



First United Methodist Church

Safety Policies and Procedures for Children & Youth

“But Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’” Luke 18:15-17 NIV

“I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Matthew 18:3-6, NIV

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our children, youth, employees, volunteers and the whole church body. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in case of reported abuse.

Statement of Policy

First United Methodist Church intends to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children and youth to the greatest extent possible. First United Methodist Church strives to provide procedures that will result in the safest environment possible for the children and youth of the church.

Child/Youth Protection Procedures

Screening of all paid church staff members and persons who work with children and youth.

All paid staff members and volunteers that will have direct contact and supervision of children or youth, will sign a consent form in advance for mandatory fingerprinting and background checks.

Adult Supervision

We will work to ensure the safety of our children and youth by:

- a. Having at least two adults present at children and/or youth events, activities, etc.
- b. Assuring that volunteers are at least five years older than children or youth being worked with.
- c. Assuring no worker under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility, nor be alone with, any child or youth without having an adult check in with them periodically.
- d. Providing First Aid and CPR training for all nursery and preschool workers.
- e. Having sign-in/sign-out procedures for all nursery and preschool classrooms.
- f. Texas childcare minimum standards will be used for child/staff ratio.

- g. Providing an orientation session that includes: church policies for prevention of child abuse, procedures to be used in ministry with children and youth, appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse, and details of state law regarding child abuse.
- h. Holding counseling sessions with doors open and others near by when possible.
- i. Providing parents advanced notice and information about activities involving children and youth.
- j. Providing appropriate equipment and supervision for activities.
- k. Holding adequate insurance for the scope of ministries.

Overnight Accommodations

At events that require overnight accommodations:

- a. In camp or dormitory type settings at least two leaders will be present with every group of children and or youth.
- b. When staying at a hotel, leaders shall sleep in separate beds from children/youth.
- c. Any one leader shall not be alone with any one child/youth.
- d. Co-ed overnight activities require both male and female adult leaders without exception.

Responding to alleged/suspected child abuse while on the premises of FUMC or at any other church related function:

The following are the procedures to be implemented upon notification or suspicion of abuse of a child/youth while on the premises or any church related function of First United Methodist Church.

- a. The Director of Children's Ministries and the Director of Youth Ministries are the designated individuals who will receive all reports of suspected or alleged abuse. In the event that they are not on the premises, any member of the staff will be designated persons to receive the report.
- b. The designated individual must then immediately, in a non-accusatory manner, separate the alleged abuser from the victim.
- c. The designated individual will immediately notify the Senior Pastor.
- d. The designated individual will immediately contact the parents of the alleged victim.
- e. The designated individual and the person actually suspecting the abuse are obligated by Texas state law to report the allegation to the appropriate state authority. (Child Abuse Reporting Hotline 1-800-252-5400)
- f. The designated individual will then document all the steps taken of the alleged abuse.
- g. The Senior Pastor will notify FUMC attorney, insurance agent, the District Superintendent, and the New Mexico Conference of the United Methodist Church.
- h. The designated individual and any other persons involved in the incident will respect the privacy and confidentiality of the person(s) involved and refrain from making any unnecessary comments.

- i. FUMC will cooperate with any official investigation of a governmental agency. FUMC will not conduct any internal investigation on its own.
- j. The Senior Pastor will be the only person authorized to speak to the media.
- k. The person under investigation for the alleged abuse will be immediately suspended from all responsibilities with children and /or youth until a thorough investigation is conducted.
- l. The staff and volunteers will be educated on the seriousness of reported suspected child abuse and shall understand the finality and life-changing results that will take place by all parties involved.

The Director of Children's Ministry and the Director of Youth Ministries will oversee the implementation of this policy and provide for the safe-keeping of the consent forms at the church. The policy will be reviewed annually by volunteers, workers, and church administration, so that all will be reminded of the rules and so that any needed modifications may be made to the policy.