



SAFE SANCTUARIES (Covenant United Methodist Church)

A SYNOPSIS OF THE "POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE"

1. **Minimum Age:** Volunteers and staff must be at least 21 years old and must be 4 years older than the age of persons that they will be working to serve. Persons not meeting this requirement may not be left alone with children.
2. **Six Month Rule:** All volunteers must have been an active participant at CUMC for six months before they will be eligible to serve in the areas of children and youth ministries. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only as assistants with another adult. The Safe Sanctuaries Board will consider exceptions to this rule.
3. **Two-Adult Rule:** Two adults (who cannot be married to each other) are to be utilized in all close-quarter programming with children and youth. This is a minimum that then falls in compliance with the adult/child ratios. Other ratios may apply in accordance with the Conference Policy. Where it is impossible to staff two adults (who are not married to each other) in every room, have an additional adult to serve as a floater with visual and physical access to all areas (requiring either doors to be open or having prominent windows in the doors).
4. **Lodging:** Children or youth will room together without an adult. In situations where adults must room with youth or children in a hotel, cabin, tent or other similar situation, there must be two adults. These adults must be the same sex as the children or youth. Adults cannot sleep in the same bed with youth or children unless they are the parent or guardian of that child.
5. **Transportation for Church-Organized Events:** Always have more than one child or one adult in a vehicle. Exceptions to this rule are allowed only in emergency situations.
6. **Release of Children:**
 - A. On-campus daytime including Sundays (Sunday school, Children's Church): Children in 4th grade and younger must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Emergency cases will be determined on an as needed basis. No child may be released to a sibling or other older child. Exception: We will release children to brothers or sisters who drive with written permission from parents.
 - B. On-campus nighttime including Sundays (Sunday night program): All children 6th grade and younger must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Emergency cases will be decided on an as needed basis. No child may be released to a sibling or other older child. Exception: We will release children to brothers or sisters who drive with written permission from parents.
 - C. Off-campus events: All events should originate and terminate on Covenant's campus. All drivers must adhere to transportation roles. Drivers are not allowed to "drop" children off on the way back to the church from an off-campus event.
7. **Open Door Rule:** All counseling sessions with children and youth shall take place in offices with windows or the door shall remain open while the office is in use.
8. **Policy Publication:** Safe Sanctuary Policy will be posted in all areas of the church and included in the church's publications.
9. **Reporting Abuse:** Law requires volunteers who work with children under the age of 18 to report any type of suspected child abuse to the proper authorities. Any volunteer who makes such a report in "good faith" is protected by law from any form of liability, but failure to make such a report can give rise to criminal and/or civil liability. You may report in "good faith" anonymously.
 - A. If suspected child abuse has occurred, contact the Memphis and Shelby County Child Protective Services at 1-877-237-0004.
 - B. If immediate danger exists to a child, contact the Police, Sheriff or Highway Patrol (911) immediately and await their arrival or follow their instructions.
 - C. Incidents of child abuse or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, whether allegedly perpetrated by individuals associated with the church or outside of the church, shall be reported to the director of the pertinent program or his or her supervisor.
10. **Scheduled Free Play:** Scheduled events or programs.
Two (2) adults must be present for scheduled free play.
Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult or guardian at least 18 years of age.
11. **Open Gym:** Posted hours the gym is open for use.
One (1) adult volunteer at least 21 years of age or a hired front desk employee, at least 16 years of age, must supervise the gym and the building. Children and youth under 12 years of age must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or adult at least 18 years of age. Children 12 – 15, a parent, guardian or designated adult at least 18 years of age must be on campus.
12. **Unsupervised children and youth:** Any person or group using, attending, or visiting any area of the church cannot leave their children under the age of 12 unsupervised. Children may not be left in a room by themselves or allowed to roam the church campus. This includes the ball field area and playgrounds.

**Amended and approved by the Administrative Council of Covenant United Methodist
May 17, 2004**