

Stockton United Methodist Church Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify Safe Sanctuaries issues and describe who, what and why Stockton United Methodist Church (SUMC) is committed to protecting from neglect and abuse all of the children, youth and vulnerable adults who come to us and to protect our staff/volunteers from potential false allegations.

II. Definitions

- A. Certification Authority – the SUMC Church Council oversees the SUMC Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures.
- B. Inappropriate behavior – any incident of misbehaving or acting out that disrupts an event, activity or travel without rising to the level of neglect or abuse.
- C. Neglect – failure to provide nutrition or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the well being of a child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- D. New Volunteer – any unpaid lay worker who is new to SUMC and who is willing to undergo training to continue to work with participants in ministries at a church sponsored event, activity or travel. New volunteers must work under the supervision of a designated Safe Sanctuaries certified, experienced and trained staff/volunteer.
- E. Participants – children (0 - 11 years) and youth (12 – 18 years) and vulnerable adults who register, enroll, attend or otherwise participate in SUMC ministries such as a Sunday school class or any event, activity or travel sponsored by SUMC, the Ozarks North or other district or the Annual Conference.
- F. Person in charge – Adult staff/volunteer designated by the program director or pastor to supervise an event, activity or travel.
- G. Physical abuse – any deliberate act that inflicts bodily harm to a person.
- H. Safe Sanctuaries Committee – the SUMC committee that implements the SUMC Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures.
- I. Sexual abuse – any sexual contact or sexually explicit language, gestures or images by a staff/volunteer with or directed to a participant.
- J. Staff – any clergy person or any paid employee of SUMC, a district or conference who works with, cares for or supervises a participant in ministries at a church sponsored event, activity or travel as well as any unpaid lay worker designated “volunteer staff” who regularly works with participants at a church sponsored event, activity or travel.

- K. Volunteer – any unpaid lay worker who works with, cares for or supervises a participant in ministries at a church sponsored event, activity or travel. See definition of new volunteers.
- L. Vulnerable adults – persons over 18 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities.

III. Standards for Staff/Volunteers

SUMC requires all prospective staff/volunteers to meet the following standards:

- A. Actively participate in ministries of SUMC for a minimum of six months prior to working with participants at an event, activity or travel for the first time or work under the supervision of one or more certified staff/volunteers who are 19 years or older.
- B. Work under the supervision of certified adult staff/volunteer if prospective staff/volunteer is from outside the United States of America or without a social security number which prevents completion of a background screening.
- C. Be 19 years or older at least three months prior to the first time they work with participants.
- D. Be at least four years older than the participants with whom they work. With college-age staff/volunteers, a staff/volunteer 23 years or older must be the second adult when senior highs are present.
- E. Youth, aged 15 - 18 years, who want to work with participants at SUMC hosted events, activities or travel may work under the supervision of a certified adult (19 years or older) after successfully completing the Safe Sanctuaries online application and training and the local orientation.

All certified staff/volunteers must comply with the SUMC Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy.

IV. Standards for Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator

The Certification Authority appoints the Safe Sanctuaries coordinator. The person appointed must meet the following special requirements and accept the following specific responsibilities.

Special Requirements

- A. Possess working knowledge of the Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuaries policy.
- B. Demonstrate program management skills.
- C. Demonstrate computer skills which include mid-level Microsoft Office proficiency.
- D. Become Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuaries certified within thirty 30 days of employment.
- E. Become CPR certified within 90 days of employment.

- F. Be able to execute emergency evacuation procedures (provided by the church).
- G. Comply with the SUMC Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy.

Specific Responsibilities

- A. Pre-screen prospective staff/volunteers and advise about Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuaries training and certification.
- B. Ensure all pre-screened staff/volunteers complete the Missouri Conference online training and local orientation before they work with participants.
- C. Periodically plan and schedule local SUMC orientations for prospective staff/volunteers who successfully complete the Missouri Conference online application process and training.
- D. Monitor and evaluate performance of staff/volunteers who work with participants.
- E. Receive from the Missouri Conference, review and maintain accurate, up to date records of Safe Sanctuaries training completion and a list of all currently certified staff/volunteers in a secure confidential file with access limited to those authorized by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.
- F. Report prospective staff/volunteers to the Safe Sanctuaries Committee for approval or disapproval within a month after receiving notification they satisfactorily completed the Missouri Conference online training and the local orientation.
- G. Notify prospective staff/volunteers who successfully completed all steps of the conference online training and the local orientation of certification status within a month after Safe Sanctuaries Committee approval.
- H. Notify certified staff/volunteers three months before it is time to renew certification.
- I. Report quarterly to the Safe Sanctuaries Committee the total number of SUMC Safe Sanctuaries certified adults and teens.
- J. Retain Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Forms in a confidential church file for five years for purposes of future screening and certification.

V. Screening Staff/Volunteers

Careful screening is one way to protect the safety of participants. Screening includes gathering and reviewing information about prospective staff/volunteers. SUMC screens for prospective staff/volunteers who meet the standards listed in section III and also uses the screening tools provided online by the Missouri Conference.

VI. Training

All pre-screened staff/volunteers must successfully complete the Missouri Conference online training and local orientation before they work with participants. Training includes, but is not limited to the following subjects:

- A. Recognizing the signs of neglect and abuse.
- B. Avoiding situations where neglect and abuse might take place or conduct which could be perceived as negligent or abusive.
- C. Reporting requirements of the State of Missouri and the Missouri Conference of The United Methodist Church.
- D. Media response procedures.

The local orientation focuses on interpreting specific SUMC policy, procedures and rules and specific scenarios staged in the SUMC facility or on the grounds.

VII. Media Response

Contingent on the situation, the SUMC pastor, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chair or some other person with the right skills will be designated to respond to the media.

VIII. Certification Authority

The Church Council serves as the Safe Sanctuaries Certification Authority. The Certification Authority resources Safe Sanctuaries activities, appoints the Safe Sanctuaries coordinator and the Safe Sanctuaries Committee and annually reviews the SUMC Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures.

Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Procedures for Clergy and Staff/Volunteers

I. Purpose

The purpose of these procedures is to describe in detail when, where, and how to implement the Stockton United Methodist Church (SUMC) Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy.

II. Certifying Staff/Volunteers

Before prospective staff/volunteers are permitted to work with participants, they must receive certification from the SUMC Safe Sanctuaries Committee.

Steps to SUMC Safe Sanctuaries Certification

- A. Safe Sanctuaries coordinator advises prospective staff/volunteers about pre-screening, application, background check, training and local orientation.
- B. Prospective staff/volunteers complete all steps in the Missouri Conference online Safe Sanctuaries training (including background check) plus the SUMC local orientation with satisfactory performance.
- C. Safe Sanctuaries coordinator receives all documents required for certification.
- D. Safe Sanctuaries coordinator recommends prospective staff/volunteers who successfully complete the background check, conference training and local orientation to the Safe Sanctuaries Committee for certification.
- E. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee considers the credentials of prospective staff/volunteers and approves or disapproves certification.

III. Screening and Training

Prior to employment or acceptance as a staff/volunteer, the person in charge of any children's, youth or vulnerable adult's program must refer each prospective staff/volunteer 15 years of age or older to the Safe Sanctuaries coordinator.

Screening and Training Steps

- A. Safe Sanctuaries coordinator advises prospective staff/volunteers about the steps to SUMC Safe Sanctuaries certification.
- B. Prospective staff/volunteer completes online:
 1. An application;
 2. Background check form (staff/volunteers 19 years of age and older);
 3. References form (staff/volunteers 19 years of age and older);
 4. Safe Sanctuaries training;

5. Credit card payment of certification fee, reimbursed by SUMC.

C. Prospective staff/volunteer completes the SUMC local orientation.

Staff/volunteers who have a break in service of one or more years must submit to screening procedures again. SUMC reserves the option to repeat background checks.

SUMC relies on the Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuaries online training. The average online training time from start to finish is currently less than three hours; however, the actual time will vary from person to person. If interested prospective volunteers do not have a computer, the Safe Sanctuaries coordinator may arrange for them to use one of the SUMC computers to complete the training.

IV. Local Orientation

The local SUMC orientation introduces staff/volunteers to:

- A. SUMC policy, procedures and specific rules;
- B. SUMC facility and grounds layout;
- C. SUMC emergency evacuation procedures;
- D. Specific scenarios staged in the SUMC facility or on the grounds.

V. SUMC Safe Sanctuaries Rules

The following rules apply to every event, activity and travel hosted by SUMC, the Ozarks North or other district or the Missouri Conference and attended by one or more participants.

- A. **Forms rule.** A parent/legal guardian of each participant must complete, sign and deliver the following SUMC forms to the program director's mailbox in the hallway:
 - 1. Participant Enrollment Form;
 - 2. Health Release Form;
 - 3. Special Event, Activity or Travel Consent Form prior to each special event, activity or travel that requires the form.

The person in charge ensures these three forms for each participant are current and appropriately filed.

- B. **Gender rule.** When a group consists of both genders, accompanying staff/volunteers must represent both genders.
- C. **Hall walker rule.** Any time fewer than two certified staff/volunteers are present at an event or activity in an enclosed room (such as a Sunday school classroom), a designated Safe Sanctuaries certified adult staff/volunteer walks the halls to supplement the one Safe Sanctuaries certified staff/volunteer. The hall walker also watches for inappropriate conduct in other parts of the building. In the event hall walker finds herself/himself alone with a participant, the hall walker immediately finds a second adult as the circumstances require.

- D. **Motel rule.** A staff/volunteer and a participant may not share a motel/hotel room unless the staff/volunteer is a parent or legal guardian of the participant.

Participants of the same gender may share a room adjacent to a room shared by staff/volunteers of the same gender with an open door connecting the two rooms. When no connecting rooms are available, participants of the same gender may share a room separate from a room shared by staff/volunteers of the same gender, subject to random room checks.

- E. **Open door rule.** All event or activity rooms must have windows or open doors that allow hall walkers to see inside.
- F. **Separate shower rule.** Males and females do not shower together. Participants and staff/volunteers do not shower together. Designate separate shower times as necessary.
- G. **Sleeping area rule.** Males and females sleep in separate sleeping areas at all church sponsored events.
- H. **Special events rule.** Prior to events that target large numbers of guests, the person in charge coordinates with the Safe Sanctuaries Committee to create a Safe Sanctuaries event plan.
- I. **Staff/Volunteer to participant ratios rule**
1. Staff/volunteer to children under three years old – 1 : 4;
 2. Staff/volunteer to preschool children – 1 : 6;
 3. Staff/volunteer to elementary age and above children and vulnerable adults – 1 : 6;
 4. Staff/volunteer to work camp or mission trip participant – 1 : 4.
- J. **Touching rule.** It is OK to shake hands, lightly touch a shoulder or one hand, lightly hold a hand as in a “therapeutic touch,” give a “high five,” and give an “A-frame” or sideways hug. Avoid full frontal hugs, lap sitting, prolonged or inappropriate touch.
- K. **Travel rule.** Two adult rule applies, except spouses or a single staff/volunteer may provide rides for a participant if participant’s parent/legal guardian gives written permission. Youth may not transport other youth on trips beyond Stockton without a Safe Sanctuaries certified adult present.
- L. **Two adult rule.** At least two Safe Sanctuaries certified staff/volunteers must be present. If two cannot be present, the hall walker rule applies. In any situation in which one certified staff/volunteer is augmented with a hall walker, classes or small groups must meet in rooms with an open door or in an open space within sight and sound of others. Spouses may not serve as the only two certified staff/volunteers present.
- M. **Work camp and mission trip rules.** Staff/volunteer to participant ratio – 1 : 4 which includes at least two certified staff/volunteers present at each work site on mission trips. On mission trips, participants and staff/volunteers do not spend time alone with those served.
- N. Exceptions to the rules above may be approved by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.

VI. Reporting Accidents

If a participant is accidentally injured, the person in charge of the event immediately tends to the participant's needs, fills out an Accident Report Form, notifies the SUMC pastor and the participant's parent/legal guardian and delivers the completed form to the program director's mailbox in the hallway.

VII. Reporting Incidents

If a participant exhibits inappropriate behavior (less than neglect or abuse), the person in charge of the event immediately:

- A. takes the participant aside;
- B. explains the behavior observed;
- C. describes the consequences;
- D. otherwise, appropriately disciplines the participant.

The person in charge then fills out an Incident Report Form, notifies the SUMC pastor and the participant's parent/legal guardian and delivers the completed form to the program director's mailbox.

VIII. Reporting Alleged Neglect or Abuse

Observable signs of suspected neglect or abuse that occurred outside the church environment and alleged neglect or abuse of participants by staff/volunteers, other participants or clergy that occur at church sponsored events, activities or travel mandate reporting to the Missouri Division of Family Services through the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline and to the Ozarks North District Superintendent. Staff/volunteers must fully cooperate with the Department of Family Services and law enforcement.

Outside the Church Environment: Reporting Procedures

If an alleged victim is in imminent danger, the person in charge immediately calls law enforcement – **911**.

When a staff/volunteer or the person in charge of a SUMC sponsored event, activity or travel becomes aware of suspected neglect or abuse based on observable signs of neglect or abuse that occurred outside the church environment, follow these steps.

- A. The staff/volunteer who observed or received the report of neglect or abuse immediately documents in writing on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form the account of alleged neglect or abuse he or she observed or the account of the participant who reported the incident. She/he then notifies the person in charge of the alleged incident. If there is reason to believe the victim is in immediate danger, notify the person in charge immediately before documenting the incident on the form.
- B. The staff/volunteer and the person in charge do not discuss the matter with other participants or other staff/volunteers.

- C. Upon receiving a report of alleged neglect or abuse, the person in charge further documents the report in writing on a separate Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form, then speaks with the alleged victim using open-ended questions. The person in charge immediately documents this conversation in writing on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form, then notifies the SUMC pastor.
- D. If the person in charge has reasonable cause to suspect that the participant has been neglected or abused, after consulting the pastor, she/he encourages the staff/volunteer with whom the alleged victim initially confided or who observed the neglect or abuse to report the incident directly to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline – **1 (800) 392-3738**.
- E. The person in charge insures the call is placed as soon as possible and definitely within 24 hours of incident discovery, even if she/he has to make the call.
- F. The pastor notifies the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chair that alleged neglect or abuse has been reported and the process of reporting has begun.

Open-Ended Questions: Communicating with Victims and Incident Reporters

Listen attentively to the details of a victim's or incident reporter's description of an incident of alleged neglect or abuse to enable accurate and unbiased reporting.

- A. Use open-ended questions which usually begin with:
 - 1. what;
 - 2. why;
 - 3. how;
 - 4. describe.
- B. Ask open-ended questions within the natural flow of conversation.
- C. Ask the question and let the person give you her/his answer.
 - 1. No leading.
 - 2. No prompting.
 - 3. No interrupting.
- D. Some examples:
 - 1. Tell me (describe) what happened.
 - 2. How did she/he (hurt or touch) you? (Repeat back the words victim or incident reporter used; do not add your own words.)
 - 3. How did this make you feel?
 - 4. Who else knows about this?
- E. To assist incident reporters, this open-ended questions section also appears on page 4 of the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form —Church Hosted Event, Activity or Travel.

Church Hosted Event, Activity or Travel: Reporting Procedures

If an alleged victim is in imminent danger, the person in charge immediately calls law enforcement – **911**.

When a staff/volunteer suspects neglect or abuse is taking or has taken place:

- A. The staff/volunteer immediately separates the alleged abuser(s) from the alleged victim(s) and the other participants, then reports the suspected neglect or abuse to the person in charge of the event, activity or travel.
- B. The staff/volunteer who observed or received the report of neglect or abuse immediately documents in writing on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form the account of alleged neglect or abuse he or she observed or the account of the participant who reported the incident.
- C. The staff/volunteer and the person in charge do not discuss the matter with other participants or other staff/volunteers.
- D. If the alleged abuser is:
 - 1. Staff/Volunteer or another participant**
 - a. Upon receiving a report of alleged neglect or abuse, the person in charge further documents the report in writing on a separate Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form.
 - b. The person in charge then speaks with the alleged victim using open-ended questions and immediately documents this conversation in writing on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form.
 - c. The person in charge reports the alleged neglect or abuse to the SUMC pastor.
 - d. After questioning the alleged victim and recording the conversation on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form, if the person in charge has reasonable cause to suspect that a participant has been neglected or abused at the event, activity or travel, she/he strongly encourages the staff/volunteer with whom the alleged victim initially confided or who observed the neglect or abuse to call:
 - i. Missouri Child Abuse Hotline – **1 (800) 392-3738**.
The caller provides all of the information recorded in the shaded cells of the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form. The person in charge insures the call is made to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline as soon as possible and definitely within 24 hours of the incident, even if she/he has to make it.
 - ii. North Ozarks District Superintendent – **1 (417) 869-7878**.
The caller briefly describes the circumstances. The district needs details only if the incident leads to a lawsuit. The district will notify the bishop's office, if appropriate.
 - e. The person in charge notifies a parent/legal guardian of the alleged victim of neglect or abuse at the earliest possible time without revealing the name of the alleged abuser and encourages parent/legal guardian to talk to the child about the incident.
 - f. If the alleged abuser is another participant, the person in charge notifies a parent/legal guardian of the alleged abuser at the earliest possible time.
 - g. The pastor notifies the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chair that alleged neglect or abuse has been reported and the process of reporting has begun.

2. Person in charge

- a. The staff/volunteer with whom the alleged victim initially confided or who observed the neglect or abuse reports the alleged neglect or abuse to the SUMC pastor.
- b. After questioning the alleged victim using open-ended questions and recording the conversation on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form, if the staff/volunteer has reasonable cause to suspect that a participant has been neglected or abused at the event, activity or travel, she/he calls
 - i. **Missouri Child Abuse Hotline – 1 (800) 392-3738.**
The caller provides all of the information recorded in the shaded cells of the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form. The SUMC pastor insures the call is made to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline as soon as possible and definitely within 24 hours of the incident, even if she/he has to make it.
 - ii. **North Ozarks District Superintendent – 1 (417) 869-7878.**
The caller briefly describes the circumstances. The district needs details only if the incident leads to a lawsuit. The district will notify the bishop's office, if appropriate.
- c. The SUMC pastor notifies a parent/legal guardian of the alleged victim of neglect or abuse at the earliest possible time without revealing the name of the alleged abuser and encourages her/him to talk to the child about the incident.
- d. The SUMC pastor notifies the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chair that alleged neglect or abuse has been reported and the process of reporting has begun.

3. SUMC pastor

- a. Upon observing or receiving a report of alleged neglect or abuse, the person in charge documents the account in writing on a Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form.
- b. After questioning the alleged victim using open-ended questions and recording the conversation on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form, if the person in charge has reasonable cause to suspect that a participant has been neglected or abused at the event, activity or travel, she/he reports the alleged neglect or abuse to the:
 - i. **Missouri Child Abuse Hotline – 1 (800) 392-3738.**
The caller provides all of the information recorded in the shaded cells of the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form. The person in charge insures the call is made to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline as soon as possible and definitely within 24 hours of the incident, even if she/he has to make it.
 - ii. **North Ozarks District Superintendent – 1 (417) 869-7878.**
The caller briefly describes the circumstances. The district needs details only if the incident leads to a lawsuit. The district will notify the bishop's office, if appropriate.
- c. The person in charge notifies the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chair that alleged neglect or abuse has been reported and the process of reporting has begun.

4. Clergy other than the SUMC pastor

- a. Upon observing or receiving a report of alleged neglect or abuse, the person in charge documents the account in writing on a Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form.
- b. The person in charge immediately reports the alleged neglect or abuse to the SUMC pastor.

- c. After questioning the alleged victim using open-ended questions and recording the conversation on the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form, if the person in charge has reasonable cause to suspect that a participant has been neglected or abused at the event, activity or travel, she/he reports the incident of alleged neglect or abuse to the:
 - i. Missouri Child Abuse Hotline – **1 (800) 392-3738**.
The caller provides all of the information recorded in the shaded cells of the Alleged Neglect or Abuse Report Form. The person in charge insures the call is made to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline as soon as possible and definitely within 24 hours of the incident, even if she/he has to make it.
 - ii. North Ozarks District Superintendent – **1 (417) 869-7878**.
The caller briefly describes the circumstances. The district needs details only if the incident leads to a lawsuit. The district will notify the bishop's office, if appropriate.
- d. The SUMC pastor notifies the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chair that alleged neglect or abuse has been reported and the process of reporting has begun.

IX. Media Response

Depending on the situation, the SUMC pastor may convene a crisis team to coordinate a media response with the Missouri Conference crisis team in the office of the Director of Connectional Ministries and Communication (Rev. Sherry Habben), available 24/7 – **1 (573) 441-1770** or cell **1 (816) 686-6865**.

Contingent on the situation, the SUMC pastor, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chair or some other person with the right skills will be designated to respond to the media.

Generally, the first communication with the media should be a very broad statement because it may still be unclear exactly what happened. If attorneys are involved, seek their advice. The conference crisis team will decide the message and the initial statement normally contains these messages:

- A. Concern for what happened.
- B. What we have done, for example: We created a safe environment to protect from neglect and abuse all of the children, youth and vulnerable adults who come to us and to protect our staff/volunteers from potential false allegations.
- C. We are cooperating fully with local officials.

X. Certification Authority

The SUMC Church Council serves as the Safe Sanctuaries Certification Authority.

- A. Resources and annually reviews and approves the SUMC Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Abuse Prevention policy and procedures.
- B. Appoints the Safe Sanctuaries coordinator.
- C. Appoints a Safe Sanctuaries Committee to administer the Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures.

XI. Safe Sanctuaries Committee

The Safe Sanctuaries Committee implements the SUMC Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures.

- A. Grants access and determines who has access to secure and confidential Safe Sanctuaries certification records.
- B. Reviews and approves screening procedures annually.
- C. Considers the credentials of prospective staff/volunteers and approves or disapproves certification. If questions arise or there is less than adequate knowledge about the suitability of a prospective staff/volunteer, the Safe Sanctuaries coordinator notifies the applicant and the pastoral/professional reference. The Safe Sanctuaries coordinator will conduct a personal interview with the person who completed the pastoral/professional reference, document the conversation and file it with the secure and confidential certification records. If the Safe Sanctuaries Committee determines the prospective staff/volunteer may be unsuitable to serve, certification is disapproved and the applicant notified.
- D. Monitors the total number of SUMC Safe Sanctuaries certified adults and teens.
- E. Reserves the right to revoke an individual's certification at any time.