

**University UMC**  
**Abbreviated Safe Sanctuary Policy**  
(Updated April 2023)

## **Volunteers/Staff**

- **Age:** Volunteers/Staff must be at least 5 years older than the persons they are working to serve. If they are not 21 years of age, they may not serve in a role of authority, but as assistants. In Youth Ministry, they must be 2 years removed from UUMC Youth Group.
- **Sixth Month Guideline:** Volunteers/Staff must be a member of our church for at least six months before volunteering with minors and vulnerable adults. If this must be waived for a probationary period, it will likely be for UNC Wesley college students and those paid staff who do not come from the Methodist denomination.
- **Background Check:** Criminal background checks shall be made of all clergy, paid staff, and volunteers who have supervisory program responsibility to the extent permitted by law to determine current or historic child abuse or sexual misconduct, criminal records, violent or pedophilic behavior. Background Checks are good for 3 years.
  - Prior Convictions: Those convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect **may not** work in any church-sponsored activity for children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- **Two Adult Rule:** Two approved adults must be present at all times and these adults cannot be related or partnered. If they are, then a third adult must be present.
  - This applies to classroom activities, activities away from the church facility and when transporting children, youth and vulnerable adults.
  - When feasible, both male and female leaders are there, especially in a co-ed group.
- **Touch:** Physical touch can be appropriate to the age of the child, youth or vulnerable adult. Touching should be initiated by the child, youth, or vulnerable adult. If it is not, permission must be asked. It should be a response to the person's need for comforting, affection, or safety. It should **never** be based upon the volunteer/staff's needs.
  - Inappropriate Forms of Touch Include, but are not limited to: Children older than preschool sitting on laps of staff/volunteers. If they are preschool age or below, they must be sitting on a lap in the presence of at least one other adult and a group of children (in other words, lap-sitting alone in a room is inappropriate); Piggy back rides; Massages (if there is a massage circle, it is *only* appropriate for adults to join if there are at least 5 people and at least 2 other adults participating); Touching out of anger or disgust; Touching in any manner that may be construed as sexual; Touching private/intimate areas of the body and genital areas; Any physical touch causing harm
  - Appropriate Forms of Touch Include: A side hug. If the hug is from the front, it needs to be brief (less than 3 seconds); Holding hands while praying; Holding hands while walking if a young child or vulnerable adult needs help; A brief pat on the upper back or shoulder; Handshakes, high fives, or fist bumps
- **How to Report Disclosed, Suspected or Observed Abuse:**

- Immediately notify the staff person in charge
- See our full Safe Sanctuary Policy for a step-by-step response protocol

## LGBTQ Youth

Being inclusive yet protecting of all children and youth is difficult to navigate. It is a process that is constantly changing and evolving. Currently, there are a few important considerations, which University United Methodist Church will seek to uphold:

- Make no assumptions about a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Stay educated on proper use of terminology.
- Be intentional about creating and maintaining a safe environment and culture of awareness around derogatory language and bullying.

There is not a specific housing policy for transgender or gender non-conforming youth. It is vitally important for the staff ministry leader in charge to openly communicate with the individual youth about their needs. Some reasonable flexibility may be necessary to ensure comfortable accommodation that best suits everyone, and is at the discretion of the youth, family, and leaders.

## Chaperones for Overnight Events

- **Overnighters or Outings Away from Church Property:** Two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and female if the group is mixed gender. All minors on an overnight outing must have written consent & notarized medical release form.
- Chaperone responsibilities include the following and enforcing these rules:
  - There will be a 1:7 adult: child/youth ratio observed
  - If the trip isn't local (outside 25 miles) chaperones include parents of minors attending
  - For longer trips (150 miles or more) each vehicle must have 2 licensed chaperones
  - Minimum age for drivers is 21 unless defined through a rental company
  - At least one chaperone trained in CPR/First Aid is required.
  - Adults and students will be split by gender for overnight accommodations. We will work to make accommodations for transgender individuals or gender non-conforming individuals.
  - When large common sleeping areas are used, adults will remain in the immediate vicinity, sleeping near the exits.
  - Chaperone couples will not stay in the same bed/sleeping bag, even same sex couples who are sleeping in the same room
  - With the exception of a parent/child combination, a staff and youth or two (or more) youth will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag
  - It is not permitted for same-sex youth couples to sleep in the same cabin if there are more than one sleeping space designated for that gender
  - A youth and an adult or more than one youth should never be alone in a sleeping quarter while the rest of the group is outside
  - Youth should always be accompanied by another youth
  - No single youth is permitted to sleep in a room with an adult other than his/her parent

- Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited
- Appropriate attire is required for all activities, based on the nature of the trip

### Social Media & Direct Communication

- Adult Volunteers/Staff members may **not** request to “friend” or “follow” or accept a “friend” request from a person under the age of 18 without written permission of the child’s parent or legal guardian. This applies to all social media platforms **except** Snapchat as communicating with a minor through Snapchat is **not permitted at all**. This form denies permission for the use of social media platforms that do not retain records of photographs.
- Adult volunteers and staff members will **not** communicate with children under the age of 13 on any forms of social media. If they must communicate by email with a middle school youth, then they need to always carbon copy the parent or legal guardian.
- Communication between a minor and an adult on social media or texting should always be appropriate in nature to the point that when an objective third party reads texts or comments on photographs, etc. that he/she will easily discern an appropriate relationship between the two parties. These guidelines of communication must still be followed (if communication continues) even after volunteering is completed and/or after employment at University UMC ceases and will remain in place until the youth is 18 years of age.
- Photos published on sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for any persons under the age of 18. Parents who **do not** want their child’s picture published anywhere should notify both the relevant program director and communication specialist.

***Please sign, detach, and return to relevant Program Director***

*By signing my name below, I certify that I have read and understand the above information. Any questions concerning this Safe Sanctuary Policy have been discussed. My signature also certifies my agreement with this policy and I plan to adhere to it both while I am serving at University UMC Chapel Hill and at any point after I may no longer serve at University UMC until the youth I am in communication with has turned 18 years of age.*

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child/Youth Name (If applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

By Checking this box, I am requesting that or my child’s/youth’s photograph **not** be published on any published platform used by University UMC (including news articles, website, Facebook, Constant Contact emails, etc.) even though name and contact information is never included with a published photograph.