



## **Child Safety Policy**

*The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 2000, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the potential for child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:*

*Jesus said, "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.*

### **Purpose**

Our purpose for establishing this Child Safety Policy is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of all the children God has entrusted to our care. This policy will be reviewed annually.

### **Scope**

This policy covers all newborns through sixth graders on all Central United Methodist Church (CUMC) campuses at all church sponsored events, although to the extent that this policy conflicts with any rules, regulations and/or licensing requirements of Central's Children's Academy with respect to its various programs and offerings, the rules, regulations and licensing requirements of Central's Children's Academy will control and otherwise prevail over any and all such conflicts.

### **Covenant Statement**

CUMC hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that seek to assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children as well as all of our Children's Ministry team – both paid staff and leaders as defined in section 1 A.

## **I. STAFF SELECTION/HIRING CRITERIA**

### **A. Leaders for children's ministries fall into one of two categories: Primary and Secondary.**

1. *Primary Leaders* - All paid staff, clergy, and any non-paid volunteers who work with children as a leader in any capacity including, but not limited to: Sunday School, midweek small groups, Vacation Bible School, lock-ins, retreats, mission camps, and after school programs. This would also include **anyone** who participates in **any** overnight activities and van/bus drivers.
2. *Secondary Leaders* – All paid childcare staff and non-paid volunteers who work with children as an aide or assistant to the primary leaders.

**B. Leaders, either Primary or Secondary will have to fulfill certain requirements before they are eligible to work with our children. Requirements may differ based on their interaction and may include any or all of the following:**

1. *Age restriction-* All Primary Leaders are to be at least 18 years of age. All Secondary Leaders must be at least 12 years of age **and** at least 3 years older or three grades ahead of the age group with which they are assigned to work. Secondary Leaders under the age of 16 shall be accompanied by a Primary Leader.
2. *Experience Requirement -* Central United Methodist Church will not utilize any volunteer as a Primary Leader for children, unless they have been an active, regular attendee of CUMC or another church which can be confirmed for at least six (6) months or satisfy other discretionary requirements of CUMC's Children's ministries.
3. *Completion of proper paperwork* (refer to Appendix A).
4. *Consent to online background check.*
5. *Background checks and child maltreatment checks will be conducted every two years. Anyone found to be a Registered Sex Offender or named on the Child Maltreatment Registry will not be allowed to serve on the Children's Ministry Team. All other offenses (felony and misdemeanor) will be considered on an individual basis.*
6. *Fully documented reference checks may be conducted.*
7. *Interview with a member of the Children's Ministry staff.*

## **II. SUPERVISION GUIDELINES**

### **A. Two Person Rule**

Two leaders will be present with children at all times, except for extenuating circumstances such as illness of leaders, bathroom breaks for children who need help or similar circumstances. When only one leader is present in a room with children, another leader will be in the hallway with the ability to monitor the classroom frequently.

When transporting children off the CUMC campus in a church van or bus, a minimum of two adults consisting of at least a driver and another adult will be present. Sometimes it may be necessary to transport children in cars driven by staff or leaders (e.g. to mission trip job sites). In these cases, one adult may transport two to five children without being accompanied by another adult. When

transporting children off the CUMC campus, a release form (Appendix B) will be signed by the parent/guardian of each transported child.

**B. Open Door Policy**

Further protection for the children requires that an open door policy be followed. This policy requires that the parents of the children served, the clergy, administrative and professional staff of the church have the right to visit and observe the children's activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced. Children's Ministry staff will conduct brief observations of Children's Ministry rooms from time to time. All classroom and office doors will have a window and have visibility from the hallway. If there is not a window in the door, then it must remain open while occupied with children.

**C. Discipline**

One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate but care must be taken that these interactions are conducted in an environment that provides visibility.

**D. Touch**

Hugging and other forms of appropriate physical touch between leaders and children are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in our Children's Ministry setting. Any form of touching shall be a response to the child's need for comforting or encouragement. It shall not be based upon the adult's emotional need.

A child's preference not to be touched shall be respected. Children's Ministry leaders are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.

Leaders must promptly discuss any observance of inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by others with paid Children's Ministry staff or a pastor.

**E. Outings Away From Church Property**

Parents of all children participating in off-campus or overnight CUMC activities must complete a release form (see Appendix B). Generally, when children are involved in an off-campus event, a minimum of two adults is required, except in the case of extenuating circumstances such as an accident or where medical attention is necessary or advisable.

CUMC leaders must be accessible by phone in emergency situations when with a group of children away from CUMC campuses.

### **III. MEDIA POLICY**

CUMC reserves the right to utilize photographs, video, and digital imagery of children covered under this policy for promotional and informational purposes through official CUMC communication channels. Names will not be included with any media used. Parents or guardians who do not wish to have their child's image used by CUMC may sign an "opt-out" form (Appendix C) which must be submitted to Children's Ministry Staff. These forms may be obtained from any Children's Ministry staff member.

Children's Ministry staff and volunteer leaders shall not post images of any child covered under this policy (other than their own), or comments referencing any child covered under this policy (other than their own) by name on the Internet or personal social media sites in relation to church sponsored events. However, photos of children covered under this policy taken at church sponsored events may be submitted to Children's Ministry staff for possible use on church communication channels as described in paragraph 1 of this Media Policy.

Children's Ministry staff and volunteer leaders shall not communicate with children covered under this policy on social media sites.

Children's Ministry staff shall copy their immediate supervisors on electronic communications (emails and/or texts) with children covered under this policy. Children's Ministry volunteer leaders shall copy a Children's Ministry staff member on electronic communications (emails and/or texts) with children covered under this policy.

### **IV. POTENTIAL CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT**

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and to be an advocate for children participating in the life of the church. The church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, and adults in which all reasonable efforts are made to protect them from abuse/neglect. Primary and Secondary Leaders are bound by state reporting guidelines to report suspected abuse/neglect whenever it comes to their attention regardless of where that abuse/neglect takes place in an effort to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse/neglect. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. If suspected abuse/neglect occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place.

Reports shall be made to the State child abuse hotline. (1-800-482-5964) Volunteer leaders are strongly encouraged to inform a Children's Ministry staff member if a suspected abuse/neglect situation is being reported.

If the suspected abuse is occurring on site or at an off-site church sponsored event, the following steps shall be taken in conjunction with reporting of the situation through the hotline:

- A. Remove the child from the classroom or event activity.
- B. Address immediate needs of the child.
- C. Immediately notify Director of Children's Ministries, Associate Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Childcare Services, or a pastor.
- D. Willingly cooperate during abuse/neglect investigation with church leadership and authorities.
- E. Maintain confidentiality of the situation for protection of the child.

Once the appropriate Children's Ministry staff member or pastor has been notified, the following steps shall be followed if the situation is occurring on site or at an off-site church sponsored event:

- Remove accused. Do not confront accused with hostility; be cautious to treat with dignity. Until further notice, the accused is to have no involvement with children or youth groups within CUMC.
- Request the leader to make a written statement of what they observed, , what they suspect and/or what they were told. It is important that the leader do this as soon after the event as possible so that key details are not forgotten or overlooked. Be sure the statement is dated and signed.
- Notify CUMC's Administrator or a pastor.
- The Administrator will then make the proper contacts including the Senior Pastor, the church's attorney, the church's insurance company, and the District Superintendent.
- The District Superintendent will report the allegation to the Bishop's office. If the suspected abuse/neglect involves a Pastor, provisions stated in the most current *Book of Discipline* must be followed.

The Administrator will be the designated spokesperson to make any statements or responses to news media, congregation, etc. so that all parties involved will be treated with confidentiality.

## **V. Training**

Training regarding this policy is available annually, periodically, or upon request.

## **VI. Compliance**

All Children's Ministry staff and volunteer leaders are asked to comply with this policy. Additional training, clarification, and appropriate corrective action will be conducted as needed to ensure the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of the children entrusted to our care.

## **VII. Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge that I have read and will adhere to all aspects of this policy.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date