

**University City United Methodist Church
Charlotte, NC 28269
August 23, 2010 Revision**

UCUMC Policy 35-1 Child Abuse Prevention

Purpose: To determine and demonstrate the absolute and unwavering commitment of UCUMC, to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

Introduction

“*Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me*” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God. God calls us to make our churches safe places; protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (Excerpts from *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church: 1996* by the United Methodist Publishing House). As we engage in our ministry with children and youth, UCUMC must not allow the risks of abuse to undermine or hinder this ministry. To address this challenge, the following steps must be addressed:

- Acknowledging the risks and developing a practical plan to reduce them.
- Taking steps to prevent harm to both our children and our workers.
- Continuing to answer the imperative to be in ministry with children; making a difference in their lives.

*The 1998 Volunteers for Children Act amended the National Child Protections Act of 1993 and is specific: if an organization uses employees and/or volunteers who have been previously convicted of a relevant crime, the organization may be held liable under the legal theory of **negligent hiring**. Further, the same organization with inadequate supervision of child care can be held liable under the legal theory of **negligent supervision**.*

Definitions

Physical abuse: Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. (i.e. shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing, burning, etc.)

Emotional abuse: Abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty which may make a child feel worthless, unloved and undeserving of love and care.

Neglect: Abuse in which a person endangers a child’s health, safety or welfare through negligence, whether it be withholding food, clothing, medical care, education or even affection and affirmation of the child’s self-worth.

Sexual abuse: The sexual exploitation or use of anyone under 18 years of age, through any contact or interaction in which the minor is used for the satisfaction of the older person, including both touching and non-touching behaviors.

Touching behaviors: Behaviors including, but not limited to, kissing on the mouth, fondling, intercourse, forcible rape, genital anal penetration and oral sex.

Non-touching behaviors: Behaviors including, but not limited to, verbal comments of a sexual nature, display of pornography, obscene telephone calls, exhibitionism and allowing or coercing minors to witness sexual activity.

Minor: Includes any child or youth under the age of 18.

Paid staff: Compensated employees of University City United Methodist Church.

Volunteers: Any adult or youth who has direct or indirect contact with any minor(s).

Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures have been set forth by University City United Methodist Church to insure the safety of all children and youth, to protect paid staff and volunteers, and to reduce the liability of the church from allegations of child abuse: To better understand the Policies and Procedures, you should read, "*Safe Sanctuaries – Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*," – a United Methodist writer's approach to Child Abuse Prevention.

Selection and Screening

Screening includes the careful gathering and review of information, in search of persons who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment. All screening results will remain confidential.

PAID STAFF: All persons employed to serve in a supervisory capacity for children/youth, shall:

1. Be at least 18 years of age.
2. Complete the Application For Working With Minors. (UCUMC Form 35-*Employment Application*). By signing this form, the applicant will give UCUMC permission to contact references and to perform any necessary investigation, including contacting appropriate law enforcement agencies.
3. Complete a permission form for a criminal records check. (UCUMC Form 35-4 *Permission for Criminal Records Check*)
4. May be interviewed by the Safe Children Task Force. (UCUMC Form 35-2 *UCUMC Task Force* and UCUMC Form 35-3 *Interview Form*.)

VOLUNTEER STAFF: All volunteers serving in a supervisory capacity for children/youth shall:

1. Be at least 15 years of age.
2. Receive a copy of UCUMC Form 35-5 *Child Care Worker Position Description*.
3. Be a member or participating visitor of UCUMC for a minimum of six (6) months or provide a reference by the Weekday School.
4. Complete UCUMC Form 35-6 *Volunteer Application*.
5. May be interviewed by the Safe Children Task Force.
6. Complete a permission form for a criminal records check (UCUMC Form 35-4 *Permission for a Criminal Records Check*.)

SAFE CHILDREN TASK FORCE: This committee is responsible for conducting the personal interview of all applicants for approval/disapproval. See UCUMC Form 35-2 *Local Task Force*. It is further charged with overseeing investigations of allegations of abuse. This committee will meet periodically to review the church's compliance with this policy. This committee consists of:

- Lay Representative
- Church Council Representative
- Staff Representative
- Others as desired.

NOTE: The committee must consist of both male and female members. If this is not the case, the committee shall select one individual from either the Church Council or SPRC to satisfy this requirement. Findings and reports should be given to the ministerial staff, for review. All information will be retained by the Church Business Administrator in confidential files.

STAFF: Consists of the Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, and Weekday School Director.

.Education and Training of Staff

In an effort to successfully implement the policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child abuse, an on-going program for education and training is essential.

1. All new employees and new volunteers, shall attend a training session prior to working with our youth/children.
2. An annual Covenant Renewal will be offered for all staff and volunteers.

Training sessions are designed to help workers with children to understand that the policies are in place to protect not only the children, but the workers as well. Sessions shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Behaviors that signal problems (What is abuse and how can we recognize it?)
2. Guidelines for prevention (What are we doing to keep our children/workers safe?)
3. Procedures for reporting alleged abuse (Knowing the legal reporting requirements for N.C.)
4. What is considered abuse or "risky" behavior?
5. Procedures for response (To the victim, the family, the news media, our insurance agency, the annual conference and possibly, to the abuser.)
6. Basic First Aid

Copies of the training materials will be provided to each attending staff or volunteer member.

Basic Prevention Guidelines

All meetings of children/youth shall be governed by these guidelines:

1. Two trained volunteers must be available on the premises at all times. Two Volunteers (one must be an adult-18 years or older) should be assigned to each group at all times. If two volunteers are not present in each classroom and there is not a glass panel, windows or half door that is open, then the classroom door will be left open. In addition, an adult should be available to roam in between classrooms in order to monitor the activity inside and outside the room(s) where sessions or event is held.
2. Any volunteer or paid staff working with minors on site at UCUMC **must wear a nametag** that displays a teddy bear, denoting that they have been through our training session.
3. Restroom policy-Volunteers/staff accompanying a child or youth needing assistance to the restroom should leave the hallway door open.
4. Written, signed, parental permission shall be obtained prior to groups departing the UCUMC premises. No youth should drive to any out of town activity. A parent or adult should transport them.
5. Classrooms/staff offices shall not be in an isolated area of the building.
6. Unauthorized visitors will not be allowed to remain with the group.
7. 3rd Grade and under students, without express permissions and supervision, shall not be allowed to leave the designated meeting area. Buddy System-volunteers/staff shall make sure that 4th Grade and above students have a buddy close to their age accompany them if they leave the classroom or activity area, out of the vision of the leaders, so that no child/youth is ever alone in the hallways, church building, or at an outside activity.
8. If required, any one-on-one interaction with a minor must not be conducted without prior consent obtained from a parent or guardian of the minor.
9. Volunteers or paid staff will not date or have romantic involvement with a minor.
10. When on trips, adults shall not share a bed with a child unless the child is their own. On overnight youth or mission trips, there should be at least one male and female adult chaperone.
11. There shall be access to a telephone at all times in the nursery office of the Fellowship Hall building, room 500 in the lower level of the Disciple Center building, and the reception desk in the low lever of the Worship Center building.
12. No one under the age of 18 should be give given supervisory capacity and should be at least five years older than those being supervised. Youth can participate in children's activities as "assistants" as long as other Care Policy procedures are followed.

Discipline

Corporal punishment will never be used for any reason. No individual is to spank, hit, or shake a child or youth. Positive discipline measures will be used to redirect and guide a child/youth's behavior. Techniques of behavior management to use will include the following:

1. Positive reinforcement
2. Redirecting student to other areas of the room or to new activities
3. Time out
4. Removal from the classroom/activity area and taken to the parent(s) or appropriate ministry leader.

Procedures for Reporting Alleged Abuse

When a paid staff member or volunteer at a church sponsored program or event, suspects that abuse has taken place, he or she should report the incident immediately to the Senior Pastor, or to the Church Business Administrator, and/or to another member of the church staff. The person suspected of abuse should, for the safety and well being of the minor involved, be removed from further contact with the minor until an appropriate investigation has taken place.

- The adult in charge shall document the incident in writing. (*UCUMC 35-7 Reported Incident of Possible Child Abuse.*)
2. The Senior Pastor and staff ministry leader in which incident occurred should be advised in writing.
 - a. If a staff member is the alleged suspect, the report should be made to their supervisor.
 - b. If the Senior or Associate Pastor is suspected, the report should be made to the Lake Norman District Superintendent., as well as to the Church Business Administrator (if available) and the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. NOTE: The matter should be held in strict confidence and must not be discussed with anyone else.
 3. If reasonable cause is established, the Pastor/Administrator shall notify:
 - a. Mecklenburg /Charlotte Department of Human Services.
 - b. District Superintendent
 - c. Insurance carrier
 - d. UCUMC attorney
 4. All conversations should be documented.
 5. The Staff Parish Relations Committee shall be informed of any incident involving a staff member.
 6. Any person who is not found innocent of alleged abuse or molestation shall be removed from work with children and youth at UCUMC.
 7. The chair of SPCR or designee, District Superintendent, and/or lawyer is responsible for all contact with the Press and for outside church inquiries. Confidentiality of all persons shall be scrupulously safeguarded.
 8. Notwithstanding the above, any person who has cause to suspect abuse or neglect shall report the said suspicions to the Director of Department of Social Services in the appropriate county pursuant to North Carolina Law (NC General Statute Section 7B-301) Suspect means you have seen signs of abuse or neglect, or the child has made statements to you.

Educating the Congregation and Parents

“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” Luke 18:16. Because our church is a community of faith---a safe haven and sanctuary---where children and youth can be confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to eternal life, it is our obligation as a congregation, to be as current and aware of the variety of educational opportunities that may be provided each year. The following steps include:

Congregation and staff:

- Taking the training as a volunteer before volunteering
- Completing UCUMC Form 35-8 *Participation Covenant Statement* yearly
- Agreement to a random background check at any time.

The more a congregation does to encourage openness and honesty in communication, the faster healing and recovery can proceed.

Implementation of this Plan

1. Pastors, the Director of Children’s Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Weekday School, and Minister of Worship and the Arts, in conjunction with the appropriate committees, are responsible for implementation of this policy.
2. The Church Business Administrator or Associate Pastor is responsible for all contact with the Press and for outside church inquiries.
3. All files are to be considered confidential, and will be accessible only to those with the need to know as established by the Senior Pastor and/or Chair, SPRC. Files will be maintained in the office of the Church Business Administrator. This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Church Council. This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Safe Children Task Force instead of Church Council.

Attachments:

- Informative Web Sites about Child Abuse/Molestation
- UCUMC Form 35-1 Employment Application
- UCUMC Form 35-2 UCUMC Task Force
- UCUMC Form 35-3 Interview Form
- UCUMC Form 35-4 Permission for a Criminal Records Check
- UCUMC Form 35-5 Child Care Worker Position Description
- UCUMC Form 35-6 Volunteer Application
- UCUMC Form 35-7 Reported Incident of Possible Child Abuse
- UCUMC Form 35-8 Participation Covenant Statement