

Wilmore United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuary Policy

For staff and volunteers

Revised 8/2015

RATIONALE: To have official policies and practices designed to provide a safe ministry environment for all children, youth and vulnerable adults and to protect those committed to ministering to them. This policy sets forth the mandatory requirements in the areas of screening, supervision, reporting and response.

DEFINITIONS:

- **ABUSE** – means harm or a threat of physical or emotional harm to a child, youth or vulnerable adult by a parent, guardian or other person. Abuse includes: (a) the infliction of physical or emotional injury by other than accidental means; (b) the creation of risk, or allowing the creation of risk, to a child by other than accidental means; (c) committing or allowing to be committed an act of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or prostitution upon the child.
- **CHILD, CHILDREN or YOUTH** – means any person who has not reached his/her eighteenth birthday.
- **EXPLOITATION** – means obtaining or using another person’s resources, including but not limited to funds, assets, or property, by deception, intimidation, or similar means, with the intent to deprive the person of those resources.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE** – includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any contact or interactions in which the parent, guardian, or other person uses or allows, permits, or encourages the use of the child for the purposes of the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person.
- **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION** – includes, but is not limited to, a situation in which a parent, guardian or another person allows, permits, or encourages the child to engage in an act which constitutes prostitution under Kentucky law; or a parent, guardian, or other person having custodial control or supervision of a child or responsible for his/her welfare, allows, permits, or encourages the children to engage in an act of obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child as a provided for under Kentucky law.
- **SUPERVISION** – means to oversee or direct a ministry or activity.
- **VULNERABLE ADULT** – means a person eighteen years of age or older who, because of a mental or physical dysfunction, is unable to manage his/her own resources, carry out the activity of daily living, or protect himself/herself from neglect, exploitation, or a hazardous or abusive situation without assistance from others.

SCREENING PROCEDURES:

The following standards shall be required of all staff and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults. All volunteers will have a file that is kept in the administrative offices of the church and the file will be overseen by the Missional Discipleship Pastor.

- “The Six-Month Rule.” All volunteers must have attended and been actively participating in WUMC for a minimum of six months before they will be allowed to be in supervisory ministry roles.

- Asbury University and Asbury Theological Seminary students and spouses who can provide a pastoral reference from their home church detailing their specific involvement in ministry and who complete the remaining requirements can be exempt from this requirement.
- New attendees desiring to be involved in these ministry areas upon completion of all other requirements can serve as ministry assistants prior to fulfilling their six month requirement but they can never be alone with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Complete Volunteer Application Form
- Submit to a National Criminal Background Check
 - Ministry volunteers will have a new background check completed every three years.
 - Individuals who have had a lapse in volunteer ministry service for more than one year will complete a new background check prior to returning to ministry.
- Kentucky Annual Conference Safe Sanctuary Training
 - All volunteers and staff must complete this training prior to serving in ministry in any capacity.
 - This training must be reviewed every two years for all volunteers and staff.

SUPERVISION:

- “Two Adult Rule.”
 - Regardless of the size of the group there will always be two unrelated adults present. This can include an adult ‘roamer’ who moves in and out of classrooms and ministry activities. In the instance that a roamer is being utilized doors shall always remain open. If a half door is present, only the top half must remain open.
- No children, youth or vulnerable adults shall be left unsupervised while attending a ministry activity or event.
- All volunteers in supervisory roles shall be a minimum of 18 years of age and at least 4 years older than the children/youth being supervised. Adult volunteers are not permitted to date minor youth who participate in the WUMC youth ministry.
- All ministry activities shall occur in open view. Ministry spaces must be open to public view through the use of a viewing window, glass pane in the door, a ½ door configuration or an open door.
- Registration materials will be collected on all participants for any ministry activities/events.
 - A record will be maintained of the names, addresses and contact information for all parents and guardians.
- Ministry events involving transportation shall require written/signed permission from parents/guardians.

REPORTING:

Reporting is required by any staff person or volunteer who personally witnesses an incident of abuse or exploitation, or when an allegation of an event of abuse or exploitation is made to them by a third party and/or when a child, youth or vulnerable adult discloses abuse or exploitation. It is crucial that reporting be immediate and the allegations dealt with as timely as possible to the incident or disclosure.

- The staff person or volunteer who observes an incident of abuse or to whom the alleged abuse is reported or disclosed, or who even suspects abuse is required to report it immediately to the staff person in charge of the ministry event or activity. Upon receiving such information, the person in charge shall immediately inform the senior pastor and call the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) at (800) 752-6200, the local CHFS office or the Kentucky State Police.

- The person in charge of the ministry activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately attempt to obtain necessary information such as the name of the alleged victim, his/her address and family information.
- If the accused is the appointed clergy or a member of his/her family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the District Superintendent (DS). The DS shall immediately report to the proper authorities as set forth in paragraph one. The DS will take responsibility and act according to the established rules of The Book of Discipline with respect to claims against a pastor. If the DS is not available, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office in Crestwood.
- After the person in charge of the ministry activity has reported the abuse to the proper authorities, the senior pastor will report the incident to the DS or the Bishop's office if the DS is not available.
- The staff person in charge of the ministry event/activity will keep a written report of the steps taken by the Church in response to the reported abuse. The report shall be brief and contain only the factual information relevant to the situation. It will be kept with the secure Safe Sanctuary background check files. It shall be written in ink to prevent it from being changed.

RESPONSE PLAN:

A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

- All media requests for statements should be directed to the Senior Pastor who shall be in contact with the DS and serve as the "official media spokesperson." If the accused is the Senior Pastor, all media requests shall be forwarded to the DS.
- Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children or vulnerable adults and advise the accused there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any ministry, care should be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.
- When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or volunteer has committed an act of abuse or exploitation, they shall be required to refrain from all ministry activities with children, youth and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with The Book of Discipline.
- Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well being of the child, youth or vulnerable adult until the parent/guardian(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both parent/guardian(s) is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning the notification of others.
- Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
- The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.