



Asbury United Methodist Church

Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy

History

Version	Date	Author	Reviewed By	Changes Made
0	08/03/2013	Doug Sunkel	Staff-Parish Relations Committee	Revision of original policy.
1	09/01/2015	TJ Anderson	Staff Parish Relations Committee	Revised to include input from CMO and changes deemed necessary.
2	06/07/2016	Gloria Curry	Staff Parish Relations Committee	Revisions and annual approval.
3	05/05/2017	Paul Schultz	Staff Parish Relations Committee	Revisions and annual approval.



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1. Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of 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.

Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones ... it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that "children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse" (§ 162C).

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. [From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church-2000*, pp. 180-181. Copyright © 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.]

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child and youth abuse in Asbury United Methodist Church, herein referred to as the "Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy".

2. Purpose

Asbury United Methodist Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

3. Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that ensure the physical safety of our children and youth, as well as those who work with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in programs and events; we will educate our workers with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate policies; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

4. Background Checks

All individuals 18 and older working with children and youth in ministries sponsored by Asbury UMC must have at a minimum, a current limited criminal background check on file with the church office. A full criminal background check may be required at the church's discretion. The criminal background check must be performed at least once every 3 years. The process for insuring these are completed is:

4.1. The Children's Ministry Director and ministry leaders working with children or youth distribute the criminal background check form to all individuals 18 and older in their groups, and to the leaders of associated organizations for which they have responsibility (e.g. Boy Scouts). The criminal background check request form (see appendix) is available in the main office or can be obtained from the church secretary.



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4.2. The criminal background check forms are collected by the ministry leaders and returned to the Children's Ministry Director or church administrative secretary.

4.3. The Children's Ministry Director mails or makes telephone or online requests for the background checks. (Allow two weeks for processing.)

No individuals 18 and older works with or presides over children or youth on church property or at a church function without having an approved criminal background check.

5. Record Keeping

The church secretary will partner with the Children's Ministry Director in keeping a current listing of all completed and approved criminal background checks with validity and training dates, which is available to ministry leaders for verification.

6. Two Person/Open Door Rule

To protect youth, parents, volunteers, and leaders, Asbury UMC practices the following "Two Person/Open Door rule":

6.1 It is our goal that at least two (2) unrelated individuals 18 and older or at least 1 individual 18 and older with a supervised minor at least 14 years of age are required at all child and youth church sponsored activities. Activities are to be conducted in areas that minimize opportunity for secrecy and isolation.

6.2 In the event that only one (1) individual 18 and older is present there should be no fewer than two (2) children or youth with the individual. In this instance, doors without windows to the classroom must remain open and any windows must have clear view into the classroom.

6.3 If only one (1) individual 18 and older and one (1) child or youth are present, then immediately contact the Children's Ministry Director or ministry leader to resolve any one-on-one situations.

7. Incident Reporting

This section outlines the procedures for reporting when you have reason to believe alleged abuse or neglect involving a church ministry occurred. All leaders of ministries involving children or youth are expected to know, understand and follow these procedures.

For the purpose of this policy, "child abuse" and "neglect" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child or youth's physical, psychological or emotional health and development.

Did YOU personally witness or have reason to believe a situation occurred?

Did you directly observe a situation where a child was in risk of harm by another person or where you had reason to believe alleged abuse or neglect was occurring? If so, you must follow the "Reporting Procedures" outlined below.

Has another person reported a second-hand alleged abuse or neglect to you?

If another person has reported a second-hand alleged abuse or neglect involving children or youth to you, you must direct the individual to the Asbury UMC Child and Youth Protection Policy, "Incident Reporting" and advise the individual their responsibility to follow the policy. Do NOT report second-hand information yourself.



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Has a child reported a situation to you?

Sometimes children will unexpectedly or innocently speak about behavior or an event that resulted in the child being abused, afraid, or touched in an inappropriate way. Do not alarm the child. Do not ask leading questions that may put words or ideas in the child's thoughts. Instead, say something such as "I think you were upset by that" or "Thank you for sharing with me.". If a child has reported a situation to you, then you must follow the "Reporting Procedures" outlined below.

Reporting Procedures

1. Any person who observed alleged abuse or neglect or to whom such alleged abuse or neglect is reported should IMMEDIATELY call the following:
 - A. Call the local police at 911.
 - B. After calling the local police, IMMEDIATELY call Child Protection Services at 800-800-5556 to make a report and follow their instructions.
2. After calling Child Protection Services, the person who made the call will IMMEDIATELY inform the pastor of the incident in person or by calling the church office. The pastor will determine the next steps to be taken and required documentation to be completed.
3. The Children's Ministry Director, staff person, event leader, ministry leader or individual of the child or youth involved in the incident shall obtain the necessary information and complete the Incident Report Form. Refer to "What to report" for additional information.
4. The Children's Ministry Director, staff person, event leader, ministry leader or individual involved in the incident are to communicate with the pastor to ensure that they remain informed.
5. If the pastor is the alleged abuser, the Child Protection Services must be called IMMEDIATELY. The Staff Parish chair and/or the church Lay Leader are to be notified and they will then contact the District Superintendent by phone and follow his or her instructions.

Note: per Indiana code 2015, if you report to the pastor and/or event leader, then the responsibility for reporting it to authorities passes from you to the individual who has taken it from you.

Ref: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2015/ic/titles/031/articles/033/chapters/005/> However, the Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy requires that you contact authorities first.

What to report:

Explain, as clearly as you can, what happened or is happening to the child. Describe the nature of the safety issue. Be as specific as possible. It is helpful to report as much of the following information as you can. *Even if you do not know all of this information, report what you do know:*

- Name of birth parents or guardian
- Date of birth or approximate age of parents and child(ren)
- Address of parents and child(ren)



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- The safety issue
- When and how often the safety issue occurred
- Where the safety issue occurred
- Name, date of birth or approximate age, description, and location, if possible, of the person who caused safety issue.

8. Policy Training

The children's Ministry Director, ministry leaders or event leaders involving children or youth ensure all people working with children and youth are trained yearly in the policy and receive a copy of, understand and agree to follow the "Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy".

Every individual will receive a copy of the slide-formatted presentation of this policy, a 5x7 training overview card, a business card with reporting numbers, a criminal background check authorization form, a signature form acknowledging receipt of the training and a copy of "A Summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act".

9. Policy Administration Responsibilities

The key person(s) and their responsibilities for the administration of this policy are:

9.1. All Leaders

- Ensure all individuals 18 and older working in their ministry have a current background check on file in the church office. Background checks (section 4) are valid for three (3) years for continuously active ministry participants.
- Ensure volunteers from partner organizations also have current background checks on file with their organization by obtaining validity dates from their partnering ministry leader.
- In the event a volunteer needs a background check, provide them with the form to be signed and submitted to the church administrative secretary or Children's Ministry Director.
- Ensure volunteers have received a copy of, understand and agree to follow the "Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy" training card.
- Follow up on any incident, either observed or reported by a volunteer, child or youth, in accordance with the Incident Reporting procedure (section 7).

9.2. Children's Ministry Director and Church Administrative Secretary

- Complete background checks (section 4) for workers with children and youth as requested by Ministry Leaders.
- Maintain a record (section 5) of background check status for workers with children and youth.
- The Children's ministry Director is to maintain and update the Child and Youth Protection Policy training kit and power point presentation to aid ministry leaders in the training process.

9.3. Senior Pastor/Children's Ministry Director/Staff Parish Relations Committee

- Verify all individuals in positions involving children or youth have received training in the "Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy."
- Ensure this policy is reviewed by staff on an annual basis.
- Ensure reported incidents are appropriately investigated, and the proper authorities are notified of the incidents.
- Respond to media inquiries associated with incidents of reported child or youth abuse.



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10. Children's Privacy Protection

Regarding the use of child and youth photographic images, refer to the Asbury United Methodist Church Media use policy which is available in the church office or on-line.

11. Appendix

Included in the Appendix are copies of the following documents important to the administration of this policy.

- Background Check Authorization Form
- Incident Reporting Form
- Policy Signature Form
- Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy Training Kit
- Asbury UMC Child & Youth Protection Policy Training Card
- Asbury UMC Child and youth Protection Policy Business Card
- A summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act
- Asbury united Methodist Church Media use Policy