

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

We celebrate that children and youth are full participants in the life of Epworth United Methodist Church and in the realm of God. As a community of Christian faith we are called to offer welcome, hospitality, education, spiritual growth opportunities, and support to all children and youth. We seek to be faithful to that trust, and we acknowledge that it takes active commitment of the whole congregation to assure the physical safety and spiritual care of all our children and youth.

Abusive behavior or neglect, by any of us toward any one of us, puts all of us at risk. Epworth is committed to being a holy place, an open place, and a safe place in which all persons can experience the love of God. These policies and procedures are an effort to further that promise.

The following govern all paid staff members and volunteers who work with children and/or youth at Epworth United Methodist Church:

TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

1. All paid staff members, upon employment, must participate in an online Safe Sanctuary training program, which is sanctioned by the Conference. As a component of this program, a rigorous background check is completed. Upon employment, new employees must immediately take the mandatory Safe Sanctuary training program; their permanent status will be pending until the background check has been satisfactorily completed.
2. There will be an annual Code-of-Conduct training for all counselors and counselors-in-training, working in the summer camp program, under the direction of the Director of Children and Family Ministries.
3. In addition to the mandatory online training, each new nursery assistant shall undergo additional training administered by the Director of Children and Family Ministries regarding emergency protocols and safety of small children.
4. There will be an annual training for volunteers such as Godly Play instructors and greeters and adult volunteers at summer camps and for youth counselors over 18 under the administration of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. The training will cover:
 - a. The church's Safe Sanctuary policies and emergency protocols
 - b. Details of state laws regarding child abuse
 - c. Indicators and appropriate steps to report suspected abuse.
5. First Aid/CPR Training will be offered annually for all volunteers working with children and youth and is required for all paid staff under the administration of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

DOCUMENTATION

6. As indicated above, all Paid Staff of the church shall undergo a rigorous background check and shall abide by the policies set forth in this document.
7. Information Forms: Volunteers, paid staff, and drivers will complete appropriate information forms (see attached) before beginning service.
8. Your supervisor will be immediately notified of any suspected abuse (physical, sexual or emotional). An incident report form will be completed in case of injury or suspected abuse.
9. Parental Notice: Parents or guardians will be given advance notice and full information

regarding activities of their children and youth. Parents or guardians must give written permission for off-site activities. Parents or guardians of nursery-age children will sign in when the child is brought in to nursery care and sign them out when they leave with the child.

10. No person who has been convicted of child abuse or is a registered sex offender will work with children or youth. Megan's Law reviews will take place annually.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

11. Two Adult Rule: No fewer than two adults are to be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth. If this is not possible, a "floater" may be assigned to drop in where children and/or youth are gathered.
12. Six-Month Rule: All volunteers with children or youth must have been actively involved in the congregation for at least six months before beginning their volunteer service.
13. Five-Years-Older Rule: Any volunteer or paid staff recruited or hired providing ministry services to children or youth are to be at least five years older than any of the children or youth with whom the staff person will work.
14. Open-Door Counseling: At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used will remain open for the entire session.
15. Minimum Age: All employees and all volunteers who have primary supervisory responsibility for children will be over the age of 18. Volunteers under the age of 18 will work only under the direct supervision of adult staff or trained volunteers.
16. Drivers: Anyone providing transportation for an official church event, outing or work team must have reached 25 years of age. All drivers will complete a driver-information form and provide requested materials.

BUILDING SAFETY

17. Annual Review of Building Safety: Annually in May the Trustees will conduct an annual walk-through of the property, identifying and seeking to correct physical hazards and promote visibility for the safety of children.