

SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH
First United Methodist Church
Pensacola, Florida

First United Methodist Church seeks to create a safe environment for all children and youth involved in our programs. In order to insure their safety, we have developed the following list of policies and procedures designed to prevent risk of injury through accident or abuse. **Please remember these policies are not a substitute for common sense and parental supervision.** Jesus made the importance of children clear in his ministry. In Matthew 19: 13-14, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." The care of children is a sacred trust bestowed upon us by God and we must go the extra mile to prevent any possibility of injury.

Policies:

1. All paid personnel working with and/or in the vicinity of children/youth will have a Level II background check run within 10 days of employment including a fingerprint check. The results of these checks will be kept on file in the church office. Access to files will be restricted to maintain confidentiality. Personnel will have access to their file and may obtain copies on request. Staff will be rescreened every 5 years.
2. All volunteer personnel who lead a program on a regular basis with children/youth must have been a member and/or active participant of FUMC for at least 6 months. Volunteers who have participated less than 6 months may serve as helpers. All regular volunteers will submit an application and authorization for a background check. Volunteers serving on overnight trips must have a Level II background check. The responsibility for getting the paperwork filled out by volunteers will reside with the various program staff. This paperwork will be kept in the church administrator's office once it is completed. You may search under volunteer screening criteria in ACS to see if a person has already completed the paperwork.
3. All paid and volunteer personnel will be at least four years older than the age group with which they are working. An adult must supervise any volunteer under the age of 18 at all times. There will be at least two workers present whenever children or youth are present except in emergency situations and/or where not reasonably feasible. When there is only one worker present or any number of workers under 18, there will be an adult monitor/supervisor who will give frequent unannounced visits. Adults are considered 18 year olds and above for the children's area and 21 and above for the youth area.
4. No volunteer or paid staff person will be alone with a child or youth. At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the door of the room will remain open for the entire session or a second adult will be present. Whenever someone seeks counseling, it is important to determine in the initial meeting what level of counseling the person needs and refer all those who need professional counseling to a trained counselor. Staff is only qualified to do very basic counseling and should act primarily as a source for referral.
5. Adult workers with children and youth must be attentive to:
 - a. appropriate dress for example no short shorts or skirts, no underwear showing, no skimpy bathing attire etc.
 - b. appropriate use of language and topics of conversation
 - c. appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement.
 - d. When visiting in a home, the two non related adult rule still applies. If a young person drops by the home of an adult volunteer or staff person, the visit should be conducted in the front yard or moved to a local restaurant.
6. Parents are requested to supervise their children while on church property and follow these guidelines:
 - a. Children 4th grade and below must be picked up from Sunday school and any other program by an adult.
 - b. Children in 5th or 6th grade may meet their parents in the sanctuary or Wright Place after Sunday School or other scheduled event.
 - c. Persons below 18 years of age must be in a scheduled program or with a parent at all times. **Persons under 18 are not permitted to roam the building. Please note the coffee bar is not a scheduled program.**
 - d. Youth may not leave the premises and return between youth choir and UMY or between Sunday school and worship.
 - e. We request that parents please alert the staff person responsible for their child regarding physical, emotional or psychological diagnosis their child has received in order to serve them better.
7. Two-way glass will be installed in all classrooms used by children/youth or the door will remain open.
8. First aide/CPR, training will be required for all program staff. Documentation of training will be kept in their file at the church office. Training will be repeated every January.
9. When an adult escorts a child to the restroom, the door will remain open.
10. Parents will receive 48 hour notice and full information about all events their

- children will be participating in. An annual signed, notarized, emergency treatment form will be required for all off-site events. Parents will provide written permission for off-site event.
- a. No youth will drive to an out of town event under any circumstances.
 - b. Parents must provide an annual permission slip for their young person 16 or older to drive their own vehicle to in town events. They must also indicate parental permission for other youth passengers.
 - c. Parents of passengers must send written permission to ride with another youth for in town events.
11. No child under third grade will be released to anyone other than the adult who dropped the child off unless previously arranged by parent and satisfactory identification has been displayed.
 12. First Church will adhere to the following discipline plan:
 - a. Children/youth will receive two verbal reprimands for misbehavior. No language will be allowed that makes the child feel unworthy, unloved or not cared for.
 - b. After two verbal warnings the child/youth may be removed from the class or activity until they seem ready to re-enter the activity.
 - c. If a child/youth is removed, the parents will be notified and invited to help design an appropriate behavior management plan.
 - d. Positive reinforcement is encouraged as a management technique. NO physical discipline is allowed except restraint when absolutely necessary.
 13. Our fire safety plan will include a bi-annual fire drill for children and youth. At any time if the fire alarm goes off, the children will be immediately evacuated from the building. They will return only after the Director of that activity has determined it is safe.
 14. In determining if programs will be canceled, we will err on the side of caution. If the public schools are closed, all child/youth programs will be canceled. All areas will adhere to the church emergency plan in case of an emergency.
 15. Our maximum child/youth to adult ratios will be:

Ages 0-1	1 to 4
Ages 1-2	1 to 6
Ages 3-5	1 to 8
Kind - 5 th	1 to 15
6 th - 8 th	1 to 20
9 th - 12 th	1 to 20
Overnight for any age	1 to 7

 (Minimum of 2 adults for every program)
 16. Overnight programs will follow the following guidelines:
 - a. hotels should be selected that have rooms openings to the interior of the building and rooms whoujld be on the same hallway when possible.
 - b. If two adults cannot be assigned to a room housing youth, the youth should be roomed separately from adults. Children in 6th grade and below must have 2 adults in their room. If adjoining rooms are available with doors that can be left open, a single adult in each of the adjoining rooms is acceptable.
 - c. An adult should never share a bed with a child or youth
 - d. Where adults need to be assigned to separate rooms, it is recommended that adult rooms be dispersed between the youth rooms as much as possible.
 - e. If room checks are needed, they should involve two adults.
 17. The following guidelines apply to transportation
 - a. All drivers will be screened in the same manner as other leadership for an event including a review of their motor vehicle record.
 - b. All drivers must provide proof of insurance and a drivers liscence to keep on file. These will be recorded under volunteer screening criteria in ACS
 - c. All drivers must be 18 years of age
 - d. Where possible, it is recommended that two adults be placed in each vehicle or the vehicles teamed in minimum groups of two that stay together at all times.
 - e. The trustees will establish safety policies and guidelins for the operation of church-owned vehicles. These will include that no one drives more than 10 hours a day and breaks must be taken every three hours. Seat belts must be worn when they are available. Drivers are not to divert their attention from driving by using cell phones, eating meals, setting GPS systems, selecting music, texting, etc.

Procedure for recruiting, screening and training staff and volunteers.

1. The volunteer or staff person will complete the application form and character reference form as provided by staff supervisor of that area.
2. Be interviewed and/or discuss the skills needed in the area of service by the supervisor of that area.
3. Agree to the background check
4. Sign the covenant form.
5. Read safe sanctuaries policy and attend training when offered.
6. Those receiving unfavorable background checks will be notified by the church administrator.

Procedures for Reporting Alleged Abuse:

First United Methodist Church will respond to all alleged or suspected incidences of child/youth abuse in an effort to protect the child/youth and any individuals involved in the incident. It is not the policy of the church to prove whether the alleged or suspected abuse has or has not occurred, as this is the responsibility of the proper legal authorities.

Upon suspecting or learning of an allegation of abuse, persons should:

1. Report the situation immediately to the person who is in charge of the event or activity.
2. The person in charge of the event or activity will immediately suspend and remove the individual from the duties involving children/youth pending external and internal investigation.
3. The person in charge of the event or activity will immediately inform the staff person related to that area of ministry or the Senior Pastor if that staff person is not available.
4. The staff person will inform the parents of the alleged victim and respond to their questions and concerns.
5. The staff person will inform appropriate state authorities by telephone at 1-800-96-abuse and follow the direction of the abuse hotline counselor.
6. All such matters will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. Any person reporting alleged abuse will refrain from any discussion about the alleged incident with anyone other than the staff person.