

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

April 2012 Revision



North United Methodist Church

Child and Youth Protection Policy

Overview

1.0 Valuing Safety: North United Methodist Church places a high value on the spiritual, emotional, sexual and physical safety of each child while conducting ministry with children and youth.

2.0 Screening Workers: North United Methodist Church will screen and qualify by designation each individual considered for employment or volunteer work in ministry with children and youth.

3.0 Setting Standards: North United Methodist Church will expect all employees and volunteers to carry out the vision and standard practices set forth for ministry with children and youth.

4.0 Providing Training: North United Methodist Church will provide ongoing training regarding our Child Protection Policy to all employees and volunteers who serve in ministry to children and youth at the level of "leader" or "assistant."

5.0 Assuring Compliance: North United Methodist Church will structure and supervise its ministry with children and youth to assure compliance with our policy and State and Federal laws regarding reporting of child abuse.

6.0 Responding to Emergencies: North United Methodist Church will train all employees and volunteers in ministry to children and youth to take appropriate measures to prevent harm from weather, fire, accidental injury and threats to persons or property.

1.0 Placing High Value on Safety: North United Methodist Church places high value on the spiritual, emotional, sexual and physical safety of each child while conducting ministries to children and youth.

Procedures

1.1 All employees and volunteers will hold safety as the highest priority, reflecting our belief that trust is the foundation of relationship with God. Trust grows only in an atmosphere of safety that is trust-worthy.

1.2 All employees and volunteers will maintain spiritual safety for children and youth by interacting with respect, honesty and caring, thereby honoring each child's vulnerability and trust. Children and youth will be taught and assisted to interact in the same manner.

1.3 All employees and volunteers will maintain emotional safety for children and youth through generous use of encouragement and recognition of choices. Non-blaming language will be used in all situations, and children will be encouraged to do the same.

1.4 All employees and volunteers will maintain sexual safety by honoring the bodies of children and youth. There will be no inappropriate touch nor touch with sexual intent. There will be no discussion of sexual subjects except when following a curriculum provided by North United Methodist Church and paired with another teacher. If a child asks a direct question about sexuality, the question will be referred to parents, since "family questions are best answered by parents."

1.5 All employees and volunteers will maintain a physically safe activity area and activities that protect children and youth from risks to physical safety. This includes removal or avoidance of risks as they become evident.

1.6 All employees and volunteers will employ disciplinary measures only when needed to maintain safety as defined above. Physical force is never to be used for discipline. Holding, blocking, isolating, or escorting may be used with discretion when clearly for the purpose of safety.

2.0 Screening Workers: North United Methodist Church will screen and qualify by designation each individual seeking employment or volunteer work in ministry to children and youth to assure the safety of each child.

Procedures

2.1 All employees and volunteers will complete a standard application (see appendix A).

2.2 All employees and volunteers must be at least 21 years old to be considered an adult.

2.3 All employees and volunteers will be assigned a designation for service based on meeting of screening requirements.

- a. The designation of "leader" is required for all adult employees and regular adult volunteers who serve more than one time per month, serve in a leadership role, or serve as chaperones for children or youth events that include overnight stays. These individuals will be screened and trained to be partners in implementing our child protection policy. It is preferred that leaders have at least six (6) months regular attendance at North United Methodist Church.
- b. The designation of "assistant" is required for all non-adult employees and all adult regular volunteers who serve more than six (6) times per year or who serve as chaperones for events that require overnight stays. These individuals will be screened and trained to serve as assistant to a "leader." Non-adult assistants may not yet meet age requirements or have not completed criminal background checks necessary to qualify for a "leader" designation. Non-adult volunteers or non-adult employees may not serve as chaperones for children or youth. Such volunteers must be invited to participate by the Pastor of Children's Ministries, Minister of Youth, or the Child Care Supervisor.
- c. The designation of "helper" is required for an occasional worker who serves less than six (6) times per year and does not accompany children or youth at events that require overnight stays. These individuals do not necessarily receive training and are expected to follow the direction of program leaders regarding child protection policy whenever they serve.

2.4 All adult church employees and volunteers who work with children or youth will be required to complete a screening process prior to participating in children/youth programs or activities. The screening process will include but not necessarily be limited to: criminal background check, reference check, and personal interview(s). The church reserves the right to, at its discretion, conduct criminal background checks of any leader or assistant during such time the person is serving in this capacity.

2.5 All information received during the screening process will be reviewed by the appropriate supervisory personnel of children and youth ministries. Individuals may obtain a copy of their own background check from the church if requested.

2.6 Volunteers who serve as "helpers" on a one-time basis at a program designated as a "public event" are exempt from the screening process.

3.0 Setting Standards: North United Methodist Church will expect all employees and volunteers to carry out the vision and standard practices set forth for ministry to children and youth.

Procedures for Care of Children

3.1 Only screened and designated Leaders, Assistants, and Helpers may serve as care providers to children and youth. A parent or family member may stay with a child to ease the transition into the room but not as a care provider.

3.2 Each child in childcare must be signed into the room and assigned an appropriate nametag as part of our Child Identification System. The sign-in sheet contains the child's name, the parent or family member's name, whereabouts of parent or family member and the tag number. The tags are paired so that both child and family member will have a tag identical in appearance and number. At pick up time, children may be identified by matching each child's name to the family tag.

3.3 For each child, we will file the child's name, the name of a parent or guardian and contact information (phone or address) to have in case the need arises to contact families on an urgent basis.

3.4 At least two adult Leaders, preferably unrelated, must be present in the room whenever children age 18 and younger are present.

3.5 Every reasonable effort will be made to avoid situations where a Leader, Assistant, Helper or any other adult is alone with one child.

3.6 Childcare rooms will be adequately staffed to care for children according to the following guidelines:

Children ages Birth – 2:	1 caregiver per 4 children
Children ages 3 – 5:	1 caregiver per 5 children
Children ages 6 – 11:	1 caregiver per 6 children

3.7 Childcare staff will remove choking and age-specific injury hazards from the Infant and Toddler rooms. This includes scissors, tacks, paint, chalk (any item that can fit through a toilet paper tube is too small); phone cords, dried beans, plants, paintbrushes / pencils that can poke. Babies should be laid on their sides or backs to sleep, never on their stomachs.

3.8 Childcare providers will follow the printed age-specific guidelines posted in each childcare room.

3.9 Childcare notes are used to receive special instructions and to provide observations, comments about the child's experience in childcare. Childcare staff will give written or oral feedback to a parent or family member of each child at pick up time.

4.0 Ongoing Training: North United Methodist Church will provide ongoing training regarding our child protection policies to all employees and volunteers who serve in ministries to children or youth as a "leader" or "assistant."

Procedures

4.1 All new leaders and assistants will attend an annual training session or meet with the Pastor of Children or Minister of Youth Ministries to learn our philosophy of safety.

4.2 All leaders and assistants are trained to understand and implement the child protection policies of North United Methodist Church, including safety training, standard procedures for care, prevention and identification of child abuse or neglect, and response to suspicion or allegations of child abuse or neglect.

4.3 All leaders and assistants will be trained to identify abuse and neglect in the following ways:

- a. Sexual abuse – includes any interaction between a child and another person in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator and/or any additional person. This contact or interaction can include rape, molestation, forcing a child to look at or fondle the sexual parts of another person, and exploitation of a child through pornography and prostitution.
- b. Physical abuse - Child physical abuse is any physical force such as hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc. applied by an adult or significantly older youth in a position of care or authority to a child.
- c. Social/emotional abuse - Child social/emotional abuse is any belittling, hateful or blaming words or actions directed toward a child, including discipline by humiliation.
- d. Spiritual abuse - Child spiritual abuse is imposing the will of an adult or older youth by exploitation of a child's vulnerability and trust, especially when justifying these actions by referring to God or religious beliefs.
- e. Child neglect - Child neglect is denial of basic needs such as food, water, cleanliness, clothing and sleep, whether as a means of discipline or otherwise.

5.0 Supervision and Legal Compliance: North United Methodist Church will structure and supervise children and youth in a manner that assures compliance with our policy and State laws regarding reporting of child abuse.

Procedures

5.1 All employees and volunteers will comply with Indiana state law by immediately filing an incident report of suspected child abuse to the Pastor of Children or the Minister of Youth or their designee, who will then make a report to Child Protection Services within the appropriate timeline - not to exceed 24 hours at a maximum. If the Ministers of Children or Youth are not available, then the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastors, or Business Administrator shall be contacted. Any employee or volunteer filing an incident report will receive written confirmation of the report made to Child Protection.

5.2 All employees and volunteers will limit themselves to reporting their observation and shall not undertake any investigation themselves, nor will they attempt to gather documentation, including no surveying of parents and no photographing or videotaping.

5.3 The Pastor of Children or Minister of Youth, Senior Pastor or Church Business Administrator will facilitate and shall not impede the filing of reports with Child Protection Services.

5.4 All employees and volunteers will comply with North United Methodist Church policy by not placing the church at risk by filing a child abuse report independently. They shall immediately notify the Pastor of Children and Youth or designee when abuse is suspected. The Pastor of Children or the Minister of Youth will then immediately implement compliance with Indiana state law. If Child Protection Services requests a full report following our initial contact, then a full report will be filed. If Child Protection Services advises that a report is not necessary based upon available information, then we will keep the incident on file in the event that additional information would warrant calling Child Protection again.

5.5 Should the situation arise wherein the Pastor of Children, the Minister of Youth, the Senior Pastor nor Church Business Administrator not be immediately available, a telephone message should be left with one or more of said persons noting that "an urgent response is needed regarding legal issues and childcare." If a return call is not received within the necessary time frame, then the employee is released to call Child Protective Services on his/her own.

5.6 The Pastor of Children or the Minister of Youth will immediately notify the Senior Pastor, the chairperson of Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and the Business Administrator regarding any incident report requiring contact with Child Protection. If a Child Protection report is filed regarding suspected abuse that occurred on the church grounds, then the Senior Pastor or Business Administrator shall also notify the District Superintendent and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees who shall then notify the church's insurance carrier.

5.7 All information related to suspicions and reports of child abuse is to be held

confidentially among the Childcare Staff. Childcare Staff will be informed of action related to reporting that has taken place so that they may respond appropriately within the childcare setting, e. g. not file additional reports unless new information is obtained. They are never to disclose information to parents or children.

5.8 The official spokesperson for any situation involving Child Protection or suspected child abuse at North United Methodist Church will be the Senior Pastor. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys, or any other parties will be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse.

5.9 North United Methodist Church will make the victim our first priority. All allegations of child abuse will be taken seriously. Confidentiality will be protected when appropriate. The church will cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.

5.10 North United Methodist Church will not prejudge any accused person, nor confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protection Service or law enforcement authorities. Accused persons will be treated with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker, that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person has been cleared by the authorities or charges are filed.

5.11 The Pastor of Children or the Minister of Youth and the Childcare Supervisor will monitor day to day operations for compliance with all policies and procedures. The Pastor of Children and the Minister of Youth will file a quarterly report to the Senior Pastor and Staff-Parish Relations Committee regarding all other incident reports not involving Child Protection Services.

5.12 Employees will receive performance evaluations no less than once annually, including performance related to compliance with policy and procedures.

6.0 Responding to Emergencies: North United Methodist Church will train all employees and volunteers in ministry to children and youth to take appropriate measures to prevent harm from weather, fire, accidental injury and threats to persons or property.

Contacts

Pastor of Children & Families: Rev. Danyelle Ditmer

Minister of Youth: Anne Moman

Senior Pastor: Rev. Darren Cushman Wood

Church Business Administrator: Marie Powell

NORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
3808 North Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46208
Phone: (317) 924-2612