

Safe Sanctuary Policy for Davidson UMC

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:2

“In particular, children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

Social Principles of the United Methodist Church 2005-2008

Davidson United Methodist Church, intent on providing a safe environment for children and youth who participate in programs designed to help them grow in their faith, enforces the Safe Sanctuary Policy printed below. This policy maintains guidelines and procedures set by the United Methodist Church to help ensure the physical safety of our children and youth. This policy is also designed to protect our adult volunteers as well as the church as a whole from unfounded allegations of misconduct. We believe the church should be a safe place for all ages to learn, serve and grow in their faith. Volunteers are defined as unpaid persons serving in ministry with children and youth. Children are defined as those persons from birth through fifth grade. Youth are persons from sixth grade through twelfth grade.

A. Selection and Training of Paid Workers and Volunteers.

1. Davidson UMC will order nationwide criminal background checks on all employees. (These will be filed in a locked cabinet and kept under the strictest of confidence.) The business office will run all checks, with the exception of childcare employees. The children’s ministry department will request all childcare employee checks. Background checks will be run at least every five years, and more often as deemed necessary.
2. Davidson UMC will order nationwide criminal background checks on all adults who volunteer with children and/or youth. Volunteers must complete a background form giving the church permission to run the check. Checks will be run and reviewed by the program staff person to whom the volunteer relates. (All documents will be filed in a locked cabinet and kept under the strictest of confidence.) Background checks will be run at least every five years, and more often as deemed necessary.
3. The responsible program coordinator will contact previous church and/or personal references on each volunteer. Upon five year renewal for a volunteer, a personal reference is not needed for volunteers that have consistently served as a volunteer for three of the five most recent years in a similar capacity. The responsible program coordinator/ staff person that has personally observed the volunteer’s work, will write, sign, and date a statement of observation and include this in the volunteer’s file. Persons refusing to have a background check or, provide an accurate social security number for a residence trace or who have been actively affiliated with DUMC for less than six months will not be allowed to volunteer with children and youth. Neither will any person who has been convicted of, or pled guilty to, physical and/or sexual abuse of children, or other serious crimes against persons (rape, assault, domestic violence,

etc.), or against whom such charges are pending, be allowed to work with children or youth. A decision concerning a volunteer's service will be made after analyzing all information and in the best interest of the children and youth involved.

4. In the event of a combined program with another church, an intern program and other similar circumstances, the Senior Minister or his designee may make an exception to the "six month rule."
5. All program staff members are required to complete CPR and First Aid training every two years. Annual recertification is recommended. When childcare is provided by church employees, there must be at least one CPR and First Aid certified caregiver in each room. It is highly recommended that volunteers working off campus also receive this training.
6. All DUMC employees and volunteers working with children or youth must attend one Safe Sanctuary Training Session in person. Annual renewal will take place online. A designated DUMC employee will maintain records of all screenings as well as completion of annual Safe Sanctuary training.

B. Guidelines for Workers with Children and/or Youth

1. All activities for children and youth will operate on the two-adult rule. A minimum of two adults is to be in or with each group of children. If two of the adults are related, a third unrelated adult must be present.
2. Any group of children or youth meeting in a room without a hallway or door window should do so with the door propped open. There are to be persons monitoring each floor in the educational building during all ministry activities. It is recommended that a person serve as a monitor in the Molly McKay House as well.
3. The Leader: Child recommended ratio for children's activities is 1:10 in the classroom, and 1:6 on trips or overnights. The Leader: Youth recommended ratio for youth activities is 1:20 in the classroom, 1:15 on day trips and 1:8 on overnight trips.
4. On overnight trips the majority of adult chaperones must be twenty-one or older. At the discretion of the program staff person leading the event, young adults under the age of twenty-one may be chaperones, provided they are paired with adults twenty-one or older and assigned an age-appropriate level of responsibility. There will be one female counselor per every eight girls and one male counselor per every eight boys. No youth shall be housed one on one with an adult.
5. It is our policy that children and youth travel with an adult driver and a non-related adult passenger who have undergone DUMC background checks. However in situations where transportation needs dictate the use of personal vehicles, in addition to the church vehicles, children and youth may travel in a vehicle with only one adult driver who has undergone a DUMC background check provided that at least three children or youth are in the vehicle, that all children and youth sit in the back seat(s) of the vehicle, that the vehicle travels in a convoy with other DUMC vehicles and that communication between vehicles in the convoy is available at all times. The exception to this rule allows for the child of the driver to ride up front. When a personal vehicle is used, the driver will be made aware that they are

personally responsible for the safety of their passengers and that their insurance will cover any incident that occurs while traveling with the church. Likewise parents whose children travel in a personal vehicle will be made aware that the driver's insurance will be the primary liability coverage during travel. The only time a youth may travel alone in a vehicle is with their parent.

6. All children, youth and leaders are expected to behave in a Christ-like manner during all on and off campus activities sponsored by Davidson UMC. Each class on campus and each group going off campus will sign a covenant of Christian behavior. If discipline issues do arise, leaders should make one effort to resolve the issue with another adult present or as a witness. If the negative behavior continues, the leaders are to contact a parent and have the child removed from the group. If a parent cannot be located, time out within the room may be used. No form of verbal abuse or physical discipline is ever to be used.
7. Adult volunteers working with youth and children are to be at least five years older than the youth and children to whom they are assigned. DUMC values the presence of youth volunteers. Youth volunteers may assist in instances where there is less than a five year age difference and may serve as a third person in the room after the two adults per room has been fulfilled. It is recommended that youth wishing to assist in the childcare area complete a babysitter's course. (Red Cross or Safe Sitters.) Youth must be in senior high to volunteer in the infant nursery. It is also recommended that youth volunteers attend a Safe Sanctuary training session at church and then complete an online Safe Sanctuary training/questionnaire each year thereafter.
8. Any questionable or inappropriate behavior should be reported immediately to the appropriate ministry leader as such conduct can precede abuse, even though the observed act itself does not constitute abuse.
9. Program staff and volunteer leaders driving children or youth must pass the DMV check provided with all background checks. Each passenger must wear a seatbelt when available during DUMC off-campus trips. Double buckling is not allowed.
10. First aid kits are located in the Molly McKay house, each DUMC vehicle, in the first floor hallway (between restrooms), the kitchen, the chapel and in the church office. Also small kits are provided inside a Sunday school cabinet in each preschool and elementary classroom. Kits will be checked monthly and restocked as needed by church staff.
11. Other organizations that use Church premises for children and youth oriented activities (for example, Boy or Girl Scouts) will provide a copy of their policy to the DUMC business office. Their policy must be compatible to DUMC's. After review, the Safe Sanctuary committee will be called together by the business administrator if anything is questionable. The organization will also receive a copy of the DUMC policy and will be responsible for adhering to it as well. The policy that is stricter will prevail.

C. Guidelines for Off Campus Staff/ Chaperones

1. Youth are to use the "buddy" system during all on and off campus activities. While using the buddy system, preferably, 3-4 youth should

- accompany one another. However, when this is not possible, the minimum number of youth using the “buddy” system should be 2.
2. Parents are to be given detailed policies and procedures for all children and youth related to off-campus events. Itineraries will be distributed in addition to policies and procedures for all off-campus events.
 3. Children and youth must complete a *Medical and Liability Release* form in order to participate in off-campus activities. A medical treatment consent form is also required. All forms must be signed by a parent/guardian.
 4. Permission forms for prescribed medications to be taken during off-campus activities must be completed by a parent. Medications are to be under the control of and administered by an adult in charge, with the exception of epi-pens, asthma inhalers, or other prescription medications in consultation with the trip leader. When possible the group will be accessible to parents by way of phone.

D. Guidelines for Parents and Leaders

1. All children through the fifth grade are to be escorted to and from group activities/classes by an authorized parent or adult. No sibling is allowed to drop-off or pick-up.
2. Youth are to use the “buddy” system during all on and off campus activities. While using the buddy system, preferably, 3-4 youth should accompany one another. However, when this is not possible, the minimum number of youth using the “buddy” system should be 2.
3. Parents are to be given detailed policies and procedures for all children and youth related on-campus events. Itineraries will be distributed in addition to policies and procedures for all off-campus events.
4. Once on DUMC property, children and/or youth will not be permitted to leave the church property, even with parental consent, until the event is concluded unless escorted by parents. Staff and volunteer leaders are placed in precarious situations when children or youth walk up or down Main Street for snacks, to meet someone, etc.
5. As for youth events, we realize, and ask parents to realize as well that we are a downtown church. Parents are advised to discuss youth group rules and regulations with their middle and high school youth. We ask that parents actively take a role in knowing where their youth are at all times. Once on DUMC property, youth are to remain on campus for the duration of the event they are attending.
6. Children and youth must complete a *Medical and Liability Release* form in order to participate in off-campus activities. A medical treatment consent form is also required. All forms must be signed by a parent/guardian.
7. Any prescribed medications to be given during *an on campus activity* must be administered by the parent. Permission forms for prescribed medications to be taken during off campus activities must be completed by a parent. Medications are to be under the control of and administered by an adult in charge, with the exception of epi-pens, asthma inhalers, or other prescription medications in consultation with the trip leader. When possible the group will be accessible to parents by way of phone.

8. To ensure Internet safety for our children and youth, only first names will be used on any DUMC website. Parents must notify the church if they do not want a photo of their child used on any DUMC publication or the website.

E. Procedures for Reporting Incidents of Abuse of a Child or Youth

1. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children or youth will be reported as soon as possible to the Minister of Christian Education, the Senior Minister or their designee.
2. The Senior Minister, the Minister of Christian Education or their designee will report the alleged incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the Director of the Department of Social Services of Mecklenburg County.
3. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances and will also make a report that documents all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.
4. All adult members of DUMC staff, and other adults participating in programs on the property of DUMC are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children or youth. They will be encouraged not to hesitate to caution others that activities they observe are, or may appear to be, inappropriate. The Church will be supportive of individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse.
5. Any organization that uses DUMC facilities will also notify the Senior Minister or his designee as soon as possible about any incident or suspected incident of abuse involving any person affiliated with such organization while using DUMC facilities.
6. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.

F. Responding to Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Youth

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to the alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegation can be substantiated or cleared.
2. All procedures listed in the previous section on Reporting will be strictly followed.
3. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.
4. All efforts in handling the situation will be carefully documented.
5. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim will be notified immediately.
6. The liability insurer for the Church will be notified about the incident by the Senior Minister or his designee, as appropriate.
7. The safety and security of the child must be safe-guarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
8. An in-depth investigation will be carried out by church personnel under the supervision of the Senior Minister or his designee as well as by civil authorities if appropriate.
9. The Senior Minister or his designee will be the sole spokesperson for the Church insofar as media inquiries are concerned.
10. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities, as circumstances dictate, until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Revised and Approve by Board of Stewards October 6, 2009