

Charity United Methodist Church

Safe
Sanctuaries

**Protection Policy & Procedure
for
Staff and Volunteers Working with
Children and Youth**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 – Overview.....	3
2 – Protection Program Purpose	3
3 – Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse – Screening Policies and Procedures.....	3
3.1 – Screening.....	3
3.2 – Six Month Rule.....	4
3.3 – Supervision of Children and Youth to Include Two-Adult Rule.....	4
4 – Lanyards, Colored Nametags and Photo ID Policy.....	5
5 – Transportation of Children/Youth to Offsite Events.....	6
6 – Staff and Youth Paid/Unpaid Workers.....	6
7 – Discipline.....	6
8 – Open Classroom.....	6
9 – Permission to Use Photos.....	7
10 – Communication with Children and Youth.....	7
11 – Church Response to Child Abuse/Neglect.....	7
12 – Policy Review.....	7

1 – Overview

This packet is for all to review before becoming a CUMC “Safe Sanctuary” certified staff/volunteer. The CUMC Preschool will operate under their own adopted policy during their operating hours. Your responses to the questions are important in determining if working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable persons is where God is calling you to serve. You are encouraged to talk with the pastor, your supervisor, or the trainer if you have any concerns with a “yes” response to any of the questions.

An affirmative response to any of the questions does not automatically disqualify you from serving. However, there are some reasons for automatic denial. For example, if the Virginia Department of Social Services check shows that a person has been “confirmed or validated for abuse,” a denial is appropriate. If the criminal background check shows convictions for violent behavior, battery at any time, or drug and alcohol issues in the last five years, there is also a concern. In this instance, it is likely someone from the church would be in contact with you to learn more about the circumstances.

Protection Training Requirements:

- Attend the face-to-face training
- Interview to volunteer with children, youth, and vulnerable persons
- Complete and sign the application for Working with Minors and the Statement of Understanding and Acceptance.
- Have the two required references completed and submitted by individuals who are familiar with your experience with children and youth, have known you at least 2 years, and are 18 or older and not related to you in any way. These need to be submitted directly from the reference to the church.

2 - Protection Program Purpose

Charity United Methodist Church (CUMC) through this Policy, strives to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children and youth who participate in our programs and sponsored activities.

When children and youth are present in CUMC programs or activities where their parents are not present, volunteers and/or staff function as loco parentis, Latin for “in the place of a parent” and have the legal responsibility to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. Opportunities for abuse and neglect are minimized by providing proper enlistment, training, and supervision of persons working with children and youth.

3 - Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse – Screening Policies and Procedures:

3.1 – Screening

1. All staff/volunteers and youth volunteers shall complete a confidential application form and turn in two (2) references (form will be provided) from individuals who are familiar with the applicant’s experience with children and youth, have known them at least two (2) years, and are 18 or older and not related by family in any way.
2. All staff/volunteers shall sign an agreement authorizing a **National Criminal Background Check** and a **National Sex Offender Registry Check**. Background checks will be updated every three (3) years. No staff/volunteers will be allowed to serve if it is determined the individual has been charged with, convicted of or pled guilty to a charge of sexual misconduct,

child abuse, molestation, neglect, or other violent misconduct, including but not limited to those offenses set forth in Section 63.1-198.1 of the Code of Virginia. Any individual who has been convicted of a crime or who is the subject of pending criminal charges, in any jurisdiction, will not be permitted to work with children at CUMC unless the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the church pastor, after consultation, determine that the crime or misdemeanor for which the individual was convicted or with which the individual is charged is an offense that does not involve or suggest any risk or danger to children.

3. All staff/volunteers and youth volunteer workers shall complete training on child protection and abuse. Documentation of this training shall be kept on file in the church office.
4. New employees must be interviewed by the appropriate staff and Personnel committee members and references must be checked.
5. Scout Leaders, 4-H Leaders or other such community-based groups must provide the Church Administrator documentation that their leaders have completed the appropriate training course and background screening as required by the organization that they are associated with.

3.2 - Six Month Rule

In order to provide the best protection to our children, no one may serve as a **staff/volunteer** for children or youth unless he/she has completed the entire screening process set forth above and has been associated with CUMC for at least the preceding six months. During those six months, the person desiring to become **staff** must have been actively involved in the life of the church and will be required to provide a reference from within the church.

3.3 - Supervision of Children and Youth to Include Two-Adult Rule

1. CUMC requires that a reasonable ratio of **staff/volunteers** **adults** to children/youth be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children/youth. Youth volunteers Workers may be used to meet these ratios, but the “two-adult rule” will be maintained at all times. Maintaining the “two-adult rule” the following ratios will be maintained:
 - a. At least two staff for every 8 infants through two-year-old children
 - b. At least two staff for every 20 three-year-old - pre/k children
 - c. At least two staff for every 24 elementary age children: Grades K-5
 - d. At least two staff for every 30 youth: Grades 6 thru 12thIn the case of special-needs children or youth, extra personnel (volunteer or staff) will be assigned to work with these situations.
2. CUMC will provide two adults for every group of children or youth. The goal is to prevent any one adult to be left alone with children. When the “two adult rule” is not feasible, and every attempt made to find a second adult in compliance is unsuccessful then the class must be combined with one where there will be proper supervision. All attempts will be made to recruit qualified volunteers before combining classes.
 - a. Both staff and volunteers must be at least five years older than the age group with which they are working.
 - b. The two staff members will be unrelated adults age 18 or older. Examples of relationships include spouses, siblings, and parent/child.
3. A sign in/sign out system will be utilized for adults dropping off children and will be used for all children through grade 5.
4. Children/Youth under the age of 16 shall not be left unsupervised at the Church.
5. Supervision for children/youth attending events and/or activities shall begin 10 minutes prior to the beginning time of the event/activity.

6. All staff and youth paid/unpaid workers and observers must wear an appropriate colored name tag and lanyard.
7. Staff will avoid being alone with a child or youth without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings. If a staff member is alone with a child or youth, the door must be open or a window available for viewing to be possible and the staff member must notify the child's parent of the circumstances.
8. Any one-on-one mentoring or consultations between an adult and a youth must be conducted in a room or area that is in plain view of others.
9. If a children/youth group stays overnight at the church or leaves the area for an overnight trip four or more staff/volunteers must be present and must include at least two males and two females if the group is of mixed gender. In the event of a church sponsored overnight activity, boys and girls will have separate sleeping quarters designated with two staff of the same gender.
10. If a church sponsored children/youth group leaves the premises for a local event, at least one male and one female chaperone must be present when the group consists of mixed genders.
11. Bathroom Policy
 - a. Nursery-When changing diapers, the staff member changing the child shall always wear gloves and have another volunteer or staff in visible sight.
 - b. Preschool age children attending Sunday school will be escorted to the nursery and the nursery staff will supervise and return the child to the Sunday school classroom. If a child needs help, they will be helped with another staff member in visible site.
 - c. Elementary age children should be taken to the bathroom by a staff member who stands outside the bathroom within hearing distance. If a child needs to go to the bathroom then more than one child must be escorted, no staff shall take just one child to the bathroom.
 - d. When children are offsite in a public area, the bathrooms should be checked before the children are allowed to go in, and the staff member should remain in the bathroom area with the children while providing the children as much privacy as possible.

4 – Nametags, Colored Lanyards and Photo ID Policy

Each staff member working with children/youth will be required to wear a photo ID on a CUMC colored lanyard. Staff will wear a colored lanyard based on their level of screening and a nametag which will include an expiration date. The expiration date will coincide with the year of renewal which will be in three (3) years from the year of issue.

The lanyards will be colored as follows:

Green: These are the “Safe Sanctuary certified” adult volunteer staff and paid staff who have gone through the whole screening process, including background checks and the child protection training class. They are able to be left with a group of children or youth. These nametags may be worn for three years after which time the volunteer must redo the screening process.

Red: Youth paid/unpaid workers will wear a red lanyard. Youth paid/unpaid workers are in

compliance with everything except the background check and can be counted in ratios. At no point will a Youth paid/unpaid worker be left alone with children without the “two-adult rule” in place.

5 - Transportation of children/youth to offsite events (aside from bus transportation)

1. Staff and youth paid/unpaid workers should never be alone with a child/youth in a vehicle. Any exception to this rule must be made by written permission from the parent or legal guardian and submitted to the church for file.
2. All vehicles must have two adults in each with one being Safe Sanctuary “certified”.
3. Everyone must wear a seatbelt (see exceptions for bus transportation as applicable).
4. No one under the age of 13 shall ride in the front seat.
5. No one under the age of 25 shall be allowed to drive.
6. Use of safety seats which meet federal standards is required for all children under 8 years of age.
7. All drivers of Church owned vehicles must comply with the CUMC Driving Policy.

6 - Staff and Youth Paid/Unpaid Worker Training

Training will be provided for all persons who work with children or youth. The training will consist of education on child abuse and neglect to include specifics on sexual abuse and exploitation. All trainees will be educated on the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect to include strategies on how to identify inappropriate behavior toward a child. The training will also address the responsibility of the staff member if inappropriate behavior is identified.

All staff/volunteers and youth volunteers will be required to complete the training and sign the addendum to this document, stating their agreement to operate within the guidelines of this policy prior to being assigned volunteer duties with children.

7 - Discipline

All staff will use the following discipline measures:

- If a child is behaving inappropriately, the staff member will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., “We do not throw blocks. We use the blocks for building.”
- If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity.
- If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work away from the other students.
- If the child’s disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to and left under the supervision of the Children’s or Youth Director. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are used at any time. If isolating the child in the classroom or removing the child from the classroom becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s) as soon as possible.

8 - Open Classroom

Classrooms or childcare rooms will not be locked during sessions and may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer workers.

9 - Permission to use Photos

Staff members must receive permission for photographs (photo release) of children and youth to be published through website, social media, advertising, etc. This permission is granted through the registration/permission slips that must be reviewed and signed by each parent or guardian annually. Event specific permission slips will also include a photo release. Copies are maintained in the CUMC Church Administrator's office.

10 - Communication with Children and Youth

Communication with children, youth, and vulnerable persons via electronic means such as texting and e-mail requires a copy to the parent or guardian and/or program supervisor. Staff/Volunteer members must get permission from parents to communicate *directly* with children or youth via electronic devices. Upon receipt of this permission, messages should be sent at appropriate times. Volunteer and staff members with children and youth should not text or communicate with minors online after 9pm, except in the case of an emergency. A staff member or volunteer should avoid initiating or accepting "friending" within social media unless they have the parents' permission as stated above.

11 - Church Response to Child Abuse/Neglect

Should there be allegations of child abuse at Charity Community UMC, these procedures will be followed:

1. Any allegation(s) of child abuse shall be treated seriously.
2. The Pastor or their designee shall be immediately notified and will immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in the handling of the allegation(s).
3. The Pastor or their designee shall immediately notify the District Superintendent.
4. If the allegation(s) involve the Pastor, the chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee shall be notified immediately in the place of the Pastor. The chairperson shall immediately notify the District Superintendent who shall direct the next steps to be taken in responding to the allegation(s).
5. The Pastor or their designee shall immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services (800-552-7096) or the Virginia Beach Department of Social Services (757-437-3400) of the allegation(s).
6. The Pastor or their designee shall immediately notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the involved child(ren) or youth(s) unless the Pastor has verified that the parent(s)/guardian(s) already have knowledge of the allegation(s) or the allegation(s) involve conduct of the parent(s)/guardian(s).
7. The Pastor or their designee shall immediately notify the church's insurance company.
8. Church members and staff who are aware of the allegation(s) shall pray for all persons affected by the allegation(s) and for the church.

All church members and staff involved in these procedures shall observe strict confidentiality.

10 – Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Charity United Methodist Church shall be reviewed annually by the Safety Committee Chair, the Church Administrator and the Trustee Chair. The reviewed policy will be submitted for approval to the Trustees and the Church Council.