and time of the call or visit. All questions and inquires must be referred to the conference Director of Communications. Let the office administrator or person answering the phone know that this is a confidential emergency.

**Church Community Notification:** Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim’s privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns. This statement may be edited and will be delivered by the Pastor.

**Media Inquiries:** If a member of the media – newspaper, TV station, radio station, magazine – calls or approaches you in person and asks about the situation, get their name and phone number, also write the date and time of inquiry and respectfully tell them you will get back to them with the answer as soon as possible. The following “hold response” is to be used: “I want to make certain we give you the most accurate and up-to-date information. Our Director of Communications can best help you. If you give me your contact information, deadline, and topic you are calling about, I will have him/her return your call as soon as possible.” Be polite, yet firm in responding.

**Do not answer any questions yourself:** Never tell a reporter, “No Comment”, as this response raises concern that the incident (alleged or known) is not being dealt with or taken seriously by our church. Nothing is “off the record”. Treat any statement made as if it will be used publicly, even if the reporter says it is “off the record”.

**MONITORING KNOWN/ALLEGED ABUSERS PROCEDURES**

*The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: “We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms-verbal, psychological, physical, sexual- is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God’s redeeming love.”*

* A monitoring system such as a Shepherding Procedure (church members who will volunteer to shadow or in a steadfast manner “shepherd” the alleged/known abuser while he/she is at church gatherings) is set in place to ensure safety for the Church (the people) and allowance for an alleged/known abuser to participate in spiritual events and activities.
* Set forth a covenant of conduct relationship statement to be signed by the alleged/known abuser, Pastor, DL and/or Council Chair. This statement will include the following: the alleged/known abuser will be in counseling during their church participation, will adhere to the monitoring system as set forth above, know that there are certain named areas of the church that are off limits for entry, will not be placed in a position of church leadership or mentoring position.

**REFERENCES AND CONTACTS**

***Counseling References:***

* Lackawanna County Victims Resource Center 570-963-6717
* Lackawanna County Children & Youth 570-963-6781
* Wayne County Children & Youth 570-253-5102

***Contacts:***

* Pastor: Lori Robinson 570-762-4918
* Designated Leader:
* District Superintendent: Reverend Judy Walker 570-901-1569
* Director of Communications: Janelle Walker 800-874-8474 ext 3613