

First United Methodist Church

of the Saint Cloud Region
302 South 5th Avenue
St. Cloud, MN 56301

CARE & PROTECTION POLICY

Adopted October 18, 2008 Revised: September 15, 2009, September 23, 2010

General Purpose Statement

First United Methodist Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for all minors who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, the goal is to protect the children and youth of First United Methodist Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Safety Policy Oversight Committee will be composed of the Children's Ministry Coordinator, Youth Director, Financial Administrator, a representative from the Board of Trustees and Lead Pastor. The Policy Oversight Committee will oversee the implementation of and compliance with this policy and will review, evaluate, and report at least annually on the implementation of this policy to the Church Council.

Selection of Adult Volunteers

All volunteers who desire to work with the children and youth participating in our programs and activities will be screened. All volunteers must:

- a. Attend and be involved at First United Methodist Church (FUMC) for at least six months prior to volunteering.
- b. Submit an application form.
- c. Consent to a Criminal Background Check, every two years.
- d. Attend FUMC's Prevention of Child Abuse training.
- e. Attend FUMC's Emergency Procedure training.
- f. Either attend FUMC's First Aid training; or have First Aid training from another source.

a. Six Months

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until s/he has been attending and involved with First United Methodist Church for a minimum of six months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children and youth.

b. Application Form

All persons seeking to work with children and youth must complete and sign an application form to be supplied by FUMC. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children and youth, previous United Methodist Church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at FUMC.

c. Criminal Background Check

A criminal background check is required for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in our education programs and other children and youth ministries;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form, giving the church authorization to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children and youth.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence (in a locked filing cabinet) on file at the First United Methodist Church. Background checks will be completed every two years.

If any violations show up on the background check the Safety Policy Oversight Committee will meet and determine if the offense will disqualify that individual from working with children and youth. Each violation will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children or youth and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children and youth. Failure to disclose any criminal convictions on the application form will also disqualify the applicant.

d. Prevention of Child Abuse Training

FUMC will provide an educational workshop related to reducing the risk of Child Abuse. All volunteers working with children and youth must attend one of these training sessions before working with children and youth. All volunteers must sign off that they attended.

e. Emergency Procedures

FUMC will provide training on the Church's Emergency Procedure Guide. The instructions and diagrams for emergencies will be posted in appropriate and conspicuous locations within the building and in each program room for reference.

There will also be a First Aid kit and incident report forms in each program room. All volunteers must sign off that they have attended the training.

f. First Aid

All volunteers working with children and youth need to have some First Aid training. FUMC will provide a First Aid/CPR course to volunteers, or if the volunteer has First Aid/CPR training from another source (ie. EMT, medical career, Red Cross course) they may sign off on the First Aid training requirement.

The Safety Policy Oversight Committee may, at their discretion, conduct a Personal Interview. Upon completion of the application and/or the Background Check, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with any applicants to discuss his/her suitability for the position, and/or any violations that were found. The Committee may also check any of the volunteers' References. All applicants will be asked to provide contact information for references on the application mentioned above. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children and youth in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at First United Methodist Church.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for youth, who are also under age 18, to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. These teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- a. Teenage workers must be entering the seventh grade or older.
- b. They must have been attending and active at FUMC for at least 6 months.
- c. They must submit a Teen Application Form.
- d. They must attend the First Aid/CPR training at FUMC; or have some First Aid/CPR training from another source.

Policies

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children and youth are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Communication Policy (written, E-mail, and phone)

When communicating with children and youth, additional adults (related and unrelated) need to be included in the mailing or e-mailing (and a copy sent to fumc@fumc-stcloud.org). All contact will be professional in conduct, contact, and purpose.

Permission Slips

Permission Slips must be obtained from parent/guardian for each child/youth for each church activity that involves transportation from the church property or occurs somewhere other than church property.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children in our Church's Nursery, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed-in by a parent or guardian, who at that time may either authorize another designated person to check-out their child, or they must check the child out themselves.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all children at First United Methodist Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose

- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of First United Methodist Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medication to the children and youth under our care. Medication should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

One exception to the medication policy may be granted to parents of children and youth with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children and youth should address their situation with the Children's Ministry Coordinator to develop a plan of action.

Another exception is on retreats. Please refer to the retreat permission form at the back of this document.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of First United Methodist Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children or youth. Workers should consult with the Children's Ministry Coordinator if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For children over the age of five, the worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a minor’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child that is coercive, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children or youth under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children or youth at First United Methodist Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Staff or Lead Pastor for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. *At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child/youth at risk.* Therefore, if reasonable cause to suspect abuse exists, the concerned person should talk with an appropriate staff member to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child/youth and help the family. The appropriate staff members are: the Children’s Ministry Coordinator, the Youth Director, the Pastors, the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, or the Chair of the Church Council, who will help decide what steps may be appropriate and if necessary, who else to contact.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at First United Methodist Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children and youth pending an investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. The Church’s attorney will be notified.
5. We will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
6. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.
8. The Lead Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
9. A pastoral visit will be arranged for all those who desire it, including the accused offender.

Transportation

There are occasions when transportation for FUMC activities is necessary. Anyone wishing to transport minors for any First United Methodist Church activity must:

- a. Be at least 25 years of age.
- b. Have a valid Driver's License, and a copy of it on file at FUMC.
- c. Proof of valid auto insurance.
- d. Consent to a Criminal Background Check.
- e. Consent to a DMV check.
- f. Fill out an application form.

Auto Insurance

Prior to leaving for each and every event all drivers must provide proof of Auto Insurance. Two copies of the insurance card must be made. One copy will be placed in the volunteer's secure file in the office. The other copy will be brought along on the activity and shredded upon the conclusion of the activity. Because Insurance Cards tend to expire often, copies of all driver's insurance cards must be made for each and every time that driving occurs.

Background Checks

A Background Check may be used to complete both the volunteer requirement and the driving requirement, as long as it is current, within the last 2 years. If the driver does not have a Background Check on file, one will be conducted in the same manner previously stated in this policy.

DMV Check

A DMV Check is required before anyone will be allowed to transport minors for an FUMC activity. DMV Checks will be completed every two years. If any violations are found, the Safety Policy Oversight Committee will meet and discuss the violation and surrounding circumstances. Generally, violations that will disqualify a driver include two or more speeding violations within the last two years, any violation for any type of wreck less, careless or distracted driving, any instance of driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or violations of drugs or drug paraphernalia within the vehicle.

Application Form

As with the Background Check, an application form may be used for both volunteering and driving. If the driver does not have an Application Form on file, they will be given one to fill out. It will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet at FUMC.

Transportation Policies

It is the driver's responsibility to enforce the use of seatbelts by all passengers at all times while being transported for a church-sponsored activity. Failure to do so will result in no longer being able to drive for FUMC.

Drivers may not use cell phones in any manner (voice, texting or hands-free) while driving. If a call becomes necessary, it must be made or answered by a non-driving adult in the car, a youth in the car, or may be made or answered by the driver only after they have safely pulled over, and stopped the car. Failure to abide with the no cell phone rule will result in no longer being able to drive for FUMC.