

Highland United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy Statement

1.0 Guiding Principles

The congregation of Highland United Methodist Church (“HUMC”) is committed to providing a holy place of safety and security for all children, as defined in the *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy*, who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by HUMC.

This Policy Statement provides guidelines and procedures for those individuals who are called to work with and support the ministries for children and youth. It will be the responsibility of HUMC to annually educate and continually communicate these principles to the congregation. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safe Sanctuary Committee appointed by the Church Council.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 A “worker” means any of the following individuals who provide services or support for the care and oversight of a minor in a ministry activity or event with HUMC:

- a. Paid staff of HUMC
- b. Volunteers, no matter of age, who are not compensated for their services

2.2 External individuals, such as self-employed consultants and vendors, who provide services or support for the care and oversight of a minor in a ministry activity or event of HUMC are considered “affiliated workers”.

2.3 The term “parent” means parent or guardian.

3.0 Prohibited Behaviors

The *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy* provides specific guidelines regarding prohibited behaviors and is herein incorporated by reference.

4.0 Worker Selection and Screening

4.1 HUMC staff and paid staff of Highland Children’s Center

- A. All staff will have met all selection and screening requirements as included in staff policies.

4.2 Affiliated workers

- A. Selection will be made by the appropriate staff member.
- B. Each affiliated worker will receive a copy of the *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy*.
- C. Original contracts or letters of service with these individuals will be retained by the Business Manager.

4.3 Volunteers

- A. Volunteers must meet the following requirements:
 - i. Active participation in HUMC activities for a minimum of six (6) months; and
 - ii. Must be 18 years or older and be five (5) years older than the oldest aged participants in an assigned group.
[Exception: May assist if younger than the age guideline but must work under the supervision of a screened worker who fully satisfies the age guideline.]
- B. All individuals interested in volunteering in these ministries must complete the following forms, available through the Directors of the specific ministry:
 - i. *Application for Volunteer Service*
 - ii. *Authorization for Criminal/Court Records* form
 - iii. *Reference Form for Workers with Children and Youth*
- C. Volunteer candidates must provide a minimum of two personal references. These will be checked and documented by the Director of the area or ministry.
- D. All volunteer candidates will be interviewed by the Director of the area or ministry, or a designee, utilizing a standard interview guide.
- E. It is the sole responsibility of the Director of the area or ministry to select and notify volunteers.
- F. If a pre-school volunteer works more than one (1) day each week, the volunteer must give evidence of a negative TB test within the first sixty (60) days of assignment.
- G. Prior to working with the assigned group, the screened volunteer must have:
 - i. Signed the *Safe Sanctuary Code of Conduct*
 - ii. Attended volunteer training (individually or in group session)
- H. Volunteer files will be managed by the Director of the area or ministry. Files will be retained in the office of the Business Manager.

5.0 Supervision

- 5.1** Workers with the children's ministry will be supervised by the Director of Children's Ministry.
- 5.2** Workers with the Highland Children's Center will be supervised by the Director of the Highland Children's Center
- 5.3** Workers with the youth ministry will be supervised by the Director of Youth Ministry.

- 5.4** The supervising Directors have the authority to determine that services and talents of a particular worker may be best directed to another ministry of HUMC.

6.0 Worker Training

- 6.1.** All workers must attend an annual orientation conducted by the Director of the area or ministry which will be held in August of each year. Topics will include, but are not necessarily limited to:
- A. The Church mission statement
 - B. Discussion of the *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy*
 - C. Discussion of conduct guidelines as provided in this policy
 - D. Procedures for various activities and events
- 6.2** Other training may be conducted throughout the year as decided by the Director of the area or ministry. Additional training may be required pursuant to applicable state laws and regulations.

7.0 Safety

7.1 Facility

- A. Fire prevention
 - i. Electrical equipment must be turned off when not in use.
 - ii. Electrical equipment will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no fire hazard.
- B. Fire emergency
 - i. Workers must be familiar with all emergency exit procedures. Emergency exits will be clearly marked.
 - ii. Upon the first indication of smoke or fire, fire alarms are to be activated.
 - iii. Elevators must not be used during a fire alarm.
 - iv. Workers must stay with their assigned groups and guide them to a designated safe location, walking quickly in single file to as far away from the building as possible or as directed by the safety professionals.
- C. Power failure
Workers and their assigned groups are to remain where they are.

7.2 Physical emergency

- A. First aid
 - i. Workers must be familiar with the location of all first aid supplies.

- ii. Basic first aid training will be available to workers on an annual basis. Leaders and other workers of areas or events will be required to attend as determined by the Director of the area or ministry.
- B. CPR training will be available to workers on an annual basis. Leaders and other workers of areas or events will be required to attend as determined by the Director of the area or ministry.

7.3 Injury Procedures

- A. Any suspected head or back injury, broken bones, excessive bleeding or obvious and severe injury will be handled by calling 911 and getting immediate assistance from appropriate church staff.
- B. Parents must be immediately called.
- C. The injured child will not be moved and one worker will stay with the injured child.
- D. One worker will wait for medical emergency assistance to arrive and will direct them to the location of the child.
- E. The injury must be reported to the Director of the area or ministry and to the Business Manager.
- F. If the parent cannot be located or will not be able to reach the medical facility in a timely manner (such as during an offsite or overnight event), one worker must accompany the child to the location of medical care.

7.4 Use of video and photography

Video and photography may be used to document ministry events and activities. Only screened workers may use photographic or video which will only be used for HUMC purposes. In the event that photos or videos are to be used for HUMC publicity, parents may be given the opportunity to authorize use.

7.5 Use of vehicles

The following guidelines apply to drivers of HUMC and personal vehicles:

- A Drivers of children to activities or events must:
 - i. Have had a full driving privilege license for five (5) years
 - ii. Meet all requirements of the HUMC auto liability provider
 - iii. Must have a good driving safety record as evidenced by a certified Department of Motor Vehicles report

- iv. Be fully screened and approved by the appropriate Director of the area or ministry
- B. Drivers must complete an *Auto Safety Certification Form* prior to driving children to an activity or event.
- C. Two unrelated adults must be in each vehicle. If multiple vehicles are used and remain in sight of each other, then only one adult will be required in each vehicle.
- D. The number of passengers in any vehicle may not exceed the number of available seat belts. When available, all occupants must wear seat belts, unless as required by law to be in appropriate child safety restraints. Whenever possible, parents will be required to secure such child safety restraints in the vehicle.
- F. All luggage and equipment, where applicable, must be secured.
- G. HUMC will ensure that all insurance coverages are sufficient and current prior to the use of HUMC vehicles.
- H. Workers traveling with children will ensure that cell phones or other methods to communicate are available in the event of an emergency.

8.0 Confidentiality

Workers must maintain confidentiality and privacy relating to information received while serving in their respective area or ministry. However, workers must speak with a member of clergy or the Director of an area or ministry if there is a safety concern.

9.0 Guidelines for Working with Children (Nursery through Grade 5)

9.1 Conduct

- A. Two (2) or more adults must be in the room at all times
- B. Doors
 - i. Room doors with glass panels may be closed but the glass may not be covered.
 - ii. Room doors without glass panels must remain open during the activity or event. Open Dutch doors are acceptable.
 - iii. Doors may not be locked during the activity or event.
 - iv. Under no circumstances will a child be alone behind closed doors with one adult.
- C. All children should be signed in on a registration log. One parent is to register and pick up the child. If another person is picking up the child, this must be verbally communicated by the parent to the worker in that area or ministry. More specific guidelines for the Children's Center and After School Program are included in Section 11.

- D. Care will be taken by workers so that children are not left unattended.
- F. When a child is taken to a restroom outside of the classroom or activity site, a worker must first check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.
- G. Workers will wear name tags while working in the ministry event or activity.
- H. Nursery children will wear name tags on their backs.
- I. Workers who are ill should not work in the area or ministry.

9.2 Physical boundaries

- A. Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. The Director of Children's Ministry will provide age-appropriate guidelines during annual training.
- B. Children in first grade or older will not sit in the lap of workers.
- C. Refer to the *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy* for specific prohibited behaviors.

9.3 Discipline

HUMC desires to foster a sense of both fun and learning in the children's ministry. Workers should work, play and communicate with children in a cooperative manner. At times, discipline may be necessary to maintain order and respect for workers within the classrooms and within HUMC. In these cases, workers will take the following steps:

- A. Verbally redirect the child to a more appropriate behavior.
- B. If the child continues to act out, the child will be given "Time Out", allowing the child to return to the group when the child is ready to act in a cooperative manner.
- C. If a child's uncooperative behavior persists, the worker will contact the Director of Children's Ministry who will provide help and guidance to the child. The Director will then inform the parent(s) of the behavioral issue. Together, the Director, the parent and the child will agree to a plan that will encourage more cooperative behavior.

9.4 Monitoring of activities

- A. During onsite ministry activities or events, a screened worker will be assigned to roam to ensure all safety and security practices are being observed.

9.5 Parent/Guardian Communication

- A. Parents/guardians are welcomed to observe an activity/event provided that the presence of the parent is not disruptive to the child.
- B. Parents of pre-school aged children will receive a copy of the *Nursery Policy and Procedures Handbook*.
- C. Programs and events will be communicated to parents at least thirty days in advance when possible to provide adequate time for planning a child's participation.

10.0 Guidelines for Working with Youth

10.1 Conduct

- A. For any HUMC sponsored activity or event, a minimum of one worker who is five (5) years older than the oldest participants in an assigned group will be present.
- B. The ratio of adult to youth must be appropriate for the event and will be determined by the Director of Youth Ministry.
- C. Meetings, including those at offsite locations, between one adult and one youth will always be conducted in a high visibility area or with an open door.
- D. Meals between one adult and one youth must be in a public location.
- E. Volunteers will avoid driving with one youth to any location or event. Staff may drive with one youth to a location or event with written permission of the parent or guardian.
- F. Workers are expected to model respectful behavior with youth at all times, and to dress appropriate to the activity.
- G. Workers are expected to use appropriate language at all times.

10.2 Physical Boundaries

- A. No inappropriate physical touching of youth by a worker is permitted. Refer to the *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy*.
- B. Workers may not date youth.
- C. At times, a youth may need a hug for comfort. In those cases, a side-by-side hug is acceptable.

10.3 Training Required

- A. Some events, such as the Highland Service Project, involve workers from other churches. These workers must receive a copy

of the *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy* and a copy of the Guidelines for Youth section of this *Safe Sanctuary Policy*. The Director of Youth Ministry may choose to train all worker participants prior to this event on these provisions.

- B. Training will be provided on use of equipment, including tools and other equipment, appropriate to an event. Adequate training is required to ensure appropriate adult supervision at the activity.

10.4 Discipline

- A. Physical discipline is forbidden.
- B. Refer to the *Prevention of Abuse Against Children Policy* for prohibited behaviors.
- C. The Director of Youth Ministry will provide age-appropriate options.
- D. If a youth exhibits inappropriate behavior, the worker will contact the Director of Youth Ministry for help and guidance to the youth. The Director will then inform the parent(s) regarding the behavioral issue. Together, the Director, the parent and the child will agree to a plan that will encourage more cooperative behavior.

In the event that a youth participant from another church persists in inappropriate behavior, the Director of Youth Ministry should be contacted. The Director, and or clergy, will contact the appropriate church official of the participating church and together they will determine the appropriate action.

10.5 Counseling

- A. A worker may provide counseling to a youth who has requested to talk with the worker. If the worker feels unqualified to counsel the youth, the Director of Youth Ministry should be contacted for assistance.
- B. All counseling sessions will be with an open door or within a high visibility area.
- C. Should the youth request a private closed-door conference, the worker or Director must notify the Director or clergy, respectively, prior to the meeting. If possible, the conference should be held in the open in a public location where they can be seen but not overheard.

10.6 Parent/Guardian Communication

- A. Every attempt should be made to provide advance notice and information about ministry activities no later than thirty (30) days in advance.

- B. The beginning and ending times of activities will be communicated clearly to youth and parents/guardians.
- C. The Director of Youth Ministry will conduct, at minimum, one educational meeting with parents/guardians of youth each year. The agenda will include the commitment of the Church to prevent abuse and to provide a safe, holy ministry for their youth.

10.7 Offsite Events

- A. There will always be an adult over the age of 25 at an offsite event.
- B. For guidelines on travel, see “Safety/Use of Vehicle” guidelines, above.
- C. The Director of Youth Ministries will determine the appropriate ratio of workers to youth, based on the type of offsite event.

10.8 Overnight Events

- A. There will always be an adult over the age of 25 at an overnight event.
- B. No workers will be allowed to sleep in the same bed with youth. In the event of a parent and child, an exception is permissible.
- C. In a hotel or dormitory setting, living assignments will be made based on age appropriate considerations. When possible, information regarding housing facilities should be known in advance of arrival.
- D. For guidelines on travel, see “Safety/Use of Vehicle” guidelines, included in this document.
- E. All youth participants must sign a simple Youth Participation Agreement to participate in an overnight event. The Director may choose to include workers and youth in the development of the Agreement. This Agreement may include guidelines on appropriate language, dress, behavior and other event specific guidelines.
- F. Workers will determine and communicate to the youth where workers will be located during lights-out as well as during other activities.

10.9 Use of cell phones and other electronic devices

Use of cell phones, MP3 players, CD players and other electronic devices can distract from the content of HUMC ministries and prohibit interaction with ministry workers and other youth participants. Youth participating in HUMC sponsored activities and events will not be allowed to use personal cell phones (other than to call parents or guardians) or other distracting electronic devices during the activity or event.

11.0 Additional Guidelines for Highland Children’s Center and Nursery Workers

11.1 Conduct

- A. Refer to “Guidelines for Working with Children (nursery through age 5”, section 10, above.) in addition to the conduct statements that follow.
- B. Classroom ratio will be dictated by state child care laws and regulations.
- C. Each classroom will maintain a registration log with space available for special information regarding a child to be provided by the parent
- D. All children must be signed in on the registration log. One parent is to register and pick up the child. If another person is picking up the child, this must be noted on the registration log by the parent and must be verbally communicated by the parent to the worker in the area.

11.2 General operations

- A. Workers should be in the assigned location twenty (20) minutes before the start time of a church service or event.
- B. Workers who are ill should not work in the nursery or Children’s Center.
- C. Workers are to use appropriate protective gloves when changing diapers and hands must always be washed after each diaper change. Diaper tables must be cleaned with disinfectant after each use.

11.3 Medical procedures

- A. The Director of Children’s Ministry will provide materials and measures for dealing with dirty diapers, blood or other urgent medical needs.
- B. Any items needed for the precautionary measures will be provided by HUMC.
- C. All workers in the nursery and Highland Children’s Center will receive training/guidelines regarding the spread of infections diseases.