

First United Methodist  
Church, Inc.  
Rutherfordton, N.C.



**Safe Sanctuary  
Policy and Procedures**

*Approved December 11, 2005; Revised August 28, 2016*

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**FIRST APPROVED 2005; REVISED NOVEMBER 25, 2012**

## **OVERVIEW**

First United Methodist Church (FUMC) is committed to taking reasonable steps to maintain a safe environment for every child and young person involved in its program ministry as we seek to proclaim our faith and follow in the ministry of Jesus Christ in our world.

*Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name 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.

This Safe Sanctuary policy applies to all those who work with children and/or youth at FUMC sponsored programs both on and off church properties.

## **COVENANT STATEMENT**

The Church Council, staff and members of the First United Methodist Church of Rutherfordton are committed to taking reasonable steps to maintain a safe environment in which the risk of abuse of children and youth is reduced. Our goals are to protect children and youth in church programs, to educate workers and caregivers concerning abuse issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the church as a whole, from potential false allegations of abuse and neglect.

We recognize that children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults when participating in church programs and activities, both on and off the church properties. Children and youth will be able to participate in these programs and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. This general policy is applicable to all persons whether compensated staff or volunteers, who conduct programs and activities, offered by the First United Methodist Church of Rutherfordton.



## **GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS WHO DIRECT OR SUPERVISE CHILDREN OR YOUTH**

### **1. Screening Procedures**

- a. Prior to consideration for a position, any candidate who may be working with children or youth shall complete and return a Staff and Volunteer Application. (Pages 10)
- b. The Application shall be carefully reviewed by the Director of Children's and Youth Ministry or other Ministry leader in the area that the applicant will be working.
- c. References can be requested to confirm the information provided on the application.
- d. If the applicant appears to be appropriate for the ministry work, the Director of Children's and Youth Ministry or other Ministry leader will perform an informal or formal interview.
- e. Should FUMC have sufficient reason to believe that an applicant poses a threat to children or youth, and/or has any prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, then such applicant shall be immediately removed from consideration for a ministry position in this work area.
- f. A criminal background check shall be required for all administrative employees of the FUMC, all employees of the TLC Program, all employees of the Friendship Club. All members of the Youth and Children's Councils and all volunteers for lead ministry positions involving contact with children or youth within the church shall be subject to a random background check. Lead ministry volunteer positions shall be defined as Sunday School teachers teaching for a minimum of three months a calendar year, chaperones of overnight youth activities and trips and coordinators of any youth or children's program.

2. **Waiting Period** – No volunteer worker will be considered for any lead ministry position involving contact with children or youth until the candidate has been attending FUMC or is personally known to the ministry leader for at least three months and has met the screening criteria above.

### **3. Supervision**

- a. At least two unmarried adults (over 18) and at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth shall be present during children/youth activities, including events that require church vehicle travel and program events off-campus. No youth may drive personal vehicles when a church vehicle is provided. Exceptions are permitted only with approval of the parent and the ministry leader or in emergency situations.

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- b. During services/events, two unrelated adults shall be in each classroom. If two adults are not present in each classroom, then the door to the room will be left open. If the classroom has a Dutch door, then only the top portion is required to be left open. One adult shall be available to roam in order to monitor activity inside and outside the room(s) where the services/event is held in order to satisfy this requirement.
  - c. Volunteer workers are not to send children to find their parents or release any child to await transportation. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child.
  - d. Open-Door Counseling – At any counseling sessions with children and youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session if the door has no window in it. The session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
  - e. Housing – When possible, youth (ages 11-18) will be housed separately from adults. No youth and adult shall share a 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. Co-ed rooming is not permitted (except married couples and family units). Visitation between males and females is prohibited unless directly supervised in a group setting.
  - f. We train staff and volunteers with appropriate behavior for restrooms and changing.
4. **Disciplinary Problems** – Disciplinary problems shall be reported to the worker's coordinator/supervisor. Workers are not to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Any disciplinary problems will be documented on the Notice of Accident/Incident Report Form.
5. **Injuries or Illness**
- a. A suitable approved substitute, who meets the criteria set forth above, shall be used to take the place of workers who are ill. If it is not possible to find such a substitute, then only substitutes who are personally known to the relevant ministry leader for at least three months or who have been cleared through an immediate background screening may be used.
  - b. Any coordinator/supervisor who becomes aware of any injury to a worker or participant shall take steps to ensure proper medical attention is given to the injured person. If the injury is minor, the parent or guardian should be notified by the coordinator or supervisor of the injury as soon as practical. If the injury requires medical attention, then the parent or guardian of the injured person should be notified along with the worker's coordinator/supervisor as soon as practical. Proper emergency attention should be provided to the injured person, possibly including summoning an ambulance in the interim.

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**6. Internal Notice of Injury, Abuse or Molestation**

- a. A written Notice of Accident/Incident Report Form (Pages 12) shall be prepared by workers whenever an injury requiring medical treatment occurs during a ministry function/event. The incident report shall be forwarded to the worker's coordinator/supervisor and a copy provided to the Administrative Assistant of FUMC.
- b. Workers who become aware of any injury requiring medical treatment, any abuse or molestation or any allegation of abuse or molestation connected with any ministry activity shall promptly inform their coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader of such matter.
- c. If applicable, any coordinator/supervisor who becomes aware of any injury requiring medical treatment, or any abuse or molestation, or any allegation of abuse or molestation connected with any ministry activity at FUMC shall immediately inform the Pastor and shall complete a Notice of Accident/Incident Report Form. (Pages 12)
- d. The Pastor, once informed of possible abuse or molestation of a participant shall ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is promptly informed that abuse or molestation may have occurred.
- e. The accused abuser shall be removed from further involvement with children and youth pending an investigation in accordance with paragraph 9 herein.
- f. If applicable, upon notice of allegations of abuse or molestation to the Pastor, then law enforcement authorities or the Department of Social Services and the church's insurance carrier shall be promptly notified, as well as the District Superintendent and the Conference Director of Communications.
- g. If allegations of abuse or molestation are made against the Pastor, the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall be contacted immediately and shall assume the responsibilities assigned to the Pastor in this policy.
- h. Confidentiality of all persons involved shall be scrupulously safeguarded.

**7. External Notice of Injury, Abuse or Molestation**

- a. If applicable, any coordinator/supervisor who becomes aware of any injury requiring medical treatment, or any abuse or molestation, or any allegation of abuse or molestation shall immediately inform the Pastor and shall complete a Notice of Accident/Incident Report Form. (Pages 12)
- b. If applicable, upon notice of allegations of abuse or molestation to the Pastor, then law enforcement authorities or the Department of Social Services and the church's insurance carrier shall be promptly notified, as well as the District Superintendent and the Conference Director of Communications.

**8. Violation of Policy or Procedures**

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- a. Workers shall promptly notify their coordinator/supervisor of any activity undertaken on their own behalf or by others, which violates this policy or procedure.
- b. Any coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader at FUMC, who becomes aware of a violation of the policy or procedures, shall take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with the policy and procedures by all workers; and shall remove workers from their position if such removal is warranted or if the workers pose a potential threat to others.

9. **Internal Investigation**

- a. Any staff member or volunteer worker who is the subject of an investigation involving allegations of abuse or molestation shall be removed from his or her position pending completion of the investigation.
- b. Any person who is found to have committed acts of abuse or molestation shall be removed from work with children or youth.

10. **Spokesperson for FUMC** – The Pastor or his or her designee shall be the spokesperson following notice of allegations of any abuse or molestation in connection with activities of the ministry. This person will be the only person authorized to convey information on behalf of FUMC concerning the situation in order to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation. This person shall convey only such information as is deemed necessary under the circumstances.

11. **Worker Review and Annual Training**

- a. This policy and procedure shall be reviewed annually with all volunteers and staff to whom it applies.
- b. At least every four years there shall be an update of information completed by all volunteer workers or staff associated with FUMC who will be working in any capacity with children or youth at FUMC. If a volunteer or staff member discontinues service for a period of twelve consecutive months, then an update of information, including a criminal background check if applicable, will be required prior to resuming service.
- c. In the event any staff or volunteer information update suggests or indicates that any staff member or volunteer worker has become unsuitable for working with children or youth, he or she shall be immediately removed from his or her current position(s), and shall not be considered for other positions involving work with children or youth.

12. **Policy/Procedure Revision** – This policy and procedure will be regularly reviewed with legal counsel and can be modified accordingly by action of the Administrative Council in accordance with the Book of Discipline. Any such modification shall be promptly conveyed to all persons affected by the modifications.

## **GUIDELINES FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS**

### **Adults – Volunteer or Staff**

All administrative employees of FUMC, all employees of the TLC Program, all employees of the Friendship Club, all members of the Youth and Children's Councils and all volunteers for lead ministry positions involving contact with children or youth within the church as defined herein, who are over the age of 18, will be subject to a Criminal Background check completed by a company selected by FUMC.

### **Youth – Volunteer**

Volunteers that are under the age of 18 will be exempt from having a criminal background check but must have approval from the appropriate program director/coordinator or supervisor. They will be referred to herein as "Youth Volunteers".

1. Each Youth Volunteer must complete a "Youth Volunteer" application.
2. Youth Volunteers who are tutoring younger children will be under the supervision of an adult leader.
  - a. No Youth Volunteer shall be alone with a child in a room. All doors will be open at all times.
  - b. For Friendship Club, a roving monitor will be in place at all times.
3. Youth Volunteers may not fill any lead ministry volunteer position and may not supervise other youth or children.

## **CHAIN OF CUSTODY PROCEDURES FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS**

**Purpose:** To insure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained throughout the screening process to protect the rights of all prospective volunteers, church members, and church employees, as well as the best interests of the church and its children.

### **1. Initial Background Screening**

- a. As background screens are conducted, the results will be reported to the church by the screening company using a confidential method. The results of these screens will be evaluated by the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, or, in his/her absence, the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- b. Upon evaluation, the results of the screen will be reported to the prospective volunteer by the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
- c. If there are any questions regarding the validity of the results, the prospective volunteer will be allowed to view the written results of the screen. The screening company may be called into consultation to verify results and/or provide more information about the screening results. The Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee will be responsible for maintaining the integrity of this process.
- d. If a prospective volunteer has a dispute regarding the validity of their screen, then the results will be evaluated by a committee of at least three of the following:
  - i. Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee
  - ii. Chair of the Board of Trustees
  - iii. Pastor
  - iv. Chair of the Administrative Council
  - v. A representative of the Screening company
- e. The outcome of this second evaluation will be final.
- f. If the results are verified as correct by the prospective volunteer, then the results will be given to the area chairperson who has submitted the prospective volunteer for consideration. The person will be deemed to be "Eligible to Volunteer" or "Ineligible to Volunteer". To protect the rights of the individual being screened, no other information will be given.

### **2. Record Confidentiality**

- a. All background screening will be held in a separate, locked cabinet in the Administrative Assistant's office. Access to these records will be restricted.

**STAFF AND VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**

The congregation of First United Methodist Church is committed to taking reasonable steps to maintain a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church.

- No person who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church sponsored activity.
- Lead ministry volunteers as defined in the Safe Sanctuary Policy involved with children or youth of our church must have been members of the congregation or be personally known to the ministry leader for at least three months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
- Adult volunteers and staff involved with children or youth shall observe the "Unrelated Two-Adult Rule" and comply with the provisions of the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
- Adult volunteers and staff involved with children or youth shall attend training and educational events provided by the church to keep workers informed of church policies.
- Adult volunteers and staff shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that is abusive or inappropriate.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please be prepared to provide references upon request.

I have completed the Staff and Volunteer Application, and I agree to observe and abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures set forth within.

I further voluntarily release FUMC and any such person or entity listed herein from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**

The congregation of First United Methodist Church is committed to taking reasonable steps to maintain a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Medical Insurance Information**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Insurance Carrier                      Policy Number                      Telephone

Parents/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

In case of emergency contact:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name    Phone    Relationship

**Permission**

I hereby give permission for my son/daughter to volunteer at FUMC of Rutherfordton. I further give permission for medical treatment if deemed necessary in the event of an accident and agree to pay all cost and expenses incurred in connection with such medical services rendered to the aforementioned child(ren) pursuant to this authorization.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Applicant**

I hereby submit my application to volunteer at FUMC of Rutherfordton. I agree to abide by all rules and regulations applicable to the programs that the church sponsors.

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTICE OF ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

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

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

Phone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Male / Female

Name of parents/guardians (if minor): \_\_\_\_\_

Incident Type: Physical Injury / Damage to Property / Verbal Abuse

Details of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Witness (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Any action taken: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to FUMC (circle all that apply): Member / Volunteer / Employee / Visitor / Student

Where did the injury occur? On Campus / Off Campus Where? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the purpose or activity? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was responsible for supervision at the time of injury? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the injured party have personal medical insurance? Yes / No

If yes, name of medical insurance company and policy number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of staff/member person reporting incident

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person who accepted this report

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date