

College Avenue
United Church of Christ

Child & Youth Supervision Policy
2006 Revision

Document formerly called "Child, Youth & Adult Safety Policy" – June 8, 1999

Introduction

Jesus spent his ministry in the company of the most vulnerable in his society—people who were sick, blind, and lame; people who were not welcome in respectable circles; and women and children. He taught that in welcoming those with little human power, we experience the power of God—a fullness of life, love, joy, and peace—all embodied in Jesus himself. Taking a little child in his arms, Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” Welcoming children involves keeping them safe.

Children and their parent(s)/guardian(s) place their trust in us to provide a safe, loving environment. The following policies and procedures are for screening and supervising church staff whether paid or volunteer. We believe these policies will enhance our ability to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually nurturing, and healthy environment for our children and youth.

Worker Selection

This policy applies to all paid employees and/or volunteers who are to work with or supervise infants, children and youth. Adherence to these qualifying and screening procedures will ensure fairness and consistency in protecting our children and the employees/volunteers in our church community.

All information obtained from this selection process will be held in personnel files in the church office. The files will be maintained by the Administrative Assistant. The minister and the team leaders of the Human Resources Committee and the Spiritual Formation Team will also have access to the files, if necessary, for their programs.

A regular worker is defined as anyone who is employed by the church or is responsible for the care and instruction of infants, children, and youth for more than 10 hours per year. All paid employees are considered regular workers regardless of number of hours worked, job description, or title.

The following list contains job titles of paid employees considered regular workers under this policy.

- Minister(s)
- Ministerial Intern
- Christian Education Teachers
- Nursery Care Providers
- Administrative Assistant
- Bookkeeper
- Director of Music
- Organist/Pianist
- Building & Grounds Supervisor
- Custodial Assistants
- Paid Child Care Workers

In addition to the job titles listed above, the following titles fall into the regular worker category, regardless of the number of hours worked per year due to the nature of their responsibilities.

- Anyone providing transportation for infants, children, or youth for a church activity
- Youth leaders
- Volunteers supervising minors at an event or overnight trip

Occasional workers are defined as those who volunteer less than 10 hours per year. Occasional workers must work with screened and approved regular workers at all times. These occasional workers include, but are not limited to, the following events:

- Sunday Adventure
- Homecoming Activities
- Festival of Gifts
- Halloween Party
- Easter Festivities

Qualifications

Paid employees and regular workers will be screened using the following guidelines. Each applicant must:

- be in agreement with the College Avenue United Church of Christ Covenant, the UCC Statement of Faith, the Radical Hospitality Covenant, the Safe Conduct Covenant and the Communication Covenant.
- have a record free from child abuse, molestation, or any sexual offense as shown by clearance from California Department of Justice Live Scan results.
- be 18 years old, or at least four years older than the age group with which he or she is working (must be 21 years or older to provide transportation with valid California driver's license and proof of insurance).

Anyone volunteering to work with infants, children, and youth, including regular workers, and those who volunteer less than 10 hours a year, must:

- be a member of the church for at least six months.
- or, if not a member, upon the approval of The minister be active in the church for at least six months.

Application Process

All individuals seeking employment or wishing to volunteer their time or talent to serve children and youth of our church as a regular worker must:

- complete and submit an Application and Disclosure Form with three required personal references
- complete a Live Scan to be submitted to the California Department of Justice
- sign and submit a Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law form.
- sign and submit an agreement to church covenants form.

It is the responsibility of The minister and Human Resource Committee to follow the above mentioned screening procedures when selecting paid workers. It is the responsibility of the Spiritual Formation Team to distribute and process the application packets to workers interested in helping with infant, children, and youth church programs.

Upon completion of all information in the packet, the applicant is to return it to the church office.

Transparent Communication regarding drug or alcohol abuse, or other types of convictions, is expected from applicants. Applicants with these types of issues who still wish to work at the church must make an appointment with The minister prior to submitting an application to develop an action plan.

Falsification of information, or a Department of Justice Report returned with convictions, will result in denial of the application for working with children and youth.

There are many opportunities to serve in our church that do not require a Department of Justice clearance.

Standards for Supervision

Staffing for all groups of children and youth shall be arranged so that each is supervised by a minimum of two adults, at least one adult must be a regular worker or paid employee that has completed the required application process, including clearance on the State Department of Justice Live Scan screen.

The standard of two adults may be waived in a classroom setting for grades K-12 only if another adult is visible and readily available. At least two adults should attend each church sponsored event outside the church and at times when children and youth are the only group in the church building.

Recommended teacher-to-student ratios:

- Infant and Toddlers 1:3-4
- Preschool children 1:4-6
- Grades K-4 1:4-6
- Grades 5-8 1:5-7
- Grades 9-12 1:6-8

Parent/Guardian Permission

Parent/guardian permission is required for involvement in church-sponsored activities. An enrollment form, medical release and permission slip must be completed each year for ongoing programs. Separate field trip permission slips are required for activities away from church grounds and when church-sponsored transportation is needed. This guarantees that parents are aware of the activity and provides a means of communicating special details/requirements.

Open Door Policy

All workers are to exercise a policy which allows parent(s)/guardian(s) of children, ministers, program administrators/volunteers, and other members of the church the right to visit and observe all programs at any time unannounced.

Christian Education Teacher and Group Activity Leader Responsibility

Christian leaders responsible for children follow the example of Jesus himself, who opened his arms to welcome children and to bless them. These gestures convey the dignity and worth of the most

vulnerable among us—dignity and worth that call us to protect children and ensure they are treated as persons and never as objects of exploitation or abuse. Our care for children entails the following responsibilities for leaders.

It is the Christian Education Teacher and/or the group activity leader's responsibility to:

- secure adequate adult supervision for all activities/events
- follow interaction and discipline guidelines
- distribute and secure all participant's enrollment forms
- distribute and secure additional field excursion forms as necessary
- keep written attendance record
- provide a program description, evaluation and recommendations

Training

All workers must view the material on Preventing & Reporting Child Abuse. The Spiritual Formation Team will provide annual and ongoing training and support to workers in order to maintain consistency, integrity and success of activities.

Bathroom Policy

Workers shall accompany a child to the restroom, check to make sure no one else is there, leave the restroom, wait outside for the child to exit, then accompany the child back to activity.

Confidentiality

Workers shall maintain confidentiality concerning children, youth and families in the church program. Discussing students needs amongst other adults within the church's children or youth program in order to help facilitate learning and spiritual development may be necessary. However, workers shall refrain from the following:

- Sharing personal information
- Using names or identifying features
- Sharing photographs, video, or audio
- Using explicit details while speaking or writing
- Posting or sharing information or photos on the Internet
- Giving information to the press

Safety Grievance Procedure

This provides an opportunity for a child or parent/guardian of a child to express his/her grievance. It enables children, youth and their families to be heard and action taken if deemed appropriate. Complaints should be initially directed to the Christian Education Teacher/Activity Leader, unless he/she is identified in the complaint. In the event that the Teacher/Leader is involved in the complaint, The minister should be contacted. Depending on the severity of the complaint, The minister may wish to convene the Sanctuary Committee (see Safe Conduct Covenant).

- Complaints shall be investigated with an open mind

- Complainant shall be informed of investigation
- Actions shall be documented in writing
- Incidents shall be handled confidentially and sensitively

Disciplinary Policy

Any worker who violates any guideline will be spoken to by The minister. If the worker persists in violating guidelines or refuses counseling, action will be taken by the Church Council.

Any worker who is charged with, or civilly sued for a sexual offense, a violent crime, or any crime involving a minor will be asked to leave his/her position until the matter is resolved (see Safe Conduct Covenant). If the worker is convicted, pleads guilty, has a judgment made against him/her, has a civil case settled, the worker will no longer be eligible to serve in a position involving the care and supervision of minors.

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred that would not warrant reporting to authorities, the worker involved may be warned of the questionable conduct and monitored more closely to assure compliance with such warning. Paid workers will be terminated and volunteers will not be allowed to serve for disregarding such warnings.

Child Abuse/Neglect Policy

In the event of child abuse or neglect occurring within our church community, workers shall follow California Penal Code. Additionally, the church's response regarding these instances shall be to:

- care for the safety of the child or other victim
- support the families involved
- offer open dialogue and support to members of the church community

Definition of Child Abuse

According to the California Penal Code, child abuse is "a physical injury which is inflicted by other than accidental means on a child by another person." It also includes emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or abuse in out-of-home care. Child abuse and neglect occurs when a child's physical health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by the acts or omissions of his/her parent/guardian(s) or caretaker(s).

In this definition, "harm" refers to infliction of physical pain, resulting in injury, disfigurement or impairment of any bodily organ or death. "Neglect" or "harm through omission" refers to a failure to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, supervision or health care, providing the parent or guardian is financially able to do so.

Mandated Reporters

By California State law, individuals mandated to report suspected child abuse include ministers, teachers and directors of religious instruction, lay and professional counselors, administrators of day or overnight camps, and school or child care facility staff. Though volunteers are not mandated

reporters, they are morally mandated by the faith to protect children and therefore to report abuse to the secular authorities. Church employees and volunteers working with youth shall, prior to commencing their assignment, sign a statement signifying their knowledge of the reporting requirements and their willingness to comply with them.

Reporting Policy and Procedure

Any paid or volunteer worker who has reasonable suspicion to believe that a child or youth has suffered abuse or neglect must report such incident immediately to The minister. It is important that church workers be familiar with the procedure outlined below for reporting known, or reasonably suspected, incidents of child abuse.

- Inform The minister immediately. Any suspicion or knowledge of abuse must be kept completely confidential.
- The minister, or other mandated reporter, shall contact emergency authorities if the situation warrants immediate action.
- Police: 911.
- Child Protective Services (CPS) 24-hour phone: 558-3665 or 1-800-558-3665.
- The minister, or other mandated reporter, shall provide a written report within 36 hours of receiving the information concerning the incident.
- The minister shall contact the moderator(s) to discuss convening the Sanctuary Committee (see Safe Conduct Covenant).
- The alleged offender whether paid or volunteer will be suspended from all activities with children and youth until the complaint is resolved.

I have read and understand the above Child and Youth Supervision Policy and agree to abide by these policies and procedures.

Signature

Date

Printed Name