

## **SAFE SANCTUARIES GUIDELINES FOR MONROEVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**Monroeville United Methodist Church strives to be a holy place of sanctuary for the children of God. Our church provides a place where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, fellowship and service with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith.**

- 1. Screening of Workers:** All employees, including clergy, are required to obtain and maintain a PA State Police Criminal Background check (Act 34), a PA Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 33), and an FBI Clearance. All volunteers, including any unpaid clergy, who will be working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults are required to obtain and maintain a PA State Police Criminal Background check and a PA Child Abuse History Clearance. The requirement to obtain these clearances (as stated above) applies to all persons beginning at age 14. Volunteers who have not been a PA resident for at least 10 years are also required to obtain the FBI Clearance. All clearances (for employees as well as volunteers) are required to be updated every five years. Other types of clearances do not meet the requirements and may not be used as a substitute for any of the above listed clearances. All volunteers and paid staff will sign off that they have reviewed and agree with this Safe Sanctuaries document and will follow the guidelines within this document.
- 2. Maintenance of Clearances:** Clearances are maintained in the church office by the Director of Christian Discipleship and the Safe Sanctuaries Chairperson. A list of persons at MUM with Safe Sanctuaries clearances is updated regularly by the chairperson. Staff members' clearances will be paid from the Safe Sanctuaries budget. Volunteers who do not wish to pay or are not able to pay for clearances **may** also be paid from the Safe Sanctuaries budget.
- 3. The "Two-Adult Rule":** No fewer than two adults (who have all of the required clearances) be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. Risk will be reduced even more if the two adults are not related. There must be at least two adults in each classroom and in every church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. A two adult rule needs to be considered when visiting vulnerable adults as well.
- 4. The "Five-Years-Older Rule":** Volunteers and employees must be at least five years older than the children and youth entrusted into their care.
- 5. No Volunteers as Leaders or Sole Workers under the Age of Eighteen:** Volunteers under the age of eighteen can be very helpful when placed as assistants in the classrooms or outdoors for recreation. However, teenagers should not be assigned as the leaders or sole workers. At least two adults should be present and an adult should always be assigned as the leader.

- 6. Windows in All Classroom Doors:** Each classroom in the church should have a door with a window, or the door should be a half door and the top-half should be open.
- 7. Advance Notice to Parents:** A basic rule for ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults is to always give the parents and/or supervising adults advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children, youth or vulnerable adults will be participating.
- 8. “Six-Months Rule”:** All adult volunteers involved with children, youth or vulnerable adults church must have been members of the congregation or must have been attending regularly for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
- 9. Dismissal Policies:** Each of the ministries involving children has a dismissal policy to ensure the safety of the children. In Sunday School the children in classes from two year olds through second graders will only be dismissed into the care of their parents or guardians at the conclusion of Sunday School class time. Parents and guardians may make special arrangements with the Sunday School teacher if another person will be picking up the child. Teachers will remain in the classroom until all children are dismissed. The Dismissal Policy for each other church-sponsored program, event or ministry is to be appropriate to the event and to the children/youth/vulnerable adults who are involved. Dismissal Policies should also be in keeping with Safe Sanctuaries and should be communicated to parents and/or supervising adults in advance of the event.
- 10. Mandated Reporting:** According to PA law, a mandated reporter is a considered a clergy person of any established church or religious organization, a person who is paid or unpaid who accepts responsibility for a child as part of a scheduled program or activity, and an employee of a child care service. Mandated reporters are required to make a report of suspected abuse when they have reasonable cause (witness, suspect, or are told) to believe a child is a victim of child abuse (physical, emotional, mental, or sexual). You must report abuse of a child if you: witness abuse, suspect abuse, or are told by someone under 18 that they have been a victim of abuse. See addendum for how to report.
- 11. Vehicle/Driving Procedures: *Personal Vehicles:*** All drivers must be screened including clearances and have a current and valid driver’s license. Drivers must be at least 25 years of age and have a current auto insurance policy. Youth are never to drive other youth. Once youth arrive at the event, they should not drive until they drive home. The two adult rule shall be followed. An exception to this would be when travel is in a caravan. Children and youth should be in a seat in the vehicle with a seat belt.

## **12. Travel Procedures:**

Overnights in a hotel setting:

- Adults and youth should not share a room. Youth room with youth, adult rooms with adults. An exception to this is with adults who are related to a youth. For example a youth can room with an adult if that adult is a parent.
- Adults are to be the same gender as students they are supervising.
- Rooms should be on the same floor if possible.

Overnights in Cabin Settings:

- Men stay with men, women with women
- Private changing spaces should be provided.

## **LGBTQI Considerations:**

- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual youth should be housed with same gender they identify as.
- Single use hotel rooms can be isolating and should only be used in consultation with youth and his/her parents.
- Regardless of housing space, private changing spaces should always be provided.

*Transgender Students:* A conversation should take place between the student, parent(s) and trip leader to decide on the most appropriate housing for the student. The students' safety and comfort should be considered. Private housing is an option, but can be isolating and should only be used in consultation with the student and parent(s)

**13. Sexual Offender is welcome to attend church, but:** An accused or convicted sexual offender may want to attend church and/or to take part in church activities and programming. Offenders should be welcome in church but must always be under the close supervision of a trained Shepherd, must not be permitted to be in any area of the church that is generally used for classes and activities for children, youth or vulnerable adults, and must not be in close contact or conversation with children, youth or vulnerable adults. The offender and the church should enter into a "Second Chance Boundary Covenant", a document which clearly sets forth the guidelines under which the offender may attend church and any church activity/program (whether on the church property or at any third party site where an activity/program is taking place). The Covenant should also set forth the responsibilities of the church and the offender, and the document should be signed by the offender, Pastor, Chair of the Church Council (Board), and the Safe Sanctuaries Chair.

**SAFE SANCTUARIES: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth** written by Joy Thornburg Melton, 2008, published by Discipleship Resources is the resource used in writing the Safe Sanctuaries Policy for the Monroeville United Methodist Church.

**The Church intends to comply with governing laws, including Pennsylvania House Bill 435, which is effective in 2015. The Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines for Monroeville United Methodist Church may be updated from time to time to include changes in governing laws, and to provide other appropriate measures for the safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults.**

### **Addendum for Mandated Reporting Procedures:**

**How to report abuse** - To fulfill the legal mandate, when a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, he/she must immediately make the report.

A. Call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313. After making the call, mandated reporters must follow up with an electronic report or a written report completed on the CY-47 form within 48 hours of making the oral report.

B. Submit the report electronically. The report is submitted directly to ChildLine via Child Welfare Information Solution portal. You will need to include your name, telephone number and email address. You will receive an email confirmation that your report has been received; you should print and keep this confirmation for your records.

C. After making the report to ChildLine, the mandated reporter must tell the pastor or the position that they report (ex. Youth pastor). That person then is responsible to facilitate the organization's cooperation with any investigation and assists the mandated reporter with any concerns he/she may have.

D. If the Pastor is the one suspected, after contacting ChildLine the mandated reporter must contact the District Superintendent.