

Harbor United Methodist Church

A Safe Harbor

Safe Sanctuary Policy

for children and youth ages 18 and under

(02/17)

The vision of our church is to see people living the better life that God offers everyone through His Son, Jesus Christ. Our Children's Ministry mission is to help our children and their families know Jesus Christ personally to discover this better life. At Annual Conference in June, 2005 the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church passed a motion aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. Our Safe Sanctuary policy will be a tool to fulfill our mission and vision by offering a safe, loving, learning place for those in our care.

Our covenant with children and youth

As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in a manner that assures the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth and the adults who work with them.

- We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and hiring of staff and volunteers.
- We will implement prudent procedures of operation for all programs and events.
- We will educate those who work with children and youth as to the use of all appropriate policies and procedures.
- We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing the Safe Sanctuary Policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of our children and youth.

Application

This policy applies to all people, whether staff of Harbor UMC or regular volunteers, who work with children and youth (those under age 18) on a regular and direct basis.

All mentioned references and criminal check documents are confidential and will be kept secured in the church office.

Procedures

All staff and volunteers will complete a screening process:

- Application-all will complete a confidential application form
- Personal Interview/reference checks- all will be interviewed to determine suitability to work with children and youth.
- Staff is interviewed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and volunteers by the Directors of Children's and Youth Ministries.
- Participation Covenant-for all staff and regular volunteers who work with children and youth will be required on an annual basis.
- Criminal Records/Background Check-will be completed for each staff member and regular or occasional volunteer who works directly with children and youth.
- Criminal records checks will be limited to any criminal activity involving the following:
 - a minor
 - child molestation
 - any type of sexual offense
 - any type of pornographic or obscene material
 - any type of physical violence
 - suspected child abuse
 - any other offense that might jeopardize a minor
- Yearly Safe Sanctuary Training-required for all staff and volunteers
- Background Check Renewal will be done every three years for all staff and volunteers

Protection Policy /Supervision

Continuous and intentional supervision of all children and youth to reduce the possibility of abuse and to protect the adults who work with them from unwarranted accusations.

- Two-adult Rule-we require that no fewer than 2 adults be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth. These must be non-related adults. One of these may be a "floater" who moves from group to group at random.
- Visibility-all rooms used by children and youth will have a door with a window to the room or an open door to provide visibility into the

space. If it is necessary to use a space that does not meet this requirement, then two non-related adults will be present at all times.

- Age- no person shall supervise or lead a group unless he or she is at least 18 years old and 5 years older than the children/youth in that group.
- Advance notice to parents-we will always offer parents full information and advance notice of events in which their children may be participating. We will require that proper registration and consent forms be obtained before the event.
- First Aid/CPR training- will be offered on an annual basis for all staff and volunteers who work with children and youth and certification will be *required* for all nursery staff.
- Supervision- no child or youth will be left unsupervised at church functions or events. If child care or programming is not provided then child or youth will remain in the presence of their parent or guardian at all times. Parents must supervise their children on the playground.

Overnight/Off-site Activities

Following all Safe Sanctuary Policies and

- All chaperones on overnight lock-ins, retreats or trips must be 21 years of age or older and members/active participants in our congregation. All overnight chaperones will have completed all screening and training procedures. This applies to youth parents as well as other adults.
- Hotel settings: no adults in bed with a child. Adults sleep in separate rooms with frequent monitoring or check-ins. Hotels with room openings to an inside hallway are preferred.
- Bunkroom settings: at least 2 same gender adults may sleep in a large room with multiple bunk beds.
- Separate sleeping areas for males and females will be arranged.

Off-site trip information exchange:

- Parents/guardians will receive advance notice of all trip/activity information including start/stop times and location of event, program content, lodging details and covenants rules expected of their child on particular trip.
- All events and overnight trips will be adequately staffed with adult chaperones of both genders.
- Event coordinator will maintain accurate participation records of all events involving children and youth including date, location, hours of event and names of all adults present.

- Event coordinator will assure every participant has a current permission/liability release form on file and that forms are present on all off-campus events.
- At events where direct adult supervision is not feasible such as amusement parks, conferences or other large group gatherings, the event coordinator will provide an advance plan for regular check-ins and buddy systems and communicate this plan with all adult chaperones and participants.

Transportation

- Drivers will be 25 years or older and have a valid driver's license and insurance on file with the church office.
- Everyone will wear a seatbelt in a moving vehicle.
- Drivers will practice safe driving procedures by obeying all posted speed laws and regulations.
- Event coordinator will provide any necessary maps, directions, trip itineraries and emergency contact information to each driver.
- Youth are not permitted to drive from church to off campus events.

Reporting a Suspicion of Child Abuse

- The person with first hand knowledge of the incident or suspicion will report to the New Hanover County Department of Social Services, Abuse and Neglect Division at 910-341-4700/4722 under the support and supervision of the Pastor of Harbor UMC or the Director of Children's and Youth Ministries.
- This report is mandated under North Carolina General Statute 7B-301.
- This notification will be made within 24 hours of the initial report. If an allegation is made against a member of our congregation or a staff member, the Pastor or the Staff/Parish Relations Committee will notify the District Superintendent and the congregation's attorney.
- No individual shall make a statement to the press. This statement will be made only by the Lead Pastor.