

Safe Sanctuaries

HEREFORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“With God’s help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in faith, & confirmed & strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.”

~United Methodist Hymnal, Church Baptismal Vows





Why We Established this Program?

- It is our ethical duty, moral responsibility and legal mandate to make our church a safe place for children.
- However, the policy isn't just for children. This program also protects the church, its staff & its volunteers (YOU), from false accusations or any appearance of impropriety.
- Our formal written guidelines in the document "Safe Sanctuaries & Procedures" are intended to prevent the opportunity or appearance of abuse of a minor.
- Because we have these guidelines, we (as a church) are held to a higher standard than the general public. Because we have these guidelines, we are legally bound to follow them & to make sure that our volunteers follow them.



Why Safe Sanctuaries?

- We feel called & mandated to ensure safe sanctuary for all God's people.
- We seek to prevent the occurrence or even the appearance of abuse.
- We aim to protect workers from false accusations &/or suspicions.



Safe Sanctuary Administrators:

Name: Kurosh Jahromi

Phone #: 410-472-4541

E-mail: kjahromi@gmail.com



Safe Sanctuary Applies To:

➤ Any church sponsored activity *on* or *off* campus involving children/youth in which their parents/legal guardians have given consent but are not present, *including but not limited to*:

Sunday School

Youth Group

Sporting Events

Vacation Bible School

Field Trips

Childcare

Mission Activities

Overnighters

Parties

Confirmation Class

Worship Arts Class

Band Practice

Study Buddies

Counseling Sessions

Meetings



Who Must be Background Checked?

- All Clergy
- All Staff Members
- Volunteers who *work regularly* with children or youth in any church sponsored program or activity, including, but not limited to:
 - Study Buddy tutors
 - Sunday School teachers
 - Nursery caregivers
 - Youth Mentors
- All applicants must be 18 years of age or older.
- Youth helpers are not background checked & are **never** considered to meet the two adult rule or ratio requirements.
- **NOTE:** Someone who only volunteers for a one time event (i.e. Vacation Bible School or similar event that only occurs once a year or less) does not have to be background checked, but may NOT be left alone with children or youth.



The Process – For New Volunteers

- NOTE: An active relationship with the church is required before a volunteer may begin this process.
- Complete a Volunteer Application Packet, which includes:
 - Background Check Release Form (every 3 years)
 - Volunteer Application
 - Faith Statement
 - You will need to provide the names & contact info. for 3 personal references that are NOT staff members
- Complete a class on introduction to the Safe Sanctuaries policy & procedures
- All information provided is confidential & kept under lock & key & access is limited to the Safe Sanctuary Administrator(s) & Pastor.



The Process– For Ongoing Volunteers

➤ Volunteers that have been through the Safe Sanctuary process & have completed the training class for new volunteers are required to participate in an **annual training** in which they will review the Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures, recertifying & recommitting themselves to upholding HUMC's Safe Sanctuary program. This may be done by:

- Taking the in person/online PowerPoint Training
- Completing & turning in the signed participation sheet
- Keeping up on changes to the Safe Sanctuary Policy



What is Abuse?

- Child abuse is both a violation of Christian hospitality & is illegal!
- An intentional act that threatens or inflicts physical or emotional abuse or sexual maltreatment upon a child/youth.
- Abuse also includes failing to prevent an incidence of abuse or allowing a child/youth to be in a situation that results in physical, emotional or sexual injury.



Physical & Emotional Abuse Includes:

- Examples of physical abuse include, but are not limited to:
 - Spanking, Burning, Choking, Shaking, Slapping, Hitting, Kicking, etc.
 - Battery with a weapon (knife, belt, ruler, etc.)
- Examples of emotional abuse include, but are not limited to:
 - Exposing a child/youth to intimidation, humiliation, threats or bullying
 - Sending a message that a child/youth is worthless, bad, unloved, or undeserving of love & care
- Controlled or illegal substance misuse (by the adult or by the child/youth).



What is Sexual Misconduct/Abuse?

- Abuse in which contact between a child/youth & an adult (or other older & more powerful child/youth) occurs.
- Examples of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:
 - Behavior that communicates sexual interest
 - Displaying sexually suggestive material
 - Sexualized comments or innuendoes
 - Touching another's body, hair or clothing in a provocative, uncomfortable or intimate manner
 - Touching, rubbing or exposing oneself sexually in the presence of another person
 - Sexual contact including intercourse or oral sex



What is a Mandated Reporter?

From the website: www.dhr.state.md.us

- A mandated reporter is someone who encounters children through their employment. Mandated reporters are **required** by the state of Maryland to report any known or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to the county child welfare department or to local law enforcement agency (local police/sheriff's department).
- If you knowingly fail to report suspected abuse of a child, you may be subject to professional sanctions by licensing boards. Anyone that makes a "good faith" report is immune from civil liability and criminal penalty.



What is a Non-Mandated Reporter?

- Conversely, non-mandated reporters are not required by law to report incidents of abuse “but are encouraged to obtain training in the identification & reporting of child abuse & neglect & are further encouraged to report known or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect.”



What if there is an incident?

- Take care of the child/youth. Secure emergency medical help if needed.
- If you are a mandated reporter:
 - Report the incident to the police.
 - Contact one of the Safe Sanctuary Administrators or the Pastor as soon as is reasonably possible.
- If you are *not* a mandated reporter:
 - Contact one of the Safe Sanctuary Administrators or the Pastor as soon as is reasonably possible.
 - Be ready to report on all details of the incident.
- Maintain the confidentiality of those involved and cooperate with the subsequent investigation.



What do I do if someone accuses me of something?

- If you are confronted or accused of abuse, immediately contact a member of the staff or the pastor.
- Make yourself available for questioning.
- You will be asked to step down from your position with children/youth until the matter is resolved.
- The church will provide access to resources for counseling.



What if Media is Involved?

- A designated spokesperson will be chosen by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee to represent the church in case of an alleged child abuse incident.
- This designated person is the ONLY person authorized to speak to the media on behalf of HUMC.
- If you are contacted by a member of the media refer all questions & comments to the church office who will get them in contact with our church's spokesperson.



Think like Noah! 2 by 2

- At least 2 adults should be present at all church sponsored activities where children/youth are involved.
- At least one of these adults **MUST** be background checked.
- The background checked adult is considered the lead adult & is responsible for following Safe Sanctuary procedures & ensuring the safety of the event.
- If both adults are related a third non-related adult must be present.
- At no time should a non-background checked adult be left alone with children/youth.



“Adult” Supervision

- To be considered an adult leader for an activity, volunteers must be **5 years older** than the *oldest* child/youth participant.
- i.e. an 18 year old may not work with Senior High youth, but may work with Junior High youth under the age of 13 or children.



Line of Sight– Can you see me?

- ▶ We recognize that sometimes unforeseen circumstances make it impossible to have 2 adults present. When this occurs it is *imperative* that an individual adheres to the following steps to ensure the safety of children/youth & to protect the volunteer:
 - A supervising adult should make periodic observation of the event or visit the class or activity as long as only one adult is present.
 - Stay visible to others by staying in an area where others can see you.
 - Keep the door open unless there are **windows in the classroom**, make sure windows are unobstructed.
 - Ask yourself, “Does my behavior seem suspicious or inappropriate if viewed from a distance?”
 - A good rule of thumb is- if I can’t see another adult, then they can’t see me.



Safety in Numbers

- Whenever a child/youth is present *on campus* there should always be at least 2 adults present, even if the 2nd adult is not part of the activity/event taking place.
- At NO time should an adult be alone with only one child/youth.
- At NO time should a youth be left alone with only one child.
- If a volunteer finds themselves alone with a child/youth they should:
 - Seek out another adult on campus to stay with you until the event is over or the child/youth has been picked up.
 - If this is not possible follow the Line of Sight rule of thumb & stay in an area where you are highly visible.
- **Try to avoid these type of situations, but above all be smart if you find yourself in one!!**



How many is too many?

- In order to provide a safe atmosphere for children/youth to learn, worship & fellowship in the following ratios are to be adhered to for any event:
 - ▶ A ratio of 1 adult to 8 children/youth is not to be exceeded.
 - ▶ A ratio of 1 adult to 3 infants/toddlers is not to be exceeded.
- 1 to 1 is NEVER an acceptable ratio, this is for the safety of the child/youth, but above all you, the volunteer.



Restroom Assistance for Children

- If possible use the buddy system when sending children to the restroom.
- If this is not possible & the child does not need assistance, check the stalls for adults before sending them into use the facilities alone.
- If you must accompany a child into the restroom alone, alert the other adult present & leave the door ajar.
- If a child needs assistance with wiping or clothing leave the door ajar.
- If a child/youth needs extraordinary assistance, such as required because of a handicap, or accident two adults should be present.



Diaper Duty– Do we or don't we?

- Unless a parent/guardian has instructed you to call them in the event of a diaper change, it is absolutely appropriate to change diapers as needed.
- Diapers should be changed in an open environment & all possible health precautions should be followed (i.e. washing hands & disposing properly of changing materials).



Emergencies – Fire Alarms

- If the fire alarm goes off, the building should be evacuated.
- Gather the children/youth, count how many children/youth are with you & proceed to the nearest safe exit.
- Depending on where you are, proceed to the parking lot or one of the grassy areas surrounding the church.
- Stay outside the building until the “all clear signal” is given.
- If it is not possible to reenter the building, remain with children/youth until a staff member can relieve you or if this is not possible until all children/youth have been picked up by a parent/guardian.



Emergencies – Health

- Volunteers should make note of any health conditions or allergies of children/youth in their care, these can be found on sign-in sheets & health history forms.
- First aid kits can be found in various areas of the church, including:
 - Classrooms
 - Choir Room
 - Big kitchen
 - Front office
 - Sanctuary
- Ice can be found in the kitchen freezer for minor bumps & bruises.
- Do not hesitate to call 911.
- Contact a staff person as soon as possible.
- Be prepared to document the incident if necessary, including what happened, who was involved & what treatment was given.



Discipline– The “D” Word

- Discipline is an appropriate & sometimes necessary Christian tool that teaches children/youth both appropriate boundaries & that we, like God desire the best for them. **Remember:** even God disciplines those HE loves.
- Emphasize that it is the behavior that is not good, not the child/youth themselves.
- If there is a child/youth that is continually disruptive it is appropriate to contact the Youth Director to initiate a parent/teacher/director conference.



Appropriate Discipline– Children

➤ For Children

- Make children & parents aware of the rules.
- Affirmation & encouragement are always appropriate.
- Physical discipline, such as spankings are NEVER permitted.
- Humiliation, name-calling or shunning of the child are NEVER permitted.
- Move a child to a different seat or have them sit next to the volunteer.
- If the behavior is out of control &/or a threat to the group. It is appropriate to have an adult call or find their parents.



Appropriate Discipline– Youth

➤ For Youth

- Make youth & parents aware of rules.
- Use gentle reminders.
- Affirmation & encouragement are always appropriate.
- At no time shall corporal punishment be used.
- Malicious use of language toward a minor is prohibited. This includes name calling or any language leading to feelings of worthlessness on the part of the minor.
- In accordance with state & federal laws, the hazing of a minor by any adult is strictly prohibited.
- Contact the Youth Director if inappropriate behavior does not improve.
- Banning a youth from future outings or events should only be implemented by the Youth Director or Pastor.

Open Door Counseling

- At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the door of the room **should remain open for the entire session.**
- Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
- Counseling sessions conducted behind close doors are a breeding ground for false allegations of abuse.
- Close doors are make it too easy for the child abuser to have the privacy and isolation he or she needs.



Setting Healthy Boundaries– Social Media

Def.- Web sites & other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share info. & to develop social & professional contacts. These means of communication include but *are NOT limited to*: Face Book, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, texting, e-mail, Tumblr, Flickr, blogs, Instant Messaging & for our purposes the written note.

- No matter *where or how* communication occurs with a child/youth & whether it is connected with church or not, Safe Sanctuaries rules apply.
- All communications & contact within social media should be initiated by the child/youth. Including requests to be “friends,” or for cell numbers, e-mails, & usernames.
NOTE: If the child is under the age of 13, permission from their parents/guardians must be obtained *first* before engaging in ANY communication.
- If you do not feel comfortable interacting with a child/youth outside of church, it is okay to decline “friend” requests, tweets, texts, etc.
- Key to social media interactions is that they should be seen as the same as face-to-face interaction. What would you say or do if you were in front of the person?



Setting Healthy Boundaries– Pictures & Videos

- Photos or videos of children/youth whether on cameras, camcorders, cell phones, etc. should only be taken if their parents have a signed a Photo Release on file.
- Photos or videos of children/youth can only be posted online if their parents have a signed the Photo Release on file.
- If a child/youth does not feel comfortable having their picture taken or being on film, respect their privacy.
- Be sensitive when posting any images of children/youth.



Setting Healthy Boundaries– Verbal

- Always be aware of where a conversation might go between you & a child/youth or between children/youth. Steer conversations appropriately.
- Discourage name calling, foul language & other verbal attacks between children/youth. Any language that makes another feel embarrassed, worthless or unloved is considered bullying & is not okay.
- Encourage children/youth to resolve their differences amongst themselves before stepping in to mediate.
- Disagreements between volunteers or negative or disparaging remarks about other volunteers should NEVER occur in front of children/youth. Try to resolve differences after the group or event is done. If a resolution cannot be agreed upon, contact a staff person to help mediate.



Setting Healthy Boundaries– Physical

- Prolonged back rubs, massages, kissing or similar contact is not allowed.
- Hugs should be initiated by children/youth, not adults.
- Side hugs should be used whenever possible.
- Handshakes are less threatening than hugs for older children/youth.
- Remember children/youth are often shy about telling adults “No,” especially since they are taught to respect their elders & often get in trouble for telling adults “No.”
- Be aware of each child/youth’s level of comfort with physical boundaries & act accordingly.



Sexual Harassment

- Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive.
- Avoid comments or compliments of a personal nature unless you are sure how they will be received.
- The key factor in sexual harassment is PERCEPTION.



Some Tips for Healthy Interactions:

- Be a good example – treat everyone with respect.
- Ask yourself:
 - “Would I act this way if my child, youth or significant other was present?”
 - “Would I want someone to act this way to my child, youth or significant other?”
 - “If the child/youth’s parents were watching would they think it was inappropriate?”
 - Is there equal participation between you & the person you are interacting with? If not, back away.
- Read other’s verbal & physical cues.
- When in doubt, back away!
- It is not the intent that matters, it is how it is received that is the issue.



Abuse Towards Volunteers

- Verbal & physical abuse of our volunteers by children/youth is just as unacceptable as abuse towards children/youth.
- If you feel your boundaries are being violated by a child/youth or another volunteer, contact a staff person or the pastor as soon as possible after the incident has occurred.



Driving Children

- Driving children/youth is a **great** responsibility.
- Drivers must be at least 25 years old.
- Drivers must be a church member for at least 6 months.
- Driver's must have a current Driver Form, a copy of current license & a copy of current insurance on file to participate in transporting children/youth.
- Drivers are responsible for letting the Safe Sanctuaries Administrators, the Youth Director or Pastor know if their license becomes suspended or revoked, if they receive a ticket for a driving offense or if their auto insurance lapses.

NOTE: Tickets for minor offences are not automatic disqualifiers.



Overnight & Trip Rules

- Overnights & trips are a privilege, not a right. Children/youth violating the rules may be prevented from future outings & may be asked to return home early at their parents' expense.
- Written permission & medical consent forms must be completed by legal guardians prior to the trip for all children/youth.
- In the case of overnight events, males & females must have separate sleeping areas. At no time shall an adult share a bed, sleeping bag, blanket or pillow with a minor.
- Males & females must also bathe in separate areas or at different times. At no time should an adult bathe with children/youth.
- If a group decides to split up, there should be at least one adult accompanying each group. No child/youth should be allowed to go off on their own or with a group of other children/youth, even if one of the members of the group is 18 years old.



Leader Misconduct

- Working with children & youth is a **great** privilege.
- If that privilege is violated you will be removed from contact with children & youth.



Questions???

We know this is a lot of information. Please feel free to contact any of the following ministry leaders with any questions or concerns you may have:

Youth Director
Safe Sanctuary Team Leader (SSTL)
Pastor



What's Next?

- Make sure you print yourself a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Volunteer Handbook from the website. This will prove invaluable in your ministry with children/youth. All rules, procedures & some helpful info. & tips can be found in it. If you do not have access to a printer, we will be happy to provide you with a copy.
- Print & take the quiz from the link provided at www.herefordumc.com & return it to the office in person or via mail. If you have problems accessing the link, stop by the front office for a paper copy or e-mail one of the Safe Sanctuary Administrators listed in the PowerPoint.