

Child Protection Policy
of First United Methodist Church of Gadsden, Alabama
(Adopted 4/27/04)

First United Methodist Church of Gadsden, Alabama, being mindful of the importance and necessity of safety and security for children and youth in the church, seeks to create a safe environment in which opportunities for abuse are minimized, and, therefore, adopts the following policy as to staff and volunteers who are reasonably calculated to come in contact with children and youth:

1. All church employees, including, but not limited to those individuals who work in the Early Learning Center of the church, shall complete and sign release forms (an example of which is attached hereto) allowing the church to request and obtain criminal background checks as to such employees. Though not employees, any individuals who render services for the church on a regular basis as independent contractors, who are reasonably calculated to come in contact with children or youth, likewise shall complete and sign release forms.
2. All volunteers who are involved in any aspect of Children or Youth Ministry including, but not limited to, Sunday School, Children's Church, Church Nursery, Bible Buddies, Youth Fellowship, Church Retreats, and other activities, shall complete a volunteer application form, (an example of which is attached hereto), providing references and allowing the church to request and obtain a DHR Central Registry Clearance (DHR-FCS-1598) Form.
3. The church shall require and execute designated background checks and clearances to be performed in a timely manner as to each employee, contractor, or volunteer from whom such a release is obtained. The actual cost thereof shall be borne by the employee or contractor for whom the background check is obtained.
4. All completed and signed release forms, reference forms, background checks, and clearances shall be maintained in a confidential file in the church office.
5. This policy shall apply both prospectively, and also as to individuals now engaged as employees of the church or as contractors or as volunteers who fall within Item 1 or 2, above.
6. The following shall also apply to all staff and/or volunteer workers in positions involving contact with children or youth:
 - a. Five year rule: Persons should be at least 5 years older than the age group with whom they are to work.
 - b. All children and youth activities will be supervised by persons 19 years or older. (Youth volunteers will be utilized as helpers, not in supervisory roles.)

- c. Any volunteer working with children and youth must have regularly attended the church for at least ninety (90) days. In special circumstances, references for a chaperone may be obtained from another church and a record thereof maintained in the church office, along with the volunteer application form, and completed DHR clearance form.
- d. Chaperones for overnight events shall have been a member of the church for at least six (6) months. In special circumstances, references for a chaperone may be obtained from another church and a record thereof maintained in the church office, along with the volunteer application form, and completed DHR clearance form.
- e. Volunteers and paid staff working with children at conference-sponsored events shall comply with all North Alabama Conference Child Protection Policy, including completion of background checks and North Alabama Conference Volunteer Chaperone Applications.
- f. Two-adult rule: Two non-related adults should be present whenever possible in groups of children. An adult supervisor making spot checks or unannounced visits as necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of our children will also satisfy the two adult rule.
- g. Classroom doors are never to be locked and are to remain open unless equipped with windows.
- h. Staff and volunteers will avoid being alone with a child without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings.
- i. Child Protection Training Sessions will be held for all staff and volunteers in positions involving contact with children. Staff and volunteers will sign acknowledgement that they are aware of and understand the guidelines for working with children/youth under the Child Protection Policy of First United Methodist Church of Gadsden, Alabama.
- j. Doors to the exterior of the church building are to remain locked unless there is an attendant on duty at the Portico Entrance on 6th street, including weekdays, and evenings, whenever children are present in the building. Exception: The Early Learning Center shall be permitted to unlock the doors for 30 minutes for 9:00 a.m. carpool line and again for the 1:00 p.m. carpool line.
- k. Children shall not be left unsupervised in the building at any time.

7. Nursery Policy

- a. The church nursery is available to members and guests for church services, Sunday School hour, and Wednesday night activities.
- b. The nursery will be made available upon request for meetings and special activities and events, whenever possible. Requests for a nursery should be made to the church office at least two days in advance of the scheduled event.
- c. Parents shall sign their child in on the Nursery Registry Form upon dropping their child off for nursery care.
- d. Members and guests shall be required to fill out an information card in the church nursery which shall include, Name, address, phone number, name

of child, age of child, special needs or requests, and location of parent in the church (ex. Sunday School class, worship service, etc.). This card shall be kept current and maintained in a card file in the church nursery.

- e. Young children should be supervised at all times. If a parent is participating in a meeting or program, etc. in the church, their child must be under nursery supervision.
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- 8. Reporting Procedures shall be in compliance with the North Alabama Child Protection Policy, Item 5. (Copy attached.) The Children's Director, Youth Director, ELC Director, or Education Team Leaders will be responsible for responding to and reporting any complaints.

 - 9. Response Procedures shall be in compliance with the North Alabama Child Protection Policy, Item 6. (Copy attached.)

ADOPTED by the Board of Stewards this the 27th day of April, 2004

Education Team
Child Protection Policy
Of First United Methodist Church of Gadsden, Alabama
Child Protection Policy Implementation Process

- ❖ On February 5, 2004, the Education Team met and discussed the North Alabama Conference Policy for Child Protection and the Policy of First United Methodist Church of Gadsden as to Employee/Contractor Background Checks and Volunteer Attendance Threshold (as adopted by Staff Parish Relations on October 30, 2003).
- ❖ On Saturday, February 7th, Sheila Freeman, Children's Director, Debbie Leach, Education Team Chairman, Denise Floyd, and Sharon Mallory attended the North Alabama Conference Child Protection training event. This event, based on the book, Safe Sanctuaries, by Joy Melton, provided guidelines for establishing and implementing child protection policy within the local church.
- ❖ The Education Team met and discussed a proposed Child Protection Policy of First United Methodist Church of Gadsden, Alabama, making revisions to said policy on March 4, 2004, and again on April 1, 2004.
- ❖ The Proposed Child Protection Policy of First United Methodist Church of Gadsden, Alabama shall be presented to the Administrative Board of First United Methodist Church of Gadsden for adoption on April 27, 2004.
- ❖ Following adoption, child protection training sessions will be held for volunteers and staff who are deemed to be in regular contact with children and youth. Necessary releases and background checks of both present and prospective employees and volunteers will be completed as practicably possible, or no later than June 2004.
- ❖ First United Methodist Church of Gadsden will give account of progress in the adoption of Child Protection Policy at Charge Conference 2004.
- ❖ The annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths will take place on October 8-10, 2004. Plans are being made to celebrate a Children's Sabbath.

