

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Tennison Memorial United Methodist Church

Staff/Volunteer Requirements/Screening Procedures

- Complete Volunteer Application or Employment Application
- Sign Authorization to complete Criminal History Check
- Criminal History Check clearance*
- Read and sign Guidelines for Caring for Children
- Read and sign Participation Covenant – Volunteers (Teachers/Shepherds)
- Read and sign Participation Covenant – Paid Staff

- **Anyone having a criminal history of any of the following offense shall not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children and youth:**
 - Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglectful
 - Violent offenses including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence
 - Persons with a DUI or DWI conviction within the five years immediately prior to application may not serve as a driver of children or youth
 - Persons with a drug related conviction within the five years immediately prior to application may not volunteer with children or youth

Procedures for Responsible Adult Supervision

- **Two-Adults at all times**

There must be a minimum of two unrelated adults present at all times during any church-sponsored program or event for children and youth. Other factors to consider are the ratio of adults to children or youth, the physical structure of the facilities, and the duration of the event. One adult may be present with youth in 6th-12th grade as long as there are multiple youth and they are in line of sight of other leaders.
- **Five-Years or older for those working with youth**

There must be at least a five-year difference between the ages of the primary supervisor and those being supervised. Should there be less than a five-year difference in age, that person may serve as an assistant to the primary supervisor.
- **Workers Eighteen or older**

Workers with children in the nursery must be eighteen or older; primary leaders of children and youth must be eighteen or older.
- **Clear Site Lines**

As much as possible, there should be unobstructed visibility to all activities where children and youth are present.
- **Open-Door Counseling**

The door should remain open for the entire session of counseling between adults working with children or youth.
- **Advance notice to Parents**

Activities for children and youth need clear communication with parents prior to the event, with full information about the event, and written parental permission for events that may be off site, overnight, etc. Parents must give written permission for their child's participation in that specific event, or must sign a waiver covering times when a child might be alone with a worker.
- **Outside Groups**

All outside organizations, groups, or individuals who use any of the facilities of the local congregation shall sign stating they are in compliance with this policy.

Procedures for Responsible Adult Supervision (continued)

- **Drivers of Vehicles for Church Events**
All drivers of vehicles for church or other sponsored events must be at least twenty-five years of age and possess a current, valid driver's license, have proof of insurance, and not be otherwise disqualified from driving.
- **Permission for events requiring transportation**
Prior written parental permission is required for events requiring transportation to and from the event location.

Definitions of Abuse

1. Verbal Abuse – any verbal act that humiliates, degrades, or threatens any child or youth.
2. Physical Abuse – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth.
3. Sexual Abuse – Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1)incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4)romantic involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in church events, 6)sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and or content. Examples are not limited to: displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse. (#6 taken from Resolution #30 *Book of Resolutions 2000*).

Training

Training and/or orientation will be conducted on a regular basis for all persons who work with children and youth at church evens. Training shall include but is not limited to appropriate discipline, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries, leader misconduct, and this policy. No person shall, after June 1, 2005, have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth until they have completed this training program.

Reporting of Incidents

1. When a person suspects that abuse or suspected violation of the Texas Penal Code is taking or has taken place, he or she shall call 911 when needed and report the abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency and/or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (800-252-5400). The person shall contact the pastor and/or youth minister immediately, and cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.
2. Address the needs of the child or youth, medical or otherwise. Report the abuse to the parents and/or legal guardians.

Reporting of Incidents (continued)

3. The person suspected of abuse (respondent) shall, for the safety and well being of the children or youth, be removed with dignity from further contact with the children and youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential.
4. Following the report of an incident, the pastor and/or youth minister shall document the report, and then speak with the alleged victim, being careful to use open-ended questions.
5. All such conversations shall be documented, Careful and confidential documentation is essential. The documentation should include the following:
 - a. The name of the leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time, and place and any action taken by this person.
 - b. The alleged victim's name, age and date of birth
 - c. Any statement made by the alleged victim.
 - d. Name of the respondent, the date, time, and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent.
 - e. Any action taken (suspension of the respondent)
 - f. Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of worker spoken to, content of that conversation and case number assigned.
 - g. Date and time of call to the law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation.
 - h. Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.
6. Notify the Conference/District authorities.
7. It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current Book of Discipline, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.
8. Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential church file for future screening purposes.

Media Response

The Bishop shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. All responses to media should come from a spokesperson in the Conference Communications Office or as designated by the Bishop. Do not give out any information. State that all inquiries will be answered by the Conference spokesperson.

Tennison UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy Agreement

_____ I have read and agree to adhere to the Tennison UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy.

_____ I have completed the online training for Safe Sanctuary and have provided my certificate of completion to Tennison UMC. (<http://www.txcumc.org/pages/detail/705>)

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Staff Member - Signature

Date

_____ Safe Sanctuary Certificate of Completion attached

_____ Consent to Perform Criminal Background Check attached