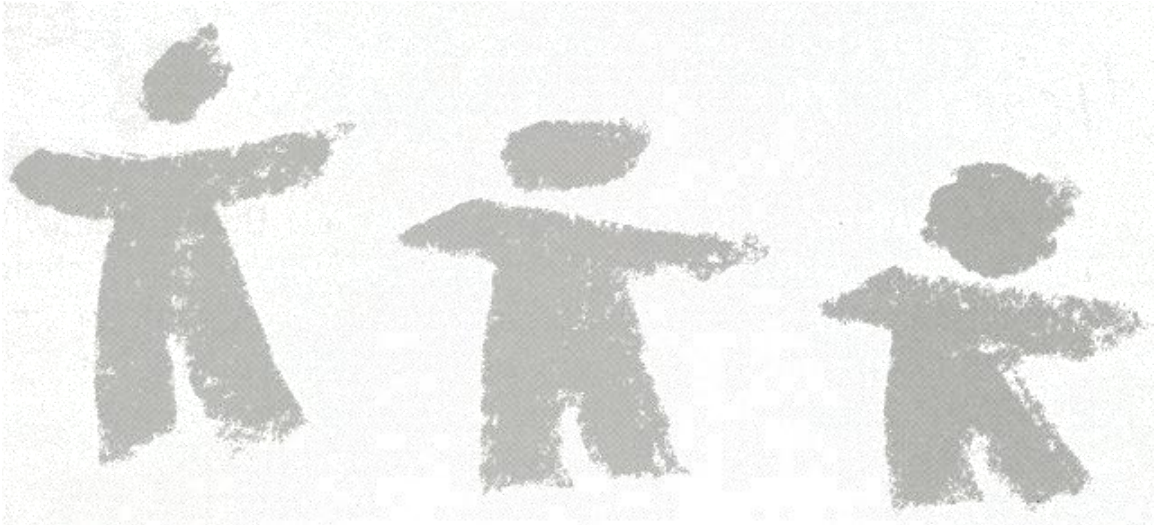


ALLIANCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Fort Worth, Texas



Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures

**Originally submitted by the Safe Sanctuary Task Force and
approved by the AUMC Church Council May 25, 2006**

Revision Submitted by the AUMC Staff-Parish Relations Committee

**Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist Congregations,
Alliance United Methodist Church's Church Council
Adopts these Revised Policies and Procedures
on August 28, 2008**

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INTRODUCTION

God calls us to make our church a safe place and to create a community of faith where all can grow safe and strong.

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.

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 and sexual exploitation and abuse."

In order to provide a safe and healthy environment for children and youth who participate in its programs and activities, Alliance United Methodist Church has developed the policies and procedures contained in this guide.

PURPOSE

As Christians, we are called to create a safe sanctuary in our church, its programs and sponsored activities. It must be a holy, safe and protective community for all of God's children. The purpose of this policy is to address the safety of our children and youth. We recognize the need to have a formal, written policy with procedures in place to

- (1) help prevent the opportunity for abuse of children and youth;
- (2) help protect workers from false accusations or suspicions;
- (3) to have an established procedure to report a suspected incident of child abuse.

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body.

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons including all paid and unpaid leaders, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with children or youth who participate in any activity or event sponsored by Alliance United Methodist Church.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that provide an environment for spiritual growth and safety of all children and youth in our care, as well as those who work with children and youth in this ministry.

- We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of paid staff as well as volunteer workers with children and youth.
- We will implement prudent operational procedures in our programs and events.
- We will conform our facilities to meet reasonable safety standards to reduce risk of harm or injury.
- We will train and educate our staff and volunteer workers in the use of these policies and procedures.
- We will provide adequate supervision and support for workers as they are in ministry on our behalf.
- We will educate parents, guardians and others in our congregation as to our policies and procedures.
- We will have in place a clearly defined procedure for reporting instances of injury, harm or abuse that conforms to requirements of state law.
- We will respond with compassion and integrity to needs as they present themselves following incidents of harm, injury, or abuse among children, staff and volunteers.
- We will regularly review our policies and procedures to assure that they conform to current legal, health and safety standards.
- We will be prepared to respond to media inquiries as set out in these policies.

In all of our ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person is “surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (*Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal, p.44*)

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

| | |
|---|--|
| CHILD: | Any person aged from birth through 6 th grade |
| YOUTH: | Students from 7 th through 12 th grade. |
| ADULT: | Individuals that are 18 years of age or older, and/or who have graduated from high school or equivalent. |
| VULNERABLE ADULT: | An adult who has one or more mental, physical or emotional impairments that renders the person incapable of self-care and/or independent living without help. |
| VERBAL ABUSE: | Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades or threatens any child, youth or vulnerable adult. |
| PHYSICAL ABUSE: | Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse includes but is not limited to punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition, and/or purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth. |
| SEXUAL ABUSE: | Sexual abuse of minors includes but is not limited to touching them in an inappropriate way such as fondling, inappropriate touching of the minor's body, and inappropriate kissing. Non-touch abuse includes making remarks of a sexual nature, showing the child explicit pornographic materials, or making the minor watch others engaged in sexual activity. |
| CHILD OR YOUTH SEXUAL ABUSE: | Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4) romantic involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in Alliance UMC sponsored activities, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples include but are not limited to: displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse. |
| PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES: | Physical boundaries are most important in dealing with children and youth. Persons working with children and youth have to understand and respect those boundaries. Obviously these boundaries change as children grown older. A young child sitting in the lap of a caregiver is most appropriate, whereas an older child or youth sitting in a leader's lap would not be acceptable. Hugs and kisses from a toddler to a leader are entirely different than the same from a youth. Emotional boundaries are also important. As a child grows older it is important for the adult leaders to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships. It is important for those working with children and youth to not step outside of those lines and allow the younger person to become too attached to them. It is important for the older person to be careful where conversations might lead to steer clear of inappropriate talk. When an adult leader recognizes that there might be an issue with these boundaries, great space should be allowed to come between them and the child or youth in question. If that does not solve the problem then the adult leader and the situation needs to be brought to the Children's Director, Youth Director, or other appropriate Staff person to address the issue. |

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| APPOINTED STAFF: | Appointed Staff is anyone who is a member of the Central Texas Annual Conference and appointed to Alliance United Methodist Church by the bishop. |
| PAID STAFF: | Paid Staff is any person directly employed by Alliance United Methodist Church. |
| CONTRACT STAFF: | Contract Staff is anyone who provides a service at Alliance United Methodist Church that is not directly employed by the church. |
| ADULT VOLUNTEER | An Adult Volunteer is an Adult as defined by this policy who assists in conducting children's or youth activities under the supervision of a person in charge of children's or youth sponsored activities. |
| YOUTH VOLUNTEER | A Youth Volunteer is a Youth as defined by this policy who assists in conducting children's or youth activities under the supervision of an adult in charge of children's or youth sponsored activities. |
| ROAMER | An adult volunteer who circulates to provide support during any church sponsored event, program, or ministry involving children or youth. |
| CRIMINAL & SEXUAL HISTORY: | Criminal history refers to an individual's criminal record including but not limited to, arrests, charges, convictions, and deferred adjudication, incidents of validated child abuse, violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, record of any sex offender history by any competent jurisdiction and record of Driving Under the Influence (where the person in question would be serving as a driver). |
| BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION | A qualified risk assessment performed to evaluate the criminal history as well as any other relevant background information of staff and volunteers. |

STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the official policy of Alliance United Methodist Church that the church grounds and all church sponsored events and activities are a safe haven for all those participating. Alliance UMC will provide a safe sanctuary by carefully screening and training volunteers and employees, strictly enforcing guidelines for supervision of Alliance UMC events, and responding to all instances or possible instances of violation of the safe sanctuary policies and procedures. The Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated as needed by the SPRC and recommendation made to the Church Council.

SCREENING PROCESS

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children and youth. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment. It is the responsibility of the leader of each AUMC-sponsored activity involving children and/or youth to ensure that all prospective volunteers submit a background investigation application to the church office in a timely manner, preferably two weeks before the activity is scheduled to begin. Leaders may provide application forms directly to prospective volunteers, or volunteers may pick up application forms in the church office.

For all volunteers and staff:

1. A background investigation application is filled out by the applicant and submitted to the church office manager or senior pastor.
2. The background investigation is run through an SPRC-approved agency by the office manager or senior pastor.
3. Results of the background investigation shall be kept confidential and will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a secured location. If there is an adverse finding on the background

investigation, the applicant shall be contacted by the Senior Pastor and given the choice to withdraw the application or continue the application process.

4. If there is a finding on the background investigation report other than those listed under paragraphs 6 & 7 below, and the applicant chooses to continue the application process, then the determination of whether that finding is serious enough to result in Alliance United Methodist Church not approving the application shall be made by the SPRC and the Senior Pastor.
5. A master list of all persons with approved background investigations will be maintained by the church office.
6. If the applicant is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children or youth, the applicant will not be approved. Any conviction of a crime against children or youth shall disqualify any applicant. Persons having a criminal or sexual history including but not limited to any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any children or youth sponsored ministry:
 - a. Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful.
 - b. Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.
 - c. A drug related conviction within the five years immediately prior to application.
 - d. Identification as a sex offender by any competent jurisdiction.
7. Applicants with a DUI or DWI conviction in their criminal history within the five years immediately prior to application will not be allowed to act as a driver.

Background investigation documents are the property of AUMC and will not be distributed.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

It is the responsibility of AUMC program staff such as Director of Children's Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, Director of Children and Youth Music Ministry or other youth & children's program directors, to communicate Safe Sanctuary guidelines and policies to all AUMC volunteers.

1. Volunteer training for Safe Sanctuaries will be offered by AUMC staff on an annual basis. If volunteers are not able to participate in training, they will be required to read and review the Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures. A signed acknowledgement will be maintained in the church office with the master file of background checks. Background investigations for volunteers will be re-run every two (2) years.
2. Staff are required to participate in Safe Sanctuary certification, including a new background investigation, every two (2) years.

CPR/FIRST AID TRAINING

Alliance United Methodist Church will offer a CPR/First Aid Class at least every two years for those that work with children and youth to have the opportunity to take the class. Anyone working with children and youth is encouraged to take a CPR/First Aid Course and refresher course when required. All paid and contract staff working with children are required to take a CPR/First Aid Class.

SUPERVISION

Program staff are responsible for making sure that AUMC volunteers and programs are compliant with Safe Sanctuary policies.

All activities involving children and youth shall be supervised as follows:

Nursery – 0 to 3 Years

- Minimum of 2 adults.

Children’s Program Activities – 4 years to 4th grade

- On-site minimum – one adult and one adult roamer.
- Off-site minimum – two adults.

Children’s Program Activities – 5th Grade to 6th grade

- On-site minimum – one adult and one adult roamer, one of whom is 21 or older.
- Off-site minimum – two adults, one of whom is 21 or older.

Youth Program Activities – Junior and Senior High

- On-site minimum – one adult and one adult roamer, one of whom is 23 or older.
- Off-site minimum – two adults, one of whom is 23 or older.

Ratios for Children’s Activities: Ratios are based on the State of Texas Guidelines.

| <u>AGE</u> | <u>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</u> | <u>RATIO</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 0 – 1 year | 1 – 3 | 2 adults |
| 0 – 1 year | 4 – 6 | 3 adults or 2 adult/1 youth |
| 1 – 3 years | 1 – 12 | 2 adults |
| 1 – 3 years | 13 – 24 | 3 adults or 2 adult/1 youth |
| 4 – 5 years | 1 – 15 | 2 adults |
| 4 – 5 years | 16 – 30 | 3 adults or 2 adult/1 youth |
| 6 – 13 years | 1 – 22 | 2 adults |
| 6 – 13 years | 23 – 44 | 3 adults or 2 adults/1 youth |

Open Door Policy: Meetings, rehearsals or gatherings involving children and youth (those under age 18) should be held in rooms with windows in the doors or with the doors open.

Parent Involvement: Parents and guardians are always welcome to participate in activities involving their children and youth in conjunction with approved volunteer and paid staff members, but may not be in direct supervision. Parents are welcome to visit their child’s classroom anytime.

TRANSPORTATION

Since Alliance United Methodist Church does not currently own a church van or bus, all transportation will be provided by parents, sponsors, and/or other church members in privately owned vehicles or in rental vehicles.

The following will be maintained and kept in the church office regarding drivers:

1. Copy of valid driver’s license.
2. Copy of valid auto insurance.
3. Documentation of license plate (number)
4. Private vehicle use form

Before any group leaves AUMC, the following will be submitted to the office:

1. Emergency contact information on each participant.
2. Permission slip, medical release on each participant.
3. The vehicle children and youth are riding in must be identified (make, model, license, and driver)
4. Destination and phone number of the group as well as basic departure and arrival times and estimated route (on private vehicle use form)

Each vehicle will have the following:

1. Emergency contact information on each participant
2. A first aid kit is recommended

Ideally, there should be two adults in each vehicle on any church-sponsored event, program or ministry. Youth can not drive in their own vehicles to church sponsored activities. Except in the case of an emergency, all drivers must be a minimum of 21 years of age, (or other minimum as required by insurance or rental agreements).

On any trip there must be at least one seat belt for every person in the vehicle. Seat belts must be worn at all times.

Under normal circumstances, adult or youth sponsors should not drive individual children or youth home from church-sponsored activities without permission of the parents. Verbal permission (phone call) is acceptable. If contact with the parents cannot be made, and, in the judgment of the responsible adult, it is in best interest of the child or youth, transportation home may be provided.

ALLIANCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CHILD/YOUTH DISCIPLINE POLICY

We believe that discipline is based on the dignity and worth of each person as a child of God. Discipline teaches people to redirect themselves and bring their actions under control. Discipline reinforces positive alternative behavior, provides choices, sets realistic limits and provides reasonable and natural consequences. We believe discipline should provide guidance with love, trust, understanding, acceptance and care; therefore helping people become aware that they are created by God and their behavior should be pleasing to God. Discipline must be: Individualized and consistent for any child or youth, 18 years or younger; appropriate to his or her level of understanding; and directed toward teaching acceptable behavior and self-control.

The following guidelines will be followed regarding discipline:

When inappropriate or unacceptable behavior is exhibited, steps will be taken to stop the behavior and to keep all participants safe:

Step 1: First a child or youth will receive two verbal warnings if inappropriate behavior occurs. However, if the misbehavior involves physical harm, the child or youth will be removed from the group immediately.

Step 2: Secondly, a child or youth will be removed from the group, but will remain in the room with adult supervision if disruptive behavior continues after two verbal warnings.

Step 3: Thirdly, the child or youth will be removed from the class and will sit outside the classroom with adult supervision if removal from the group was not effective. If behavior warrants it the parents will be called to come and pick up their child/youth up.

If necessary for the safety of others, Steps 1 and 2 may be skipped.

In order to make the programs safe and enjoyable for all attending, the following behavior problems may result in disciplinary action and/or dismissal from a program.

- Attempting to threaten or causing physical injury to another person
- Causing or attempting to cause damage to the property of others
- Stealing or attempting to steal from others
- Committing an obscene act or engaging in habitual profanity or vulgarity
- Disrupting any church activity or otherwise willfully defying the valid authority of the staff or volunteers at Alliance United Methodist Church
- Possessing any knife, firearm, or other dangerous object
- Unlawfully possessing or using alcohol, drugs (illegal or over the counter medicine), tobacco, or any product containing tobacco or nicotine.

ANYONE VIOLATING THIS CODE OF CONDUCT MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE CHILDRENS/YOUTH ACTIVITIES, AND MAY NOT BE ALLOWED TO RETURN.

Parents will be notified if their child or youth has physically hurt someone, or has been removed from the group or classroom due to disruptive behavior. If disciplinary action is taken on two consecutive sessions, parents will be asked to join the class or group for two to three sessions in order to observe and provide aid to the leaders on specific ways to help their child or youth have a better learning experience.

HANDLING AND REPORTING OF INCIDENTS

All who work with children and youth at Alliance United Methodist Church will treat any suspected abuse seriously. Therefore, the following procedure will be followed:

First secure the safety of the child, youth or vulnerable adult member. Remove the accused from any further contact with children, youth, vulnerable adults and staff. Treat the accused with dignity and support.

In all incidents where child abused is alleged or suspected, it is crucial that it be dealt with immediately and in a clearly outlined manner. The person who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the event or activity, who shall then notify law enforcement or Children's Protective Service (CPS) 1-800-252-5400, and the Senior Pastor and the Staff Parrish Relations Committee as soon as practically possible.

- The paid staff member or volunteer in charge of the group of children or youth is responsible for completing an **INCIDENT REPORT** in a timely manner following any incident of suspected abuse or neglect. The second staff or volunteer at the activity will also file a report.
- All incident reports will be reviewed promptly by the Senior Pastor who will ensure that the local authorities (law enforcement, social services, medical personnel, etc.) are promptly notified when required or appropriate.
- The parent or legal guardian will always be notified of the incident by the Senior Pastor or staff member in charge.
- All documentation and reports will be filed for future reference.
- Persons who are the subjects of the report will be required to refrain from all children's or youth activities until the incident report is resolved. This will be overseen by the Senior Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee.
- This policy prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct or assists in investigating charges. Anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions will be confronted by the Staff Parrish Relations Committee and appropriate action will be taken, which may include termination as a volunteer or employee of Alliance United Methodist Church. Likewise, anyone found to have made a malicious false report of allegations will be confronted by the Staff Parrish Relations Committee and appropriate action will be taken, which may include termination as a volunteer or employee.

HANDLING AND REPORTING OF INJURY ACCIDENTS

All incidents of injury accidents shall be documented, reported and investigated.

- Assess the needs for emergency care for the victim, and immediately notify the parents and/or other legally responsible adults. The care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
- As needed, provide emergency healthcare. Calling 911 when appropriate.
- The paid staff member or volunteer in charge of the group of children or youth is responsible for completing, in a timely manner, an **ACCIDENT REPORT** for an injury incident. The second staff or volunteer in charge of the activity will also file a report.
- Accident reports will be filed for future reference.

- The parent or legal guardian will be notified of the incident by the staff member or volunteer in charge of the activity.
- The Senior Pastor or Staff Parish Relations Committee will promptly notify local authorities (medical, personnel, etc) when required or appropriate.

RESPONSE TEAM

In the event that further action is necessary or a need for discussion of the incident or if the media becomes involved a crisis team made up of the following will assemble to handle the situation. *(If the incident involves one of the following they will not be on the crisis team.)*

- Senior Pastor
- Associate Pastor (if there is one)
- Lay Leader
- Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair
- Church Council Chair
- District Superintendent
- Lawyer

MEDIA RESPONSE

The District Superintendent and the Bishop of the Central Texas Conference shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response may only be made by a spokesperson designated by the Central Texas Conference Communications Office or as designated by the Bishop. Refer all inquires to the spokesperson.

MEDICAL INFORMATION AND PERMISSION

Each child or youth participant in a church related off-site activity unless accompanied by a parent must complete a **Medical Release/Permission Form** which must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. A copy of the medical release and permission form will be left in the church office for all outings.

OVERNIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

An overnight trip is defined by an event where children or the youth group make arrangements to sleep at a different location away from their own home.

Sleeping Arrangements:

- Girls and boys must have designated separate sleeping areas.
- At no time may a child, youth or adult of the opposite sex enter the sleeping area of another youth.
- Common areas for children or youth to congregate will be set up under the supervision of the adult volunteers and staff on the trip.
- Two youth of the opposite sex will not be allowed to be in a closed area by themselves.
- Designated adults will conduct an inspection of the sleeping area at the beginning and end of the event.