

# SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY FOR KNIGHTDALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Knightdale United Methodist Church (hereinafter referred to as “KUMC”) is committed to providing a safe and loving environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church sponsored activities. In addition, KUMC is committed to taking the necessary precautions to protect any person working in a KUMC ministry from false accusations or suspicions.

The following policies and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers or volunteers but rather are intended to protect our children, youth, employees, volunteers and the church body as a whole.

## II. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the following terms and/or conditions used shall be defined as follows:

**Policy:** A guiding principle for establishing rules, procedures and a course of action directed to providing protective care for our children and youth and to provide protection for any volunteer or employee while supervising a church sponsored activity for the youth or children.

**Physical Abuse:** Any act of omission or act that endangers a person’s physical or mental health, including but not limited to any intentional physical injury caused by the individual’s caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is either overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual’s age or condition.

**Verbal Abuse:** Any verbal act that humiliates degrades or threatens any child, youth or adult.

**Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse of minors includes but is not limited to touching them in inappropriate ways such as fondling, inappropriate touch of the minor’s body and inappropriate kissing. Non-touch abuse includes making remarks of sexual nature, showing the child explicit pornographic materials or making the minor watch others engage in sexual activity.

**Lack of Supervision:** Failure to provide proper adult supervision of a minor during the course of a church sponsored activity. This includes any injury or harm to the minor during this period.

**Minor:** Any child that has not been emancipated and/or is under the legal age of 18 years old.

**Youth:** Children who participate in youth classified events.

**Worker:** Any person in a “position of trust” with a minor(s) such as any clergy, staff or volunteer.

**Ministry:** Any activity sponsored or attended by the church whether on or off church property.

**Committee:** The Safe Sanctuary Committee shall be charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Safe Sanctuary policy, including but not limited to, the adherence to policy provisions, screening and training of any and all employees or volunteers. In addition, it shall be the responsibility of the Committee to report any violation or suspected violation of this policy occurring during the course of a church sponsored activity to the proper authority.

**Director:** Safe Sanctuary Committee Chair(s).

**Criminal History:** Compilation of an individual's identification, arrest, conviction, detention, incarceration, indictment, legal status, sex offender registration, warrant information, probation or other formal criminal charges and any disposition arising there from, including acquittal, sentencing, correctional supervision, probation or release and/or any other relevant criminal history. Criminal records checks will be done by an appropriate law enforcement agency or information gathering agency.

**Caretaker:** Parents, Guardians, daycare provider and any relative in the home that is entrusted with the responsibility for care of a child.

### **III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

By fostering awareness of appropriate, as well as inappropriate, behavior with or in the presence of minors, KUMC, as part of the body of Christ, will demonstrate Christian love and respect for one another.

It is not the intent of the membership of KUMC to be judgmental for we are all accountable to God. The membership of KUMC will rely on God's wisdom in developing, implementing and carrying out God's will through this policy. Compassion and truth will be the guiding forces for any reporting or follow up action that results from the procedures outlined in this policy.

Congregational support is critical for the success of this policy. KUMC desires to devote as much time and effort as possible to the work of the Lord which mandates that this policy be understood by every member of our congregation. This will enable church staff and leadership to do what is necessary to preserve the church's resources for the work of the Lord.

### **IV. PLAN FOR REDUCING RISK**

Screening for employees and volunteers:

An Employment/Volunteer Application form (Appendix A)

Release of information form signed for criminal records check and reference checks (Appendix B)

KUMC membership for six or more months prior to beginning volunteer service is required. Exceptions will be allowed only if the applicant provides a letter from the pastor and/or relevant staff person at their prior church or if written recommendations are received from a KUMC pastor and one current KUMC member who has been a member for at least six months.

Adults who have either been charged with or convicted of a crime involving child abuse (including, but not limited to, sexual, physical or neglect) or violent offense (including, but not limited to, murder, rape, assault or domestic violence) will not be allowed to volunteer and will not be permitted to serve in any church sponsored activity or program for minors.

Persons having a Criminal History of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.

Other offenses, depending on how recent, the frequency, and nature may also preclude an applicant or worker from serving in a ministry. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Clergy and Director. In such cases, the determining factors will be in the best interests, safety and well being of the minors. Any applicant whose Criminal History is such that his or her approval is subject to the decision by the Clergy and Director, will be given the opportunity to explain the circumstances.

Lying on an application is cause for removal from service in a ministry.

All employees and volunteers are required to attend mandatory training on the Safe Sanctuary policy and related issues regarding caring for minors.

Individual survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of KUMC. Individuals who have such a history are encouraged to discuss their desire to work with minors with one of the clergy or Safe Sanctuary Directors prior to applying to work in any ministry.

## **V. GENERAL POLICY**

A minimum of two (2) adult workers shall be present in any room or area where minors are participating. Exceptions to the above rule include:

- Escorting minors between buildings or in the hallways

- Monitoring the arrival or departure of minors

- In cases of emergency care

- Parents will be notified in advance when the two adult worker rule will not be possible.

Parents will also be notified if only one adult was present during any church activity. Any change in the policy will be documented for review by the committee.

When family members work together (husband/wife/child/siblings/etc.), an additional worker shall be present. An exception will be allowed only in cases where both family members have actively served in the Church for at least one (1) year and then only after a Clergy member and Safe Sanctuary Director approve.

Under no circumstances shall a worker be alone with a minor behind a closed door with no window. Doors shall never be locked while occupied by workers and minors.

During Sunday School, a hall monitor will be available to assist with needs in any classroom.

Classes shall remain in the assigned room location. If there is to be a change of location, a sign shall be posted on the door providing notice of any change of location.

Age appropriate disciplinary intervention will be addressed in training. However, at no time will physical or verbally humiliating intervention or punishment be tolerated.

## **VI. POLICIES FOR MINISTRIES OF CHILDREN BELOW GRADE 6**

Minors in the nursery will be signed in by a parent and signed out when picked up.

Minors in preschool through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade need to be picked up from all ministries by a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent and known to the worker. Fourth and fifth grades may be released from Sunday School by the workers without being picked up by a parent or designated person if the parent provides written permission to do so. For these minors in ministries other than Sunday School, the above procedure shall be followed.

Restroom procedures will be addressed in training.

## **VII. POLICIES FOR MINISTRIES OF YOUTH**

Workers need to be a minimum of five (5) years older than youth involved in Youth Group activities.

Youth/Leader conferences: provided (1) the conference is for a relatively brief time, (2) the Leader informs another worker at the beginning and end of the meeting and (3) other church policies are followed

A worker may “pick up” or “drop off” a youth at their home provided permission has been given by the parent.

## **VIII. POLICIES REGARDING DRIVING, TRIPS AND OVERNIGHT STAYS**

When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-adult rule applies. When multiple vehicles are used for an event, a single worker may drive if all the vehicles stay together.

Occupants of vehicles shall wear seatbelts. Buses not equipped with seatbelts are exempt.

Minors twelve (12) years and younger shall not sit in the front seat of vehicles with air bags.

Overnight: The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirement of the planned activities. There shall be at least (1) female worker and one (1) male worker on the trip. When possible, adjoining hotel rooms will be used with a one adult per three youth rule. If not available, then one adult per room with two to three youths will be the policy.

## **IX. PLAN FOR RESPONSE TO SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF ABUSE**

**Assess Immediate Risk to Minor:** Where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any Worker with knowledge or information about such abuse shall immediately contact another adult and take steps to ensure the safety of the minor. Any emergency healthcare shall be provided such as (1) first aid, (2) emergency mental health services, and /or (3) transport to a hospital emergency department. The minor shall immediately be removed from contact with the suspected abuser. The safety of the minor is most important before any reporting.

Where the abuse of a minor is alleged to have occurred at home, and the minor's safety at home is in doubt, the worker reporting the alleged abuse shall call 911 to notify the appropriate law enforcement officials.

## **X. NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Workers shall immediately notify a Director or Clergy member of any incident of suspected abuse or violation of the above policies.

The parents/guardians of the minor shall be notified of the alleged abuse as soon as possible by a Director or Clergy member.

Once a worker's obligation of notification as been fulfilled, any worker making and/or receiving a report of alleged abuse shall keep the information strictly confidential.

## **XI. REPORTING PROCEDURE**

In cases where abuse or neglect is suspected by a care giver a report shall be made to Child Protective Services (CPS) by a Director, Clergy or Worker. If abuse is suspected by a noncaregiver the local law enforcement agency shall be contacted. When the suspected abuse or neglect is reported to have occurred in an area outside of Wake County the appropriate agency in that county or state shall be contacted.

No one involved in the alleged incident(s) shall be interviewed by anyone except by the proper law enforcement/ protection agency. Those involved shall be supported until an investigation is begun.

An Incident Report shall be completed by the Worker which includes the information disclosed by the minor or what was actually witnessed. (See Appendix) Information on this form shall be kept to only factual information provided by the minor or what was witnessed. This form is to be provided to a Director or Clergy Member and will be kept secure in a locked area.

The church's attorney and insurance company shall be contacted by a Director or Clergy member.

Allegations shall be taken seriously and no pre-judgments shall be made. Situations shall be handled confidentially with due respect for the privacy of the alleged victim and others involved in the incident.

## **XII. SUPPORT OF THE MINOR AND/OR FAMILY**

Provide counseling services to meet the needs of the minor. These can either be provided by a member of KUMC clergy or an outside provider if deemed more appropriate. Counseling services shall also be offered to the minor's family.

## **XIII. DEALING WITH THE ACCUSED AND/OR FAMILY**

Remove the accused from any further contact with minors for the protection of both parties.

Treat the accused with dignity and support.

Do not confront the accused. Make sure the all minors are kept safe in the situation.

Offer and provide counseling services to the family of the accused as appropriate.

## **XIV. FALSE COMPLAINTS**

While rare, false complaints against someone are made.

As with any complaint, the information shall be kept confidential among those involved with handling the information.

Counseling services whether by KUMC clergy or outside sources need to be offered to all parties involved. This includes the families of the minor and accused. Other members of the church may also require services.

A Director or Clergy member will contact the church attorney and insurance provider.

## **XV. ADVISING THE CONGREGATION OF AN INCIDENT OF ABUSE**

Clergy members, Directors and Safe Sanctuary Committee members will hold informational sessions to advise the church that an incident occurred without providing any confidential information.

Outside resources will be contact to assist in helping the congregation heal as it is deemed necessary.

One on one counseling sessions will be offered on an as needed basis.