

**Child/Youth Abuse Prevention & Protection Policy
“Safe Sanctuaries”
The Memphis Annual Conference of
The United Methodist Church
Adopted June, 1998
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I. OUR THEOLOGICAL TASK

“Then [Jesus] took a little child and put [him] among them; and taking [her] in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me’.” (Mark 9:36-37)

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)

The Church, above all institutions, is called to welcome and nurture the child. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where children may grow, and where those who care for them may administer to their needs in responsible ways.

The 1996 General Conference approved a resolution that calls upon local churches and Annual Conferences to institute policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in our churches and church-related activities. We, in the Memphis Conference, accept the nature of this call and seek to expand it to include all forms of child abuse that could be possible in these settings.

We uphold that to report abuse is to be a witness to the world of the love and justice of God and fully recognize that reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Simply, to report abuse can help to stop existing abuse and prevent further abuse.

As caring Christians, we are also committed to protect and advocate for children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in the life of the church. The Church, at all levels of its organization, is entrusted with the responsibility of providing an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse.

Additionally, as we move into caring for the abused child, the church community must also be intentional in embracing the family system as we call upon them to look at their wounds and the wounding of their child. Further, we recognize the grace that God gives in upholding Christian community; and, we will look for grace-filled ways of dealing with both those who have been victimized and the accused.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. CHILD ABUSE - May be any act committed by a person in a position of trust (parent, caregiver, Sunday School teacher, pastor, or other) which harms or threatens to harm a child’s welfare, physical, spiritual or mental health. [Further definitions of abuse and neglect vary according to state law. Kentucky and Tennessee have child abuse reporting laws with varying definitions of child abuse and varying provisions as to who may and must report, penalties for not reporting, and required action following the report. Please refer to Kentucky Unified Juvenile Code specific information contained in KRS Chapters 600 to 645, see www.gov.state.Ky.us.domviol. For information in Tennessee refer to Tennessee Code Annotated Chapter 37, see www.state.tn.us/youth/cps/.

B. We recognize Child Abuse may fall into four categories:

- 1. PHYSICAL ABUSE** - Inflicting bodily harm to children constitutes physical abuse. Instances of physical abuse include any physical act of undue force such as assault with knife, strap, or other implement; burns, fractures, and bruises resulting from being beaten, pushed down, shaken, pinched, slapped or thrown. Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks.
- 2. SEXUAL ABUSE** - Any time a child is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older child, abuse has occurred. The child is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes fondling, sexual intercourse, forced participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution, and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.
- 3. EMOTIONAL ABUSE** - Emotional abuse deeply affects a child’s self-esteem by

submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It does not always involve injuries we can see. The child receives the message that he/she is not good and never will be. Emotional abuse can include closed confinement (being shut in a small area), making racial remarks, excessive punishment, use of profanity, knowingly permitting drug or alcohol abuse, ignoring or encouraging peer abuse.

4. NEGLECT - It is not hearing or addressing a child's basic needs for health, welfare or safety resulting in harm to the child. It can include any of the following acts of negligence or maltreatment:

- failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing;
- abandonment;
- refusal to seek treatment for illness;
- inadequate supervision;
- health hazards in the home, school, or church;
- ignoring a child's need for contact, affirmation, stimulation and nurture.

C. Codes of Law:

A child protection program is mandated by statute, which means there are state laws which declare a child's right to be free from abuse and neglect. Refer to the Kentucky Unified Juvenile Code, www.gov.state.Ky.us.domviol and the Tennessee Code Annotated for additional information, www.state.tn.us/youth/cps.

III. STANDARDS

A. Criteria For Volunteers & Staff

1. MINIMUM AGE: The following standards for Authority Figures (whether volunteers or staff) are designed to separate Authority Figures from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the Authority Figure's role.

a. AUTHORITY FIGURES – the primary leaders of youth and children's activities.

- i. To work with youth (grades 6th and above), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 22 years of age.
- ii. To work with children (infant – 5th grade), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 18 years of age.

b. ASSISTANTS – persons who lend aid to the Authority Figure and act at the direction of the Authority Figure, including volunteers. Whether working with youth or children, Assistants must be:

- i. A minimum of 12 years of age and 4 years older than the participants; and
- ii. In the judgment of a staff member, competent to assist in the activity.
- iii. An Assistant may not be counted as an adult in the child/adult ratios.
- iv. An Assistant must lend aid with at least two other Authority Figures.

2. 6 MONTH RULE:

It is highly recommended that local churches employ a six-month rule in the selection of volunteers wishing to give service in the areas of children and youth ministries. This rule discourages pedophiles who seek to benefit from the desperate need for volunteers of many churches, but also from churches willingness to easily trust.

The Memphis Annual Conference will employ a six month rule requiring that all volunteers, seeking to serve in areas of children and youth ministries on the Conference or Agency level, show evidence of membership in good standing in a local church or campus religious organization for a minimum of six months. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only in an assistant capacity with two other non-related adults, unless a floater is present (see "Two-Adult Rule", pg. 4).

3. POLICY INSTRUCTION: - See Section VIII, "Educational Component," for details.

The church should ensure that regularly scheduled (i.e., at least annually) training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training should be required of all paid staff members, and adult volunteers who work with children and/or youth. Documentation of attendance should be kept from year to year so that if an incident occurs, the church has proof that they followed the policy.

- Note: Check with your insurance provider. Many insurance companies are mandating training and it's frequency.
- Over a period of two years the training should include:
 - A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
 - B. The Church's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
 - C. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
 - D. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
 - E. Child abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
 - F. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries (ways of touching students, appropriate language, etc.)
 - G. All forms used by the church for application, background checks, reporting, and teacher files.

4. SCREENING PROCEDURES – See Section IV, "Screening Procedures", for details.

- a. An application (Appendices A & B)
- b. An interview (Appendix C)
- c. Disclosure Form (Appendix D)
- d. Reference Checks (3) (Appendix E)
- e. Background Checks (Appendix F - I)
- f. Federal and State Laws

Suggestion: Create a bank of potential occasional volunteers by introducing the church's policies and procedures to new members in their initial membership orientation so that at the end of their first six months they can and will hopefully want to go through the process and screening procedures to become a volunteer.

B. Responsibilities of Volunteers and Staff

1. TWO ADULT RULE

A minimum of two non-related adults are to be utilized in all programming with children and youth. When impossible to staff with two non-related adults, there must be an additional adult serving as a floater with visual and physical access to all areas.

A floater could be the Pastor, Sunday School Superintendent or a screened volunteer who could "move in and out of classrooms and recreation areas and function as additional helpers." (Melton, 2003, pg.38)

2. ADULT/CHILD RATIOS

Note: All ratios must be understood in light of first having two adults present at all times. Example: Recommendations for a "Conference or District Event" state that there must be 1 adult to 12 children if grades 9-12. You must have 2 adults at all times, so really for the first 12 youth, you must have 2 adults. For youth numbers 13-24, you need 2 adults according to the ratio, but you already have two adults for safety. Once you have 25 youth you need a third adult.

- a. **Day Care/Nursery Program** – The programs MUST meet the respected codes of their state as the minimum ratio.

i. Tennessee State Codes

- Infants (non-handicapped and not walking) – 1 Adult to 4 Infants
- Toddlers (walking, non-handicapped) – 1 Adult to 6 Toddlers
- 2 years of age – 1 Adult to 7 Children
- 3 years of age – 1 Adult to 9 Children
- 4 years of age – 1 Adult to 13 Children
- 5 years of age – 1 Adult to 16 Children
- 6 years of age and above – 1 Adult to 20 Children
- Mixed Age Groups:
 - 6 wks to 30 months – 1 to 5
 - 2 to 3 year old – 1 to 8
 - 2 to 4 year old – 1 to 8
 - 2½ to 3 year old – 1 to 9
 - 2½ to 5 year old – 1 to 11
 - 3 to 5 year old – 1 to 13
 - 4 to 5 year old – 1 to 16
 - 5 to 12 year old – 1 to 20

Note: For additional information contact the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

ii. Kentucky State Codes

- Birth to 1 year – 1 Adult to 5 Children
- 1 to 2 years of age – 1 Adult to 6 Children
- 2 to 3 years of age – 1 Adult to 10 Children
- 3 to 4 years of age – 1 Adult to 12 Children
- 4 to 5 Years of age – 1 Adult to 14 Children
- 5 to 7 years of age – 1 Adult to 15 Children
- 7 years and older – 1 Adult to 25 Children (for before and after school)
1 Adult for 20 children (for full day care)

Note: For additional information contact the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children.

iii. Conference Recommendation

- a.** Day Care/Nursery programs MUST meet the respected codes of their state as the minimum ratio, however, we recommend compliance with the following decreased ratios where they do not exceed State Code:

- Infants (non-handicapped and not walking) – 1 Adult to 4 Infants
- Toddlers (walking, non-handicapped) – 1 Adult to 6 Toddlers
- 2 years of age – 1 Adult to 7 Children
- 3 years of age – 1 Adult to 9 Children
- 4 years of age – 1 Adult to 13 Children
- 5 years of age – 1 Adult to 16 Children
- 6 years of age and above – 1 Adult to 20 Children [See KY = 15]
- Mixed Age Groups:
 - 6 wks to 30 months – 1 to 5
 - 2 to 3 year old – 1 to 8
 - 2 to 4 year old – 1 to 8
 - 2½ to 3 year old – 1 to 9
 - 2½ to 5 year old – 1 to 11
 - 3 to 5 year old – 1 to 13
 - 4 to 5 year old – 1 to 16
 - 5 to 12 year old – 1 to 20

b. Conference and District Events

- Grades 1-4 = 1 Adult to 8 Children
- Grades 5-8 = 1 Adult to 10 Children
- Grades 9-12 = 1 Adult to 12 Children

- c. Residential Camping** - Any overnight event should be classified as residential. In Residential Camping settings, whether at the Conference camps, a Conference or District Lock-In, or a youth related overnight event, the adults must always be the same sex as the campers.

- Grades 1-3 = 1 Adult to 8 Children
- Grades 4-8 = 1 Adult to 10 Children

- Grades 9-12 = 1 Adult to 12 Children

d. Participants who are physically impaired

The above ratios (in a.-c.) should be adjusted depending on the degree of impairment. The following ratios should be considered as a guide:

- Needing constant and individual assistance or supervision – 1 leader to 1 child/youth.
- Needing close, but not constant, assistance or supervision – 1 leader to 2 children/youth.
- Needing occasional assistance – 1 leader to 4 children/youth.
- Needing minimal assistance – 1 leader to 5 children/youth.

e. Caution – Adults and authoritative leaders should never be alone with a child or youth. This can include, but is not limited to:

- An automobile while taking a child home.
- A classroom with windowless/locked doors.
- A cabin at camp.

3. ROOMING

a. In a dormitory [cabin type] setting:

- At least two adults of the same gender as the residents should be assigned to each room of youth or children. Follow “Adult/Child Ratios” to determine when to add additional adults.
- Adults should not share the same bed with a youth or child under any circumstances.
- Adults should not to be alone with a youth or child in a room.

b. In a motel/hotel setting:

- Select a hotel with rooms opening to the interior (i.e. a closed hallway) of the building. Where possible, select adjoining rooms on a single hallway.
- When two adults cannot be assigned to a room housing youth, the youth should be roomed separately from the adults. If adjoining rooms are available with doors that can be left in the open position, a single adult in each of the adjoining rooms is acceptable.
- An adult should not share a bed with a child/youth.
- Where adults need to be assigned to separate rooms, it is recommended that one adult room be located between every two youth rooms on the hall.
- Adults should develop a rotating schedule allowing for the hallway to be monitored throughout the night.
- If room checks are needed, they should involve two adults of the same gender as the room residents.

4. TRANSPORTATION

a. Traveling to or from programmed events:

- All drivers should be screened in the same manner as other leadership for an event including a review of their motor vehicle record.
- When private vehicles are used to transport children and youth for programmed church related events, leaders should ensure that appropriate insurance is being maintained by both the church and the private driver.
- All drivers must be 22 years of age or older.
- Where possible, it is recommended that two adults be placed in each vehicle or the vehicles teamed in minimum groups of 2 that stay together at all times.
- The trustees or bus committee should be requested to establish safety policies and guidelines for the operation of church owned vehicles and they

should be strictly followed at all times.

- On all planned transports a signed, notarized permission slip should be on file. In the absence of such a form, the church staff person should call a parent or relative to pick up the child.

b. Transporting Children and Youth to and from home:

It is often out of the pastor, children's or youth leaders control as to the manner and procedures by which children or youth arrive for and depart local church events. It is, however, likely that these persons may occasionally be asked to drive a child or youth. We offer the following guidelines:

- Church related staff should make every effort to not transport a youth or child unless a second adult is in the vehicle with them.

5. MENTORING

Some Assumptions:

Mentoring programs or other efforts to pair children with caring adults are good things. In fact, we know that at-risk children who beat the odds and "make it" frequently credit their success to an on-going relationship with an adult outside their family who took an interest in them and their future, and was there "for the long haul."

The movement within The United Methodist Church to reduce the risk of child abuse through the development of careful policies and procedures is also a good thing. It is mandated by the General Conference, supported by resources and events at the general church level as well as increasing actions at annual conference and local church levels.

A Possible Dilemma:

There may be a potential conflict between these two assumptions, and the deeply-held values they represent. By encouraging adults to be mentors, to form on-going supportive relationships with individual children and youth, are we running the risk of creating settings where children are vulnerable to abuse? Are we setting up situations where it will be difficult to adhere to our own child safety procedures (such as the "two adult rule")?

How do we build in protections both for the children and youth and for the adult mentors? This question has taken on some urgency in light of the fact that, as part of the Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty, the Council of Bishops has urged its members to form personal relationships with individual children and their families, and some bishops are challenging clergy and laity in their area to do the same. No one is interested in discouraging these very positive efforts, but at the same time, we must be faithful to our commitment to procedures that reduce the risk of child abuse.

Some Initial Suggestions:

- Work through existing programs in the community that have established, supervised mentoring programs already in place, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, YMCA's, Boy and Girl Scouts, public schools, etc.
- Provide basic screening of all adults, including clergy, who will be working with children and youth.
- If a mentoring program is being set up in the conference, district or congregation, establish clear written guidelines for settings, boundaries, and environment. Provide training for all adults (or youth, if they will be working with children) who are interested in being mentors.
- Make it clear that all persons are expected to follow congregation, agency and/or conference guidelines for reducing the risk of child/youth abuse. Make specific suggestions, such as:

- Outings should be in public places;
- Routes, time frames, etc. should be agreed upon in advance, and known to all;
- Plan activities and outings that include several adults and children (such as two sets of mentor and child);
- One-to-one mentoring or tutoring should take place in a group setting, such as one large room rather than individual rooms spread through the church building.

(Adapted from "Mentoring & Child Safety," Affirmed by the Task Force on the Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty, October 31, 1998.)

6. COUNSELING

a. Open-Door Counseling

At any counseling session with children, youth or adults the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance. Counseling sessions conducted behind closed doors are a breeding ground for false allegations of abuse. Closed doors also make it too easy for the abuser to have the privacy and isolation he or she needs to carry out abusive acts. When someone is troubled and seeks counseling, it is critical to resist the temptation to meet in secret, even if the child, youth or adult makes that request. (Melton, 2003, pg. 41)

b. Limited Counseling Sessions

Whenever someone seeks counseling, it is important to determine in the initial meeting if you are actually qualified to address the needs effectively. If you do not believe you are sufficiently qualified, refer the member to another counselor. In the event you do agree to counsel them, it may be prudent to agree to a limited number of sessions (two or three) and then refer the member to another counselor if the problems have not been resolved. In this way, if you cannot successfully help the member, you will at least not unduly delay the counseling process with someone else. (Melton, 2003, pg. 41)

7. INTERPERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Youth ministry [more so than children's ministry] can be described by many adjectives, but the first one is almost always *relational*. Youth [and many children] get involved, and stay involved, with ministries because the ministries offer opportunities to experience relationships with peers and adults that are healthy, both physically and spiritually. Whether they can articulate this or not, the youth [and children] want and need to see good examples from the adult leaders of appropriate ways to relate to others. Adults who model respectful and nurturing behaviors that do not interfere with another's privacy provide these types of good examples. The youth [and children] follow the lead of the adults in this regard; therefore, it is important for the adult workers to be clear about appropriate behaviors. Adult workers must be attentive to:

- a. appropriate dress codes, [It is suggested that your group adopt dress codes that address types of swimsuits, shirts, etc. that can and cannot be worn at any group function.]
- b. appropriate use of language,
- c. appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement. A good rule of thumb for adult leaders is to never initiate a hug and to always be the one to end the hug. (Melton, 2003, pg. 37)

8. VISITING AT YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORKERS HOME

- a. Follow the two-adult rule (non-related adults)
- b. Suggestions:
 - i. If youth or children "drop by" you can visit outside in the front yard, tell them you will meet them at a local restaurant or have them go recruit another adult to be present.
 - ii. Educating youth and children of these requirements before they "drop by" is most beneficial. This way they either recruit another adult ahead of time or call you to have you meet them at a local restaurant.

9. DISCIPLINE

a. **Maintaining a Positive Environment**

Maintaining a positive environment (classroom, practice, Sunday school, UMYF, etc.) will encourage good behavior by the students and improve the learning process. As the teacher or leader in the learning environment, you will always want to find the most positive way of speaking and working with the young people in your care. Keeping your voice on a level tone goes a long way in keeping the noise level in the classroom to an appropriate level. The louder you talk, the louder the noise level will be. Always find as many positive ways to acknowledge the students in your care as possible.

i. **Appropriate Discipline** – A well-designed and managed program contributes to good behavior by:

- limiting the number of children in a classroom
- having adequate staff
- discouraging competition
- encouraging children to express feelings, and be empathetic
- developing and discussing rules of conduct.

The purpose for setting disciplinary guidelines is to enable children to develop internal control mechanisms that foster growth and promote societal values. Children must be trained in basic rules of conduct.

ii. **Age-Level Characteristics** – Knowing what is appropriate for each age level enhances the learning by our students. Each level has its own unique aspects that when they are acknowledged and planned for, produces more learning and less discipline problems. Here are some sample ideas, more can be found in curriculum resources and educational textbooks.

Ages 3-6:

Moral Development: Preschoolers are very "me-oriented." They are the center of their own worlds. Their entire view of right and wrong – along with their faith – is based upon what influential models (such as parents and teachers) tell them.

Cognitive Level: Preschoolers' play is symbolic of real life.

Ages 6-8:

Moral Development: For younger children, the moral code is "an eye for an eye." If they are pinched, they pinch back. Personal values are rooted in a "law and order" approach. Things that benefit young children are almost always seen as right, whereas harmful things are almost always viewed as wrong. The world, like their faith, is black and white.

Cognitive Level: Young children think in concrete terms about the ideas and concepts they are learning. They need help understanding symbolic or abstract ideas.

Ages 9-12:

Moral Development: Children at this age begin to see shades of gray in

their world. They question authority more and understand that individual values can impact the lives of others. They also begin to understand that doing “wrong things” means more than just “getting into trouble” or facing punishment from parents or teachers. Faith becomes a working, personal faith.

Cognitive Level: Older children continue to think in concrete terms, although by the end of childhood they can more readily understand abstract concepts.

Ages 13-15

Ages 15-18

iii. Suggested steps to follow...

- a. If a child or youth is behaving inappropriately, the leader or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state the expected behavior, e.g., “We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building.”
- b. If measure #1 is not effective, the child or youth will be guided to another activity.
- c. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child or youth may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students.
- d. If the child or youth’s disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child or youth may be taken to the Pastor or the primary leader for the activity and left under his/her supervision, with others around or contact the parents.

iv. Guidelines...

- a. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time.
- b. If isolating the child or youth within the classroom or removal from the room becomes necessary, the situation should be discussed with the parents or guardian as soon as possible.

b. Discipline While on Trips

i. Create a Covenant (Appendix J)

In order to make events safe and most beneficial for everyone involved, guidelines must be followed. Children, youth, adults and parents are encouraged to sign a covenant outlining the actions that will be taken by the adult leaders attending the event if set guidelines are broken. These policies are important for all who are members or guests of the event to follow and understand. A sample covenant can be found in the appendix.

ii. Suggested Guidelines to Follow to Help Reinforce Positive Behavior

- a. Warning for first infraction, unless a major infraction.
- b. Child or youth will be escorted for a time by an adult chaperone.
- c. Child or youth will call home to conference with a parent.
- d. Child or youth will be sent home at parent’s expense.
- e. Child or youth will not be allowed on next outing.

10. OPEN DOOR POLICY

Classrooms or child care rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents or other volunteer church workers, e.g, Sunday School Superintendent, at any time. Brief observations of child care rooms and classrooms of children or youth are conducted by the pastor or primary leader during all activities.

IV. **SCREENING PROCEDURES**

According to a dictionary, “to prevent” is “to stop something effectually by forestalling action and rendering it impossible”. It is the hope, that within the activities of the Memphis Annual Conference, we might prevent the abuse of children, youth and vulnerable persons in our care.

The initial and most fundamental step to prevention is the careful screening of the persons who will have access to children under 18 years of age and vulnerable persons. Although we recognize the integrity of an overwhelming number of the persons with discerned calling to ministries with children, youth and vulnerable persons, we realize that abuse still occurs in the church. Therefore, we believe that all persons should be properly screened and all screening documents kept on file.

The following steps should be followed in screening volunteer and paid applicants: [All the following will be required of adults who do ministry with children or youth at the conference level.]

A. **COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FORM** [Sample Forms Appendices A & B]

An application/information gathering form should be required on all persons seeking to be in ministry to children, youth and vulnerable persons and kept on file. A sample form is attached.

An application should include the following information:

- Name
- Address
- Phone Number
- Emergency Contact Person
- Gifts, Skills, Relevant Training
- Education
- 3 References (Not immediate family)
- Church Membership (Including how long a member)
- Pastor’s Name & Phone Number
- Why the Person wants to serve in this position
- When they are available

You should not ask for information about marital status or handicapping conditions as stated in Federal/State discrimination guidelines. We should also be sensitive to age and sex discrimination guidelines; however, adequate information may be requested to insure compliance with this policy’s minimum standards.

B. **CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANTS** [Sample Form Appendix C]

We recommend an interview be conducted with all applicants and offer the following tips to aide the interview process.

1. Prepare a list of questions. In doing so, read the application and note areas for exploration.
2. It aids the interview process if specific questions are used so that the questions are standard for all applicants - see attached sample questions. [Appendix C]
3. Be aware of red flags. These “flags” are indicators of issues which must be explored further in order for you to be assured that all information is collected concerning a prospective employee/volunteer. Some of these “flags” might include:
 - a. **Many addresses over a short period of time.**

This could indicate that a person is trying to be anonymous. But it could also indicate that they were a college student who moved a lot to keep rent low.

b. **Wants to work with only one age group.**

If someone would like to work with only one specific age group, it could indicate that person has targeted that age group for molestation. Or, it could mean that is the age group for which they are trained and that experience has shown they

do not work well with other ages. Also be aware of young adults who seem overly committed to one age group. For example, someone who simultaneously leads a scout troop, coaches little league, serves as a Big Brother and now wants to teach Sunday School may be neglecting their own age appropriate peer relationships in order to cultivate potential victims.

c. Does not want/need/like close supervision.

The interview may indicate that the person does not like to be closely supervised. This might raise questions about motivation for applying for this work.

4. The interviewer needs to be able to explore issues as they arise during the interview and depart from the set of prepared questions to do so.
5. Institutions, agencies and day care programs are encouraged to include education on child abuse issues. Orientation, on-site certification, and personal supervisory experience of an applicant may substitute for an interview if adequate documentation is in the applicants' file.

C. DISCLOSURE [Sample Form Appendix D]

The Memphis Annual Conference requires all persons having access to children, youth, vulnerable persons and developmentally disabled persons to complete a disclosure form and keep it on file. A proper form is attached and should not be amended.

D. REFERENCE CHECKS [Sample Form Appendix E]

It is recommended that a minimum of three references be contacted on all applicants having access to children, youth and vulnerable adults. One of the references must be the applicant's pastor (clergy person's District Superintendent) and the other two must be non-relatives. A recommended reference form is attached. Suggestion: Have applicant give reference forms to references with the churches address on it to mail back directly.

E. BACKGROUND CHECKS [Appendices F-I]

We recommend that each local church check with their insurance company to see what their requirements are in this area.

1. All volunteers or paid workers with children and youth should submit to:

- a. Social Security number verification – To determine all present and past places of residence.
- b. Criminal Convictions Check – All counties of residence are individually checked at the courthouse level or at the state level where applicable.
- c. Motor Vehicle Records – To determine whether your church insurance would cover this person's driving record, according to their standards.
- d. National Criminal Database Search – To be used in conjunction with the Criminal Convictions Check, this search "throws a net" out to check for any conviction that might have occurred in counties or states of non-residence, i.e., while on vacation or just across the state line.

2. It is recommended that all background checks be valid up to one Annual Conference quadrennium or four years.

- a. All background checks must be resubmitted beginning January 1st of the calendar year following the start of a new quadrennium or every four years.
- b. The first check shall go back to the 18th birthday.
- c. Documentation from screening checks (e.g., interviews, written information, personal contacts, references and background checks, etc.) may be kept on file indefinitely.

- 3. Possible Screening Agencies to use to do background checks:** (some companies/organizations have their own release form that must be filled out)
- a. Datafacts – Memphis, TN, 901-685-7599, 1-800-264-4110 or www.datafacts.com [Release Authorization Form, Appendix F]
 - i. Tell Ann Easton you are with a United Methodist Church.
 - ii. Datafacts staff are qualified, thorough and very personable and prompt.
 - iii. Quoted group rates, as of March 2004 (prices may change)
 - Social Security Number Trace = \$4
 - Criminal Conviction Check
 - a. by county
 - Shelby = \$8
 - other Tennessee counties = \$13
 - Kentucky counties = \$13
 - counties in other states where statewide search is not available = \$13
 - b. by state (where available)
 - AK, AL, AR, Co, CT, GA, HI, IA, NC, NM, OR, RI, VA, WA, WI = \$15
 - IN & SD = \$25
 - FL = \$33
 - NY = \$59
 - Motor Vehicle Records
 - KY = \$12
 - TN = \$10
 - National Criminal Database Search (NCDS) = \$9
Not to be done in place of Criminal Convictions Check
 - b. Volunteer Select – 800-962-2091 or www.volunteerselect.com
 - c. Kentucky State or Local Police
 - d. Tennessee Bureau of Investigation
- 4. Volunteers and staff (excluding clergy – for clergy see #6)**
 - a. The screening agency shall mail a report to the pastor.
 - b. The report shall be reviewed by the pastor and a designated person such as the Pastor Parish Relations Committee Chair or a staff person.
 - c. See #7 on page 14 if the report is unfavorable.
- 5. If a volunteer worker or paid worker (including clergy) has already submitted to a background check** because of other volunteerism or employment that requires screening (as outlined in #1), and the background check is within the last four years, such background check may be submitted to present inquiring organization. And a new background check will need to be conducted BUT will only need to be the standard check of the past seven years in order to show diligence. If prior check is not back to age 18 in all 4 areas, and is not readily accessible, you must conduct the check in full.
 - a. **Release Form for Background Check Transfer** [See Appendix G]
 1. Signed by the employee giving the employer/volunteer organization permission to share the background check
 2. Signed by the employer/volunteer organization verifying the background check and stating that the copies exactly match the originals on file with the employer or organization and that neither the copies nor the originals have been altered in any way.
 3. Copies of the original background checks then need to be sent to present employer/volunteer organization.

4. The date of the background check must fall within the time frame of the current quadrennium or the last four years.

**6. CONCERNING ALL CLERGY (ELDERS, DEACONS, PROBATIONERS & LOCAL)
[THIS IS THE ONLY PART OF THIS POLICY THAT IS MANDATORY.]**

- a. With each new appointment or every four years, which ever comes first, all clergy shall have background checks conducted as outlined below.
- b. All clergy under local church appointment:
 - i. A letter shall be sent by the District Superintendent requiring the clergy person to have the background check done.
 - ii. The screening agency who conducts the background checks shall mail a report to the District Superintendent only.
 - iii. This report will be kept in the clergy's personnel file.
 - iv. See #5 above, if present or past employer has required a background check in the past.
 - v. Local congregations are encouraged to pay for this background check.
- c. All clergy in extension ministries:
 - i. A letter shall be sent by the District Superintendent requiring the clergy person to have the background check done.
 - ii. The results shall be sent to the district office to be placed in the clergy's personnel file.
 - iii. See #5 above, if present or past employer has required a background check.
 - iv. Present employer is encouraged to pay for this background check.
- d. All retired clergy "in service" or volunteering in local churches:
 - i. A letter shall be sent by the District Superintendent requiring the clergy person to have the background check done.
 - ii. The results shall be sent to the district office to be placed in the clergy's personnel file.
 - iii. See #5 above, if present or past employer has required a background check.
 - iv. Local congregations are encouraged to pay for this background check.
- e. Retired clergy not "in service" or not volunteering in local churches:
 - i. You are exempt from this requirement but only until or if you go "in service" or begin volunteering in a local church.
- f. District Superintendents are encouraged to create a budget line item to help local churches who are unable to pay for all of or part of their pastor's background check.

7. Procedure in case of an unfavorable report

- a. Volunteers or Staff (other than clergy)
 - i. The person shall be notified with a "Notice of Unfavorable Report" form. [See Appendix H]
 - ii. The Pastor and Pastor Parish Chairperson shall meet with the person to discuss the report.
 - iii. Review Process may consider the following factors:
 1. The nature and seriousness of the crime
 2. The relationship of the crime to the purpose of the congregation
 3. The age of the person at the time of the commission of the crime
 4. The time elapsed since the person's crime
 - iv. Any charge that deals with sexual abuse or child abuse shall prevent the person from working with children and/or youth.
 - v. Action taken should be placed in person's file.
- b. Clergy Persons
 - i. The District Superintendent shall send a "Notice of Unfavorable Report" form

to the clergy person. [See Appendix H]

- ii. The District Superintendent and clergy shall meet to review the report.
- iii. The District Superintendent shall follow Disciplinary guidelines in handling the report.
- iv. A letter shall be placed in the clergy's personnel file reporting the action taken.

8. Keeping the files...

- a. There shall be two persons designated to process all applications, related documents and background checks.
- b. All references (solicited or unsolicited), disclosure statements and all background checks shall be kept confidential and indefinitely.
- c. All files shall be kept under "double lock" – in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.

F. FEDERAL AND STATE LAW

The requirements of any and all Federal laws or State laws in which a church or church agency is located affecting or relating to employment or child abuse must be complied with, and in any case where there is a conflict between such laws and the procedure outlined in this document, said laws shall prevail and the procedure outlined in the document shall be modified to the extent necessary to eliminate such conflict. Such exceptions to this policy shall apply only to the affected Agency and only to the related provision.

V. IMPLEMENTATION: PREVENTION POLICY CHECKLIST

The key to implementing a Child Protection Policy in your local church is communication with the congregation regarding (1) the need for a policy, (2) to whom it applies, and (3) how you plan to implement it.

It is recommended that the policy be created by a "Board" nominated by the Pastor Parish Relations Committee and/or the Administrative Council. We further recommend that the process for adoption be completed prior to Annual Conference, 2005 and implemented by December 21, 2005.

Here is a suggested process:

1. Create an Ongoing "Prevention Policy Board"

- A. Possible Members
 - 1. Pastor
 - 2. Pastor Parish Relations Committee Member
 - 3. Trustees Member
 - 4. Day Care Director
 - 5. Social Worker/School Counselor
 - 6. Representatives from groups that engage in ministry with children and youth
 - 7. Lay Leader
 - 8. Lawyer
- B. See "Prevention Policy Board Duties" for specifics, Section VI

2. Develop a Policy

- A. Implement an organizational policy for the protection of children and youth. At a minimum, the policy should include a brief theological statement, definition of child abuse, a strong statement that child abuse will not be tolerated, standards to be followed, a commitment to investigate any and all allegations of abuse, and a place for alleged incidents of abuse to be reported. Also, be sure to check conference policies and procedures, state laws and your insurance requirements.

3. Educate Your Congregation

- A. Send a letter to the congregation stating that the policy has been adopted by the

- 1998 and 2004 Memphis Annual Conference, and that the members will be hearing more about it in the near future. Explain in the letter, the need for the policy, to whom it will apply and how it will be implemented.
- B. Have the PPRC Chairperson write newsletter articles and speak to it from the pulpit.
 - C. Post the synopsis of the policy statement all over the church: in classrooms, bathrooms, etc. [Appendix L]
- 4. Screen all Staff and Volunteers**
- A. Implement a process for recruiting, screening and “hiring” workers (paid staff and volunteers) who will work with children and youth. A thorough screening process for staff (including clergy) and volunteers will:
 - deter persons who engage in predatory behavior from applying for a position,
 - identify possible predators,
 - show the church’s commitment to protecting children and youth.
 Again, check conference policies and procedures. Know your state laws and insurance requirements on background checks and screening procedures.
 - B. Always check prior employment and references. The screening process should include an application with information on previous employers, references and church affiliation. Make sure each source is contacted and information on each contact is in the staff/volunteer “personnel” files.
 - C. Background checks should be conducted on: (remember to check your insurance requirements)
 - i. Social Security number trace
 - ii. Criminal Convictions Check by County (or state, where applicable)
 - iii. Motor Vehicle Records
 - iv. National Criminal Database Search
 - D. Prior to beginning the screening processes, have a question and answer time, led perhaps by someone in the church such as Human Resources or Child Protective Services or Day Care Director.
 - E. Provide time after an educational event for new people to receive their screening packets and ask questions about filling out the applications.
- 5. Formally Train Your Volunteers and Staff**
- A. All workers (staff and volunteers) should be required to attend training annually on the church’s policy(s), procedures and expectations for working with children and youth (e.g., hand washing, two adult rule, four year older rule, sign in and sign out sheets, what to do if an accident occurs, reporting an alleged incident of child abuse, information on state child abuse laws, and the like).
 - B. Either send or provide training for all adult volunteers and staff who are working with children and youth. As a part of implementing the process insure that all who have been working with children and youth participate.
- 6. Institute Standards**
- A. **Criteria**
 - i. Minimum Age
 - ii. 6 Month Rule
 - iii. Screening Procedures
 - iv. Policy Instruction
 - B. **Responsibilities**
 - i. Two Adult Rule
 - ii. Adult/Child Ratio
 - iii. Rooming
 - iv. Transportation
 - v. Mentoring
 - vi. Counseling

- vii. Interpersonal Boundaries
 - viii. Visiting at Youth and Children's Workers Home
 - ix. Discipline
 - x. Open Door Policy
- 7. Other Issues to Think About**
- A. Make the physical setting safe and conduct periodic safety inspections.**
For example:
 - i. All classroom doors should have windows or a half door, if an office has no window in the door, the door should remain open during counseling sessions or private meetings.
 - ii. The bathrooms should not be isolated or far removed from classroom/play areas.
 - iii. Consider using hall monitors.
 - iv. Sign in/out procedures can be helpful, especially for younger children (age 10 and younger).
 - v. All other aspects of safety should be considered as well to minimize the risk of serious injury when accidents occur.
 - B. Communicate regularly with parents.**
 - i. Provide advance notice and full information/disclosure about event and activities, with written permission forms and information on who will be supervising and working with the children and youth.
 - ii. Give information to families about the church's policy and procedures for preventing child abuse.
 - iii. Encourage parents to communicate with someone in authority about any concerns, fears or worries about their children and/or a volunteer or staff person.
 - iv. Know the church's families.
 - v. Be prepared for how to handle sensitive and confidential matters with families and concerned church members.
 - C. Maintain adequate liability insurance coverage.**
 - i. The coverage must apply to all the different activities of the church, at and away from church premises.
 - ii. The church should work with a knowledgeable insurance agent who knows the needs of a church.
 - iii. Remember, too, that the least expensive insurance may have significant gaps in coverage.
 - iv. The church should understand what coverage they have for sexual misconduct.
 - D. Be prepared for the worst at all times.**
 - i. "This is our church; it won't happen here" is a naïve viewpoint that can create an environment and opportunities for accidents and abuse to happen while prevention steps are crucial, also be prepared for the worst, and never make assumptions about what might or might not happen in a church.
 - ii. This also means being prepared with a plan for responding immediately to allegations of abuse, including state reporting obligations.
 - E. Always remember that this is a Church!**
 - i. The Church is a sanctuary, and churches make a commitment to protect children each and every time a child is baptized.
 - ii. Churches should be role models in the community for the time and attention given to the care of children and youth.
 - F. Keeping the records safe and secure is of paramount importance in this process.**
 - i. Limit the number of persons who know the outcomes of the background and

criminal checks to the appointed clergy person, the Pastor Parish Relations Committee chairperson, and perhaps one other designee.

- ii. Copies of the applications and the actual reports should be “double locked” - locked file cabinet in a locked office.

G. No Exceptions!

- i. No one is exempt from the screening, even the woman who has been working with children for sixty (60) years.
- ii. The key to explaining this need is the reality that the procedure is designed to protect not just the children, but also the adults from false accusations.
- iii. Another key to explaining this need is that if all current staff and volunteers are properly screened then new staff and volunteers more readily understand the need.

VI. PREVENTION POLICY BOARD DUTIES

We recommend this policy be implemented by either the Pastor Parish Relation Committee or an ongoing “Board” nominated by the Pastor Parish Relations Committee and/or the Administrative Council. Listed below are the duties:

- A. The Board should meet at least twice per calendar year.
- B. The Board should report directly to the Administrative Council.
- C. Education:
 - 1. Formally educate all volunteers and employees annually.
 - a. This might mean that multiple training sessions will need to occur in order to reach all persons, especially seasonal volunteers/staff (sport coaches, Vacation Bible School teachers, new staff, etc.)
 - b. See “Educational Component” for two (2) years of training programs. (Section VIII)
 - c. Suggested persons to teach training sessions:
 - i. Call the Department of Children Services and ask for a Social Worker or Counselor.
 - ii. Look within your congregation for a counselor, principal, social worker, etc.
 - 2. Educate all children and youth.
 - i. See “Educational Component for “Children” and for “Youth” (Section VIII)
 - 3. Informally educate your congregation annually about the contents of the policy and why it is necessary.
 - a. Use the church newsletter, web-site, send an annual letter, etc.
 - b. When new members join the church (in their orientation session).
 - c. During Child Abuse Prevention Month (in April each year).
 - d. In a children and youth brochure or resource packet made available to Sunday school, choir, weekday school, fellowship groups, parents, youth group, etc.
- D. Ensure compliance with the policy.
- E. Assist Pastor in filling out the annual Charge Conference Report. [Appendix M]
- F. Be available to answer questions about the policy.
- G. Grant any exceptions to the policy, in appropriate circumstances.
- H. Review and renew the policy annually or as needed.
- I. Evaluate Board functions.
- J. Assist, with investigations, when called upon.
- K. Other duties, as needed.
- L. Stay up to date with insurance.
 - 1. Check your church’s liability coverage.
 - 2. Make sure all employees and volunteers are protected in the coverage.
 - 3. Work with your insurance agent and attorney to review coverage.

- i. Keep a detailed folder of all efforts your church makes in the area of reducing the risk of child abuse.
4. Does your insurance require background checks, yearly training, etc.?
- M. Know the child intervention resources in your area and make that information available to your church.
 1. Kentucky Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-752-6200
 2. Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline – is designated by county so call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453 (24 hours a day) and ask for your county's number
 3. Department of Human/Children Services in your county
 4. Area Child Protective Services
 5. National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse 1-312-663-3520
 6. National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800 4-A-CHILD
 7. Parents Anonymous 1-800-421-0353
 8. Sex Offender Registry (www.ticic.state.tn.us)

VII. REPORTING ABUSE/ALLEGED ABUSE

Seeing abuse, and hearing the truth of abuse, is most difficult at best. Abuse is a highly emotional issue that has at its core the violation of trust and the common understandings of healthy, whole, loving relationships. People most often want to believe the best of others, and therefore, they have difficulty believing that an acquaintance or friend is capable of abuse. With emotions stirred by this volatile issue, our vision is often clouded and the voices unheard.

All reports of child abuse must be taken seriously and handled in ways that care for the well being of both the abused and the accused. All cases of suspected abuse must be reported to the Department of Children's and Human Services in Tennessee and to the Cabinet for Families and Children in Kentucky. Initial reports should be made to county/local branch of these departments. In Kentucky, you may dial the child protection hotline at 1-800-752-6200. For Tennessee, check listings in each county by calling the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453.

NOTE: If in doubt, these departments would prefer that a call be made to discuss what has been witnessed or suspected. These agencies have trained and responsible personnel who can make the appropriate determination about whether something is suspect. Reports must meet statutory definitions of abuse before they will be pursued. Efforts of individuals to investigate before calling the appropriate state agency are discouraged. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect can result in criminal charges.

A. A Written Report [Sample Form Appendix K]

A written report of basic information is necessary to ensure on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved in a suspected case of abuse. Any report of child abuse or suspected child abuse should be met with a written record of the information.

Basic information shall include:

- Names, ages, addresses, telephone numbers of both the abused and the accused.
- Nature of the abuse, dates (if possible), and factual details that brought the report into being.
- The name of the person making the report, date information was received, their signature and any other factual information.

Reports shall be brief and void of speculation, unsupported opinion, and information not relative to the situation. These reports need to be filed in a secure place to ensure the confidentiality of the person who has made the disclosure.

All reports shall be made in ink or typed.

B. To Whom Shall the Report Be Filed

The report should be communicated and filed with the Director of the Program or Pastor, Institution or Conference Event where the suspected abuse took place. In the event that the director and/or ordained minister is the alleged perpetrator, the report must be made to the District Superintendent and subsequent handling should follow the procedures outlined in the "Professional Sexual Misconduct Policy". In every case, information should be well documented and safely secured by the person making the report, as well as, those receiving it.

3/2004