

Community United Methodist Church Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures

Reviewed and revised September 2010

I. Purpose

1. To help Community United Methodist Church provide a caring and secure environment for children and youth in all phases of church life.
2. To help Community United Methodist Church reduce its legal risk and liability exposure.

II. Biblical Foundation

Community United Methodist Church seeks to express God's love of children and to provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse in any form to our children and youth and to be in ministry to families where abuse may occur. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

Jesus teaches us explicitly that children have the right and the keys to the Kingdom of God. He demonstrated this through blessing and touch. Our goal in response to this Biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure and loving place where children and youth may grow, and place where caregivers, teachers and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

Matthew 19:13-15 Luke 18:15-17

III. Virginia's Child Abuse Law

Section 63.1-248.3, Virginia Revised Code, states that "Any person licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts, any hospital resident or intern, any person employed in the nursing profession, any persons employed as a social worker, any probation officer, any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten or nursery school, any person providing full-time or part-time child care for pay on a regular planned basis...and any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children who has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected **shall** report the matter to his or her supervisor immediately and then to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred, or to the Department of Social Services' toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline."

IV. Types of Child Abuse

A. Definition

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, care giver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental, and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

B. Types of Abuse.

1. Physical Abuse

A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation; bone fracture; brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma; burns, scalding; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions; internal injuries, poisoning; sprains, dislocations; gunshot, stabbing wounds.

2. Physical Neglect

The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the code of Virginia, which is committed or allowed to be committed, upon a child by his/her parent or other persons responsible for the child's care. Examples of such abuse are: sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy and other sexual abuse.

4. Medical Neglect

Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental or dental care for a condition, which if untreated could result in illness or developmental delays.

5. Failure to Thrive

A syndrome of infancy or early childhood, which is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

6. Mental Abuse/Neglect

A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker, which result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

7. Educational Neglect

The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

8. Bizarre Discipline

Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.

V. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Community UMC, several abuse prevention measures will be utilized. These measures include screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse or neglect convictions.

1. CUMC Volunteer Rule

Community UMC will not use anyone as a volunteer worker for children or youth in the church unless he or she has been active in the church for at least 90 days and has been interviewed by the Pastors, Youth Minister or Program Director of the church.

2. Staff Screening

Before beginning service, each employed or volunteer children's teacher, child care worker, or youth worker will be asked to sign a statement indicating that he/she has never been convicted of child abuse or neglect conviction. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or founded disposition of child abuse or neglect, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement, will not be permitted to work with children. In addition, applicants for paid staff positions will undergo a criminal record check with the Virginia State Police, and a child abuse/neglect record check with the Virginia Department of Social Services.

3. Staff Training

Before beginning service, all paid and volunteer leaders, child care workers, children and youth Sunday School teachers and youth workers will be required to read the church's child protection policy and sign a form indicating that they have read and that they understand the policy and agree to abide by it. Anyone failing to do so will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed. Leaders will be required to attend a training session offered by the church annually on child protection. Other workers with children and youth will be required to attend such training sessions.

Leaders of community groups of children or youth who use the church facility will be required to read the policy and sign the acknowledgment form. Church facilities will not be available to groups whose leaders refuse to read and sign the policy.

4. Two Adult Rule

For any church sponsored activity or any activity involving the use of the church building, teachers and assistants will be assigned in teams of two or more adults. Church childcare for children up to age seven (7) shall include at least one adult leader per group of children and one additional adult or youth assistant, at least age 16. For Sunday school and Vacation Bible School, groups of children, third grade and younger may have a team of one adult and one assistant age 13 and over. Fourth and fifth grade supervision of one adult and a youth 16years or older. Other church sponsored or community groups of children or youth who meet at the church will have two or more leaders present. If the group stays overnight at the church or, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises and plans to stay overnight somewhere else, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and one female, if the group is of mixed gender, and be at least 23 years of age.

Youth Fellowship workers For every eight youth present, there is to be one adult (age 23 and older) present. There are never to be fewer than two adults

(age 23 and older) present for any youth fellowship event. If the group is of mixed gender and staying overnight, the adults present should include at least one male and one female, age 23 and older.

Young adult volunteers under the age of 23 are invited to be present as mentors for the youth, but cannot serve as the responsible adult at any event.

If volunteers wish to be present to work with and serve as mentors for youth ministry, it is essential that they consistently act in a professional way. All youth ministry volunteers are instructed that it is against policy to date and/or have other inappropriate relationships with youth. All youth ministry volunteers are instructed that if they wish to serve in youth ministry, that they are to maintain additional and proper boundaries with the youth. Thus, no inappropriate communication and/or contact are to occur. This includes **inappropriate** physical contact, face-to-face conversation, phone use, texting, email, social networking, and social activities, and anything else deemed inappropriate on a case-by-case basis. Anyone in violation of this policy will be prohibited from any and all future youth ministry events.

All adult volunteers are required to attend volunteer training so that all involved in youth ministry will be able to work together to effectively foster discipleship and spiritual growth in our youth ministry program.

5. Open Classrooms

Classrooms or childcare rooms will not be locked and may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers.

6. Counseling Situations

For programs such as approved counseling/support groups, two adults must be present with a group of children,

7. Supervision

No child/youth will be in the building or on the church grounds unsupervised. It will be expected that all children/youth are attending the church for a specific program. Persons responsible for activities/classes will arrive early enough and remain long enough to insure that all children are properly supervised. For all classes/programs for children younger than 1st grade, a procedure will exist that clearly identifies the child with the child's parent or guardian.

A procedure is in place for signing in/out Nursery and Preschool classes (both Sunday morning and weekday/night). This procedure is in place for the protection of our children from unauthorized pickup and to allow a time of communication between parent and caregiver. The sign-in sheet will include mention of allergies, and the parent or guardian's location in the church. A cell phone number will be provided in for contact if needed. In addition, upon the child's first visit to the Nursery or Preschool classes, an information sheet must be completed by the parent/guardian.

8. Transportation

Youth will be transported to and from Youth Fellowship events by

parent/guardians, or may drive themselves if written permission is granted by a parent. During youth fellowship, youth may not leave without the express permission of a parent/guardian- if this policy is violated parent/guardian will be notified upon their departure.

Regarding youth trips- Youth will not be allowed to drive themselves or others.

Regarding youth workers- A minimum of two adults will be required in a personal vehicle to transport youth when using church supplied transportation; such as a rental van.

VI. Reporting Child Abuse

Should there be allegations of child abuse at Community United Methodist Church, these procedures will be followed:

1. Treat all allegation(s) of child abuse seriously.
2. Immediately notify the Senior Pastor, Assistant/Youth Pastor and the Director of Programs who will immediately begin documenting all procedures undertaken to handle the allegation(s).
 - a. If the allegation(s) involve the Senior Pastor, the Chairperson of the Staff-Parish Committee shall be notified immediately who shall direct the next steps taken by the church in responding to the allegation(s).
3. Immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services (800-552-7096) or the Virginia Beach Department of Social Services (437-3400) of the allegation(s).
4. Immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge.
5. Immediately contact church trustee chairperson.
6. Immediately notify the church's insurance company.
7. If the allegation involves a church staff member, it shall be handled by the Senior Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee, which shall take appropriate action. If the allegation involves a volunteer, it shall be handled by the Senior Pastor with the assistance, as deemed necessary, of the Director of Programs and any other individual(s) deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor, and appropriate action shall be taken. Unless authorized in the course of the investigation, do not confront the accused with the allegation. If the accused has been assigned duties within the life of the church, he or she must be relieved of duties involving youth or children until the investigation is concluded.
8. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation(s) is received or otherwise made known.
9. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until the investigation is complete and appropriate action has been taken.

VII. Policy Review

The Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures of Community United Methodist Church shall be reviewed annually by the church staff and approved by the church trustees.

-----Return To-----

Community United Methodist Church
1072 Old Kempsville Road
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23464

Please answer the following, sign, date, detach and return this portion to indicate you have read, understand and accept the Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures of Community United Methodist Church.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____

Email _____ Current Occupation _____

Churches you have regularly attended during the past five years: (include city/state)

Previous non-church work involving children and/or youth:

Previous church work involving children and/or youth:

Personal References (Not former employees or relatives):
Name _____ Phone _____
Name _____ Phone _____

I have read and understand the Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures of Community United Methodist Church. I agree to abide by those policies and procedures. I have no convictions for child abuse, or a disposition of child abuse or neglect. I authorize and release any references which I might provide to Community United Methodist Church to provide the Church any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children and/or youth.

Signature _____ Date of policy review _____

***** For office use only*****

Comments _____

Reviewed by: _____

