

**Charity United Methodist Church**

*Safe*

*Sanctuaries*

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

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## **1. Purpose**

Charity United Methodist Church, hereinafter known as “CUMC”, strives through this policy to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for children and youth who participate in church programs and sponsored activities. When children and youth are present in CUMC programs or activities, staff and volunteers’ function as “loco parentis”, Latin for “in the place of a parent”. Therefore, CUMC has the legal responsibility to eliminate opportunities for child abuse and neglect by ensuring that proper requirements are met for any applicant who wishes to become a CUMC “Safe Sanctuary” staff member/volunteer. A staff member, hereinafter known as “staff” is defined as “paid staff who are employed by CUMC and who would be assigned to supervise children”. A volunteer, hereinafter known as “volunteer(s)” is defined as “an unpaid person who is 18 years of age or older or youth who are 5 years older than the children/youth to which they will potentially be assigned to monitor and/or supervise”.

## **2. Safe Sanctuary Eligibility Requirements**

- Completion of application entitled “Working with Minors”
- Completion of form entitled “Statement of Understanding and Acceptance
- Completion of two reference forms from other individuals
- A one-on-one interview for new staff employees
- Safe Sanctuary Policy Training
- National Background and Offender Registry checks for those individuals who are 18 years of age or older

## **3. Procedures to be followed to Protect Against Child Abuse and Neglect**

### **3.1 – Screening, Interviewing, and Training**

- A. Applicants must complete and sign all forms included in the application process.
- B. Applicants must have two individuals complete the two (2) reference forms. The reference individuals must be 18 years or older, must be familiar with the applicant’s experiences with children and youth, must know the applicant for at least two (2) years, and must not be related via family to the applicant in any way.
- C. All applicants are required to sign an agreement authorizing a **National Criminal Background Check** and a **National Sex Offender Registry Check**. No applicant will be allowed to serve if it is determined that 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.
- D. Where interviews for new applicants associated with CUMC are warranted, appropriate staff and/or Staff Parish Relations Committee members will handle this process.

- E. If applicants who are 18 years and older pass the background and registry checks, then they are approved to complete the Training Program on Child Protection and Abuse. Documentation of the completion of this training for all Certified Safe Sanctuary approved Staff/Volunteers will be kept on file in the church office. Applicants of an age less than 18, but 5 years older than children/youth to be supervised will be approved, but not certified, as background and registry checks are not part of their approval process.
- F. Scout Leaders, 4-H Leaders or other such community-based groups must provide the Church Administrator documentation that leaders of said groups have completed appropriate training courses and background screenings as required by the organization that they are associated with.

### **3.2 - Six Month Rule**

In order to provide the best protection for children/youth, no one may serve as a staff/volunteer 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/volunteers will be actively involved in the life of the church and will also be required to provide an additional reference individual who is a member of CUMC.

### **3.3 - Supervision of Children and Youth Including Two-Adult Rule**

- A. Staff/volunteers must have parents/guardians utilize the sign-in/sign-out system when dropping off all children through Grade 5.
- B. Supervision by staff/volunteers for children/youth attending events and/or activities shall begin 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the event/activity.
- C. Children/Youth under the age of 16 will not be left unsupervised on church property or during any church-sponsored off-site events and activities.
- D. Two Adult Rule--CUMC will provide two adults for every group of children or youth. "Adults" is defined as "staff/volunteers who are at least five years older than the age group with which they are working and who are not family-related as spouses, siblings, and/or parents/children". When the "two adult rule" is not feasible, then the group must be combined with another group to be in compliance with the Two Adult Rule.
- E. CUMC requires that a reasonable ratio of staff/volunteers to children/youth be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children/youth. The staff/volunteer ratios to be maintained are as follows:
  - 1) At least two for every 8 infants through two-year-old children
  - 2) At least two for every 20 three-year-old - pre/k children
  - 3) At least two for every 24 elementary age children: Grades K-5
  - 4) At least two for every 30 youth: Grades 6 thru 12

In the case of special-needs children or youth, extra staff or volunteers will be assigned to work with these situations.

- F. All staff/volunteers must wear an appropriate colored lanyard and photo ID name tag.
- G. Staff/volunteers will avoid being alone with a child or youth without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings. If a staff/volunteer member is alone with a child or youth, the door must be open or a window available for viewing.
- H. 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.
- I. If a child/youth group stays overnight at the church or leaves the area for an overnight trip, four or more staff/volunteers must be present. If the group is of mixed gender, staff/volunteers must include at least two males and two females. In the event of a church

sponsored overnight activity, groups of mixed gender will have separate sleeping quarters designated with two staff/volunteers of the same gender.

J. If a church sponsored children/youth group leaves the premises for a local day event, at least one male and one female chaperone must be present when the group consists of mixed genders.

K. Bathroom Policy

- 1) Nursery Age-When changing diapers, the staff/volunteer shall always wear gloves and have another staff/volunteer in visible sight.
- 2) Preschool Age—If a child needs to go the bathroom, then more than one child is to be escorted, as no staff/volunteer shall take just one child to the bathroom. Staff/Volunteers must use “Sight and Sound Supervision” being able to see and hear the children while maintaining the children’s privacy as much as possible. If a child needs help, help must be given by another staff member in visible site.
- 3) Elementary Age Children (K-5)—If a child needs to go to the bathroom, then more than one child is to be escorted, as no staff/volunteer shall take just one child to the bathroom. Staff/Volunteers need only utilize “Sound Supervision”. However, if a child needs help, then another staff/volunteer must have visible site.
- 4) When children/youth are offsite in public restroom areas, the bathrooms must be checked before the children/youth are allowed to enter. Staff/Volunteer(s) must remain in the bathroom area with the children/youth while providing privacy as much as possible.

**4. Nametags, Colored Lanyards and Photo ID Policy**

Every staff/volunteer working with children/youth will be required to wear a photo ID nametag on a CUMC colored lanyard. Staff/volunteers 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 date of renewal which will be in three (3) years from the date of issue.

The lanyards will be colored as follows:

**Green:** These are the “Safe Sanctuary certified” staff/volunteers who have completed the entire screening and training process, including background and registry checks. The nametags attached to the green lanyard can be worn for three years after which time the staff/volunteer must redo the screening/training process.

**Red:** Volunteers who are youth that are 5 years older than the child/youth group being supervised will have completed the entire screening process, excluding background and registry checks. The nametags attached to the red lanyard can be worn for three years after which time the youth would redo the screening/training process or would be of the age whereby the background and registry check and would be required. These volunteers are counted in the ratios of Two Adult Rule. However, at no point will this type of volunteer be left alone with a child/youth or children/youth.

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

A. Staff/volunteers are not to be alone with a child/youth in a vehicle. Any exception to this rule must be made from the parent or legal guardian through written permission and must be submitted to the church for file.

- B. Two staff//volunteers must be present in any vehicle that is transporting children/youth.
- C. Everyone must wear a seatbelt (see exceptions for bus transportation as applicable).
- D. No one under the age of 13 shall ride in the front seat.
- E. No one under the age of 25 shall be allowed to drive.
- F. Use of safety seats which meet federal standards is required for all children under 8 years of age.
- G. All drivers of Church owned vehicles must comply with the CUMC Driving Policy.

## **6. Discipline**

All staff/volunteers will use the following disciplinary measures with children/youth:

- If a child is behaving inappropriately, the staff/volunteer 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’s Coordinator or Event Leader- No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, is to be 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.

## **7. Open Classroom**

Classrooms or childcare rooms will not be locked and may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer workers. This may be superseded by provisions in the CUMC Safety and Security Policy during times when lock-down is required.

## **8. Permission to Use Photos**

Staff/volunteer 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 registration/permission slips that must be reviewed with parent and then signed by each parent or guardian annually. Event specific permission slips will also include a photo release. Permission forms and release forms are maintained in the CUMC Church Administrator’s office.

## **9. Notifications to Children and Youth**

Notifications to children/youth via electronic means such as texting and e-mail would require the notification being sent also to the parent or guardian and program supervisor. Staff/Volunteer(s) must have permission in writing from parents to communicate *directly* with children or youth via electronic devices. Written permission will be maintained in the CUMC Church Administrator’s office. Upon receipt of this written permission, messages are to be sent at appropriate times. Volunteer/staff will not text or communicate with minors online after 9pm, except in the case of an emergency. A staff/volunteer is to avoid initiating or accepting “friending” within a child’s/youth’s social media unless parental permission is in writing and as stated above.

## **10. Training on Signs of Abuse**

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/volunteer member if inappropriate behavior is identified. Training classes will be regularly scheduled throughout the year to ensure that all staff/volunteers who need recertification will have the opportunity to do so.

### **11. Church Response to Child Abuse/Neglect**

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

- A. Any allegation(s) of child abuse shall be treated seriously.
- B. The Pastor and/or Youth Coordinator designee shall be immediately notified and will immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in the handling of the allegation(s).
- C. The Pastor or their designee shall immediately notify the District Superintendent.
- D. 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).
- E. 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).
- F. 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).
- G. The Pastor or their designee shall immediately notify the church's insurance company.
- H. 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 are required to observe strict confidentiality.

### **12. Policy Review**

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