

# **Safe Sanctuary Policy for South Vineland United Methodist Church**

Effective:

Approved: June 2, 2010

Version 1.1

## **Introduction to Policy for South Vineland UMC**

**“OUR CALLING AND OUR MANDATE IS TO ENSURE SAFE SANCTUARY FOR GOD’S PEOPLE”**

### **Background:**

Throughout the gospels, Jesus provides teachings on providing a peaceable kingdom for all of God’s people, including our most precious gifts, our children and youth (Matthew 5:9, Luke 18:15-17). The peaceable kingdom begins with sanctuary.

Scriptures provide examples of how a sanctuary is to be a community of protective nurture and harmony (Psalms 20:1-2, 27::4-5). As Christians, we are called to create a safe sanctuary in our churches. They must be holy, safe and protective communities for all of God’s children, regardless of age or ability. The purpose of this policy is to address the safety of our children and youth at all local churches, and at District or Annual Conference sponsored events. The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church recognizes the need to have a formal, written policy with procedures in place (1) to help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or the appearance of abuse of children and youth and (2) to help protect workers from false accusations and/or suspicions.

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in the case of an incident.

## **Scope of UMC Policy**

The policy and its provisions will apply to all persons including all paid and unpaid leaders, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults who participate in any activities or events sponsored by the South Vineland united Methodist Church.

### **Supervision for Nursery/Childcare at South Vineland United Methodist Church:**

There will be a minimum of two (2) Childcare providers unless there are more than six (6) children which need care; for that case, three (3) Childcare providers will be required, to adhere to State Childcare Minimum Standards, particularly in relation to the Number of childcare providers to a child ratio. There will be a floater at all times. Those persons will be certified with a back ground check.

### **Supervision of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults at South Vineland United Methodist Church**

#### **Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth:**

- \* The “Two Adults” Rule: 2 adults (over 18) should be present at all times. Avoid all one-adult-one-child situations, such as closed-door bathroom breaks.
- \* A “floater” will be available as needed.
- \* First Aid/CPR Trained personnel available at all times.
- \* Annual Orientation: to remind all volunteers and paid staff of appropriate behavior, accepted policies and procedures.
- \* The “Five-Year-Older” Rule: Adults should be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth.
- \* Un-shaded windows in all classroom doors.
- \* Open-door counseling.
- \* Vulnerable adults will have the same protection as children and youth.

## **Over-Night Accommodations**

At events that require overnight accommodations:

- \* In group settings it is required that at least (1) leader be present in every room used for overnight accommodations, with a minimum of two for major events.
- \* When staying in a hotel, leaders will sleep in separate rooms from children/youth; or if necessary for children/youth to share a room with a leader, leaders will sleep in separate beds from children/youth so long as any one leader will not be alone with any one child/youth.
- \* Vulnerable adults will have their needs met after consultation with their care givers.

## **Definitions of Abuse**

- \* Verbal Abuse - Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades or threatens any child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- \* 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 or vulnerable adult.
- \* 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 contact with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in Conference or District sponsored activities, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content, and/or photographs. 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.
- \* The above definitions also apply to vulnerable adults and will be treated as

equivalent requirements in the definition of abuse.

### **Screening for Leaders, Assistant Leaders and Childcare providers**

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children and youth. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment.

The following policy will apply to all programs dealing with children, youth (under 18) and vulnerable adults:

1. Personnel policies for all programs, both church and non-church:
  - a. Requirements
    - i The GCFA (General Council on Finance and Administration) recommended volunteer application form, available from the GNJAC (Greater New Jersey Annual Conference) website, will be used for screening all workers.
    - ii A background check is required for all workers, lay and clergy. (Renewed every 5 years).
    - iii Volunteer workers will be members of a local congregation for at least six months before being allowed to supervise such programs.
  - b. Will use the online GNJAC approved service for background checks.
  - c. It is recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry that a background check be completed for all clergy under appointment. This task must be completed within one year.
  - d. The cost of all background checks is to be paid by the South Vineland United Methodist Church.
  - e. All form and reference reports will be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. All forms will be kept in A locked file on the church premise.

**Motor Vehicle Report** - also will be checked with background check, provides driving history currently on file with the MVC . (Required only for those transporting children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.)

2. Screening forms and background checks:
  - a. Will be reviewed by the Chair of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, the supervisor of the prospective

- employee or volunteer and the Pastor.
- b. Screening forms and related data will be maintained in confidence.
  - c. Screening forms, background checks and related data will be required of all persons.
  - d. If the applicant is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children, youth or vulnerable adults, the applicant will not be approved.
3. All such programs will be clearly differentiated between those which are church operated and those that are non-church operated.
  4. Results of screens will be kept confidential. The determination of whether a particular crime is serious enough to result in the South Vineland United Methodist Church giving a negative recommendation Will be made by the South Vineland United Methodist Church in its sole discretion. Without in any way limiting those crimes which the South Vineland United Methodist Church may determine to be serious, the South Vineland United Methodist Church offers the following examples as guidelines.

**Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses will not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults:**

- \* Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglectful.
- \* Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.
- \* Persons having a Criminal History of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application will not be allowed to act as a driver.
- \* Persons having a Criminal History of a drug related conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application will not be allowed to participate in the event.

Compliance with these policies and adoption of a Safe Sanctuary Policy will be reported through a written question to be answered as part of the Charge

Conference Report, therefore, it is important that this policies reflect the approved GNJAC Safe Sanctuary Policy dated 6/2005 and be approved prior to Church conference (2005).

## **Training**

The GNJAC will, through its Districts, develop and implement training and orientation procedures for all persons in leadership who work with children and youth at Conference or District activities and events. Training will include but is not limited to appropriate discipline, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries, leader misconduct, and this policy. No person will, after October 2010, have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth until they have completed this training program. At the beginning of each event a review of this policy will be conducted.

## **Special Policies for Vulnerable Adults**

Special care should be taken when staff or volunteers are working with vulnerable adults. Volunteers often go to a vulnerable adult's place of residence or hospital as part of that specific ministry area.

1. Any volunteer that carries out this work in the name of South Vineland United Methodist church should be screened by the Pastor and/or Safe Sanctuary's Coordinator and should be a member of the church for at least 6 months before working with a vulnerable adult in a 1:on:1 role.
2. When a vulnerable adult is receiving pastoral care, the door to the room will be left part way open.

## **Counseling**

1. Any one-on-one counseling with a person under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult, regardless of who is providing counseling, will take place in a room with partially an open door. The door should remain partially open during the entire counseling session.
2. Ideally, counseling sessions with a person under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult will take place when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
3. If a person under the age of 18 requests 1:on:1 counseling, the parents/guardians should be notified as to where and when counseling

sessions will be taking place.

## **Reporting of Incidents**

Congregational Plan for Responding to Allegations of Abuse:

What should be reported?

Every individual in New Jersey, including clergy is required to report child abuse to the authorities if there is a strong reason to believe that it is occurring. If you believe a child has been abused or neglected, you have a legal responsibility to report it. The Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) of New Jersey is required by law to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect.

(<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dyfs/>)

DYFS is New Jersey's child protection/child welfare agency. It is their responsibility for investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect and if necessary, arranges for the child's protection and the family's treatment.

In addition, DYFS operates a 24-hour hotline to receive reports of suspected child abuse and neglect during evenings, weekends and holidays. This Office of Child Abuse Control (OCAC) is linked with a statewide network of Special Response Units who respond to emergency reports.

Plan Summary

This is a plan for complying with the legal reporting requirements and for making statements to other officials and the media - none but the pastor should be authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the congregation. Beyond the State's requirements, notify conference authorities including District Superintendent, Conference Coordinator of Children, Youth and Young Adults and the Resident Bishop.

Procedure Details

**Reporting:**

All complaints and allegations of child abuse occurring outside the church or church programs and activities should be reported to the DYFS Abuse Hotline as a citizen of New Jersey.

All complaints and allegations of child abuse occurring inside the church or during a church program or activity should be directed to either the Children's Ministry Coordinator or the Pastor who will contact the appropriate authorities.

Our job is not to try to investigate the suspected abuse, but to document the specifics that cause us to suspect abuse and to carefully report them. NJ Law does not require proof to call the hot line.

Forms: Report Form for Suspected Incidents of Sexual or Physical Abuse:

Follow the procedure in response to a child's complaint or allegations of child abuse occurring inside the church or during a church program or activity.

1. Remove child to a safe place. The safety of the victim must be the church's primary concern.
  2. Do not confront the alleged abuser with anger and hostility - treat with dignity but immediately remove from further involvement.
  3. Notify Authorities and document situation. Follow the steps below.
    - a. Call DYFS hotline: 1-877 NJ. ABUSE (1-877-652-2873) - They will instruct you of the steps you should follow for the specific situation. For sexual abuse cases DYFS will contact a local center and dispatch a trained interviewer to interview the child.
    - b. Call police: 911 (only if child is in immediate danger)
    - c. Call District Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_
    - d. Call Conference Youth Coordinator: 732-359-1042 (Erica Munoz)
    - e. Call Greater NJ Conference Bishop: 732-359-1010 (Ref. Sudarshana Devadhar)
    - f. Call Church Insurance and Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Keep a written record of all steps taken in response to the allegation.
- Definition of Terms:



**Vulnerable Adults:** Those adults with diminished physical, mental or emotional capacities.

**Screening Forms:** Screening forms for use with volunteers are designed to assist the local church in gaining information on persons: who are applicants for working in church programs with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Their use is designed to enhance the protection of those who participated in the programs. The use of the screening process should be required in both “church” and “non-church” programs.

**Background Checks:** As with the screening forms background checks are designed to protect those individuals involved in the programs offered by the church to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

**Church Programs/Non-Church Programs:** (as related to insurance): Programs relating to children, youth and vulnerable adults are covered under the conference-wide Property and Casualty Insurance Program so long as they are church operated.

To be classified as “church-operated,” the church must have control over:

- \* Starting and stopping the operation
- \* Hiring or firing the employees, and
- \* The management of the day-to-day operations

The decision to operate a program, as described above, should be a matter of record in the meeting minutes of the Administrative Board or Board of Trustees of the local church. This will lie to rest the question of whether it is a church-operated or a non-church program that is using the church premises.

The non-church program is not covered by the conference insurance and the church should be sure that these non-church programs carry a minimum of \$1,000,000 General Liability Insurance and are covered by Workers’ Compensation Insurance. Certificates of these insurance coverage’s should be requested and received by the church annually. The Annual Conference and the local church should be named as additional insurers on these policies. The employees of church-operated childcare centers are covered under the Workers’ Compensation Program and as such should be reported on the annual Workers’ compensation salary audit of the local church.