

Safe Sanctuary Policy

The Church at Chelsea Park

Union UMC

Purpose: It is the purpose and intent of The Church at Chelsea Park (Union UMC) to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children and students of our faith family.

Goal: Our goal is to protect children from sexual abuse, child molestation, or any type of inappropriate sexual behavior by employees or volunteers in this church and to protect employees and volunteers from false allegations.

Definition of Child Sexual Abuse: The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sexual abuse as “any sexual activity with a child, whether in the home of a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child.” The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child.

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sex abuse can involve fondling, penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas: intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Definition of a Minor: A minor is any individual under the age of 19 years.

The policy and procedures set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities whether clergy, paid staff, or volunteer.

Screening and Supervisory Procedures and Policies

Employee – anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with preschoolers, children, and students

Volunteer – anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors. Examples: Nursery, childcare, preschool, grade school, middle school, high school, and college workers, bus drivers, teachers, chaperones, and others as designated by the Church Administrator.

Current and future employees or volunteers must:

- Complete a confidential application form for reference checks.
- Complete a consent to release confidential information with Employment Screening Services.
- Recommendation Report completed by supervising staff member or interview by appropriate staff member
- Criminal records check (**can be done for about \$9 per person**)
- Received appropriate clearances of all checks to work with minors
- At least three references checked and verified including former employers.
- Attend safe sanctuary training

All records, forms and reports will become a part of the employee's confidential personnel file.

Criminal records checks for volunteers will be limited to any criminal activity involving the following: (1) a minor; (2) child molestation, (3) any type of sexual offense; (4) any type of pornographic or obscene material; (5) any type of physical violence; and (6) suspected child abuse (7) any other offense that might jeopardize the safety of a minor.

In addition to the above requirements, a volunteer must be a member of The Church at Chelsea Park (Union UMC), or regular attendee, for at least six (6) months. A volunteer who does not meet these membership requirements may serve only upon approval of the appropriate age-group minister. There are ways to allow people to volunteer without direct contact with the children.

Minors – In addition to the above requirements a minor who is an employee or volunteer must also submit a separate certification from his or her parent or guardian that the parent or guardian “knows no reason why

the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other minors.” **Minors should NEVER be allowed to supervise children without adult supervision.**

PROTECTION POLICY

Two Adults

Age-group ministers, division directors, hall monitors, greeters and/or program directors will be present, or nearby, and available on each floor and in the hallways where minors are present. Reasonable effort will be made to have two (2) adult workers present, or nearby, with preschoolers, children and students during church activities. Reasonable effort shall be made to assure that one adult is not left alone with one minor. A husband and wife working the same room will typically be considered as one adult for purposes of this policy. This should be put into place because a person can not testify against their spouse in a court of law.

View Windows/Open Doors

The preschoolers, children and students will be placed in rooms with view windows or open doors for all teaching/learning activities.

Within Town Activities

All employees and volunteers will be required to comply with all of the Safe Sanctuary policies during The Church at Chelsea Park (Union UMC) sponsored within town activities.

Out-of-Town Activities

All participants should have written parental consent and a notarized medical release form. Consent forms may be completed for a one-year period and should be renewed annually. All consent forms will be considered valid until renewed. All employees and volunteers shall be required to comply with all of The Church at Chelsea Park (Union UMC) policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in the Safe Sanctuary policies during The Church at Chelsea Park (Union UMC) sponsored out-of-town activities.

- * Background check that covers driving record if adults are transporting children or youth.
- * No chaperones in the room with the kids unless cabin style
- * All restrooms and public facility bathrooms should be checked before the children use the facility.
- * Copy of student information (medical/contact) should be available.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Observed or reported child sexual abuse or child molestation should be reported immediately to the appropriate age group minister or the Church Administrator or the Minister of Children. Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, you should talk with an appropriate person to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family. When time and circumstances permit, the report should first be made to the appropriate age-group minister, who will then proceed with the correct and thorough process.

RESPONSES TO ALLEGATIONS

All allegations will be taken seriously and church staff will take appropriate action in accordance with the laws of the State of Alabama, insurance policy requirement, and based upon advice of legal counsel.

The official spokesperson for the church in any of these matters will be the Pastor or his appointee. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media in an official capacity.

The church staff will document (in writing, with date and signature) all efforts in the handling of any incident.

The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. The Church at Chelsea Park (Union UMC) staff will minister to all involved, as well as cooperate with authorities.

AMENDMENT OF POLICY

The Administrative Council of The Church at Chelsea Park (Union UMC) may amend these policies upon 30 days notice to the Church.

EFFECTIVE DATE

February 13, 2011.

Signature: _____