



Duke Memorial UMC

Safe Sanctuaries Training

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

- To protect Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults
- To protect our Volunteers and Paid Workers
- To limit the risk of liability to our church
- A faithful response to the statistics:
 - 85% of acts of abuse are perpetrated by an adult whom a child already trusts.
 - 1 out of 3 girls and 1 out of 7 boys are sexually assaulted by age 18.
 - National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect estimates there are more than 3 million incidents of physical abuse and neglect each year.

Why Safe Sanctuaries?



In 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in the church.

Jesus said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse” (§ 162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse occur in churches both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real and appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders.

Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

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. (From The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church – 2000, pp.180-181.)

- Staff and volunteers undergo a background check.
- Volunteers must be active in the church for several months before working with young people in an unsupervised capacity.
- Children are signed in and out of Sunday school and nursery.
- One-on-one conversations with children/youth take place in public or in a room with doors open, at a time when other adults are nearby.
- Two adults when vulnerable persons are present.
- All volunteers are mandatory reporters of abuse. Report directly to the lead staff or volunteer:
 - IHN – Roger Loyd (919-419-1663)
 - Children – Jennifer Ingold Asbill (919-801-3857)
 - Youth – Chris Hamilton (262-844-0480)

Duke Memorial's Policy

- **“Five Year” Rule** – Staff and volunteers must be at least five years older than the age of the oldest child they serve.
- **No primary volunteers/workers under the age of eighteen** – The “two adult” rule applies only to those over 18. Youth workers may be an additional presence in the room.
- **Windows/Open Doors** – Rooms set aside for children should have a half-door, or a door with a window in it.
- **Advance Notice** – All parents will be informed via e-news of events at the church and when children will be moving to different parts of the building (e.g. moving from Whitford Hall for music to classrooms).

Additional Practices for Children’s Ministry

- Behavior standards are established in a written **covenant**.
- Plans are communicated to parents **in advance**.
- The identity and contact info of youth are **protected**.
- Volunteers must be at least **5 years older** than the oldest youth they serve.
- On overnight trips, adults and youth sleep in **separate rooms** whenever practical and safe to do so.

Additional Practices for Youth Ministry

When Duke Memorial hosts Interfaith Hospitality Network families, volunteers (of all congregations) are required to:

- pass a background check
- complete the Safe Sanctuaries test (or one like it for another denomination)
- Provide sufficient supervision for the number and needs of participants.
- ensure the safety of all guests and report all suspected abuse to Roger Loyd (919-419-1663)

Additional Practices for IHN

- Found in every racial, ethnic, social, and economic group.
- Married, single, widowed.
- Some are old and some are young (as young as 14 or 15)
- 60% of abusers who are caught abuse again.
- Abusers often have dozens and dozens of victims.
- Abusers were often victims of abuse themselves.
- **There is no “type” of abuser. They look like anybody.**

Who are abusers?

- Coercion occurs when power and exploitation combine.
- Abuser is powerful and his or her victim is vulnerable because of:
 - Size
 - Position/Authority
 - Knowledge
 - Finances
 - Maturity

Sources of power for abusers

- **Physical abuse** - Deliberate intentional bodily harm
- **Emotional abuse** – Spoken or unspoken emotional cruelty or violence
- **Neglect** – endangerment of health, safety, welfare through negligence
- **Sexual** – sexual contact without consent (*there is no possible consent between a minor and an adult*)
- **Ritual abuse** – physical, sexual, or psychological violation of a child inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way.
- **Spiritual abuse/neglect** (older adult) – failure of church to provide spiritual nurture to those homebound/in nursing care.
- **Financial abuse/exploitation** (older adult) – illegal and improper use of funds, property, and assets.

Types of Abuse

- Vigilance
- Accompany children to the restroom; check bathrooms and stalls before a child enters
- When transitioning rooms, count children
- Communicate rooms changes and trips around campus to parents and volunteers
- Make sure parents check children in and out
- Ensure parents have completed a registration form for all children and youth

Protecting Children and Youth in the Building

- Educate the congregation about Safe Sanctuaries policies
- Listen carefully to adults, children, and youth
- Be aware of abrupt changes in behavior
- Employ background checks (Sex Offender Registry)
- Visit and listen to homebound members

Protection for all
vulnerable people

- Financial Abuse: Cashing checks, forging signatures, improper guardianship
- Spiritual neglect/abuse : Being ignored by pastor or members of church
- Physical Abuse: Bruises, unexplained injuries, destructive behavior towards self
- Emotional Signs: Depression, withdrawal, lack of self-esteem
- Neglect: Inappropriate dress, poor physical hygiene, unsanitary living conditions, begs for food
- Sexual Abuse: Unusual vocabulary, promiscuous behavior, difficulty walking/sitting, torn or stained underwear

General Signs of Abuse

- Unusual nervousness about being left in nursery, Sunday school, or youth group.
- Lack of interest in activities that were previously enthusiastically enjoyed.
- Comments such as “I don’t want to be left alone with _____” in reference to a certain volunteer/worker.
- Nightmares including a volunteer/worker as a frightening character.
- Unexplained hostility towards a volunteer/worker.

Signs of Abuse at Church

- Immediately contact the minister or volunteer who coordinates your area of ministry.
- Document the incident(s)
- If suspected abuser is a member of staff or in a leadership position, directly report the incident to Pastor Heather Rodrigues (919-218-2129)
- If the senior pastor is suspected, report directly to Donna Banks, District Superintendent (919-779-9435)
- The police (not the church) investigate allegations.
- Confidentiality does not apply to cases of abuse of a child or youth. **Volunteers and workers are mandatory reporters.**

Reporting Abuse

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
you are mine, and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. *Amen.*

-John Wesley

Covenant Prayer
