

Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures

I. OUR MANDATE

As Christians, no matter what the place of worship looks like, the people treasure it as a holy place, a sanctuary, where we are able to worship in safety and harmony. Our church must continue to be a place where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, and service, with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith.

The goal of these guidelines is threefold: first, to prevent abuse from happening to minors and vulnerable adults in our care; second, to prevent false allegations of abuse against individuals and the church; third, to enable staff and volunteers to recognize and report suspected abuse. There is no one thing that we can do to prevent abuse, therefore this policy is to help us provide the best results.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A **youth** is a person in sixth through twelfth Grade and under 18 years of age.
- A **child** is a person in fifth Grade and younger.
- **Minors** are people under the age of 18 years.
- **Regular** or **frequent volunteers** means they serve weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly.
- **Occasional volunteers** are those who serve as the need arises like at Vacation Bible Camp, the youth mission dinner, mission trips, or special events.
- **Vulnerable adults**: Adults 18 years or older with impairments developmentally, physically, emotionally, or mentally. Some examples may include ministries to the sick, hospice care, homeless, special needs, prison inmates, etc.
- **Workers** are paid and unpaid people.
- **The person in charge** is a staff or volunteer responsible for the oversight and adherence to the Safe Sanctuary policy within their ministry.

III. WORKERS: RECRUITING, SCREENING, & HIRING

- a. PVUMC will require every adult (18 years and older) who works with minors and vulnerable adults on a *regular* or *frequent* basis to complete the following:
 1. Application
 2. Interview
 3. **Two** reference checks from an unrelated adult-in-charge or member of PVUMC
 4. Criminal background check
 5. Safe Sanctuaries Training
 6. Covenant
 7. Fingerprint check (*paid workers only*)
- b. *Minors* volunteering (they can serve as classroom assistants) will be asked to complete the following:

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1. Application
2. **One** reference from an unrelated adult-in-charge or member of PVUMC
3. Safe Sanctuaries Training
- c. Adults who work directly with minors and/or vulnerable adults on an *occasional* basis will be required to complete an appropriate process similar to the regular workers but based on the type of service and judgment of the staff-in-charge. The National Sex Offender database is a minimum check, available at www.snopr.gov.
- d. Anyone convicted of child or sexual abuse will not be allowed to work with minors or vulnerable adults.
- e. **Six-month rule:** A regular/frequent volunteer adult should be a regular attendee of PVUMC for at least six months before being considered for serving with minors or vulnerable adults as a lead worker. Exceptions can be made by the approval of staff-in-charge, or clergy. Occasional volunteers will abide by the above requirements. See “c” above.
- f. Driver’s License checks will be the oversight of the Board of Trustees. All information gathered for a worker will be kept confidential and private.
- g. Safe Sanctuaries educational training will be offered as needed.
- h. PVUMC will strive to provide a job description for each area of service.
- i. Important forms:
 1. Application with References
 2. Background Check
 3. Safe Sanctuaries Covenant of Participation
 4. Driver’s License Check
 5. Job description
 6. Incident report

This process will be supervised by the staff person in charge for unpaid workers and by PSPRC and/or staff for paid workers. For unpaid workers, background checks will be done immediately and then repeated in odd numbered years. Background checks will include a National Criminal and National Sex Offender database check.

IV. POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Statement of Purpose

PVUMC understands that at the baptism or confirmation of young people we are not simply spectators but true participants. We are committed to leading our lives in ways that demonstrate the ways of Christ and Christian discipleship. Therefore, we are called to ensure that the church is a safe place without fear of injury or abuse. We are dedicated to providing a ministry that will protect the adult leaders from unfounded accusations, and provide a healthy community of faith for our children, youth, and vulnerable adults while being proactive in creating a safe environment for all participants.

The Church at Risk

Abuse can happen anywhere. It is a crime. PVUMC must be diligent to ensure that abuse will not be tolerated or ignored in the community of faith.

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Churches generally act as organizations with a high level of trust, many opportunities for close contact, and are no longer under the protection of “charitable immunity.” Harm done by abuse is too important to ignore. PVUMC is called to be a safe and holy place where all may have the opportunity to be strengthened and nurtured in their faith.

To prevent abuse, we must recognize signs of abuse and understand that the abusers are more often than not familiar adults who are trusted. When someone is abused in the church, many victims are created, including the minor, vulnerable adult, the family, the congregation, and the family of the abuser. PVUMC is called to minister to all ages and therefore will pursue measures necessary to create a safe environment.

Types of Abuse

1. **Physical Abuse:** a deliberate, non-accidental, and intentional act of bodily harm.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** an attitude or behavior which interferes with a person's mental health or social development.
3. **Neglect:** occurs when there is a failure to provide for a child or vulnerable adult's physical needs. This includes lack of supervision, inappropriate housing, inadequate provision of food, inappropriate clothing, abandonment, or denial of medical care.
4. **Sexual Abuse:** sexual contact between a minor and an adult, or nonconsensual contact between two youth or between two adults.
5. **Ritual Abuse:** physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a minor or vulnerable adult that are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for their welfare. The abuser may appeal to a higher authority or power to justify the abuse.

Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry

1. **Two-Adult rule for ages third grade and younger.** The two-adult rule requires at least two adults (preferably unrelated) to be present during any church-sponsored program or event involving children without their parents. If this cannot be accomplished, then a roaming adult can be used to check on the classes as the second adult. A last option is to assign a teenage helper (minimum four years older than the group) to assist as the second person.
2. **Group of three rule for minors, fourth grade and older:** A minor should not be alone with another unrelated adult or minor at any time for any reason while they are in the care of a PVUMC ministry event without the parents' or legal guardians' presence. Everything should be done in groups of at least three: two adults and one minor or two minors and one adult. The goal is to have at least two unrelated adults with the minors at all times.
3. **Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries:** Ministry is relational. Adult workers need to be good examples in regards to modeling healthy relationships, positive behavior, appropriate attire, use of language, encouragement, and affection.
4. **Cyber Safety:** Written and electronic communications between adults and children and youth should be as open and public as possible. Volunteers and staff should be aware of their own “web presence.” Non-public, electronic communication (texts, direct messages, social media, etc) between adults and minors must be documented and saved. When using video chat/conferencing adhere to the rule of three. If this interaction is 1:1, the adult needs to be in a public space where other adults can see the screen, and whenever possible a parent/caregiver is notified beforehand that this will take place.

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5. **First Aid/CPR Training:** Childcare employees will be required to have first aid and CPR training up-to-date. PVUMC will encourage first aid/CPR training for all staff and church workers who serve with minors or vulnerable adults as a basic step to increase safety. Incident report forms are provided for reporting any accidents to assure proper communication to parents/guardians and PVUMC.
6. **Training & Orientation for Workers:** Those working with minors and vulnerable adults will be required to attend one class for Safe Sanctuaries training and information. Afterwards, workers will be invited to attend again anytime but especially as information changes.
7. **The” Four-Years-Older” Rule:** Minors and young adult leaders, 22 years old and younger, should be at least four years older than the oldest participant at the event. This rule helps sustain appropriate boundaries for those in their care.
8. **No Leaders under the Age of Eighteen:** An adult will always be assigned as the leader and the minors assigned as helpers.
9. **Windows in All Classroom & Counseling Sessions:** Keep all blinds open, and lights turned on in rooms that are in use, with the door left open (if circumstances permit). When counseling minors or vulnerable adults, it is ideal to have others nearby to decrease secrecy and isolation.
10. **Advance Notice to Parents:** Parents will be given advance notice of events for minors that do not require the parents to be in attendance. It may be necessary to have permission forms, medical releases, information about the event, and expectations communicated.
11. **Participation Covenant:** A written Safe Sanctuaries Covenant of Participation will be provided to all leaders so they may acknowledge their awareness and involvement in the program.
12. **Parent & Family Education:** Information about Safe Sanctuaries is available by visiting www.pvumc.org/safesanctuaries.
13. **Appropriate Equipment & Supervision:**
 - a. PVUMC will be attentive to appropriate supervision in any event, check for equipment safety, provide the proper safety supplies for the event, and communicate as necessary.
 - b. It is the responsibility of parents/caregivers to stay with and monitor their children/youth on campus until they are put into the care of workers at the event they are attending. Likewise, it is the responsibility of parents/caregivers to stay with and monitor their children/youth at the end of the event. The goal as a church, in partnership with the parents/caregivers, is safety in numbers. The hope is that children and youth will not be left unsupervised or alone. The priority is the safety of all minors and vulnerable adults.
 - c. PVUMC Children’s Ministry requires parents to sign-in and sign-out their children. If parents do not pick up their child in a timely manner, they will be sent to the Child Care Center for supervision.
14. **Camping:** PVUMC-led camping events will follow PVUMC Safe Sanctuaries guidelines and the rules of the camp. This may include proper permission forms, ratios, safety training for the leaders, transportation safety, medical releases, and background checks.
15. **Adequate Insurance for the Scope of Ministries:** PVUMC will be insured adequately for its scope of ministries, including transportation.

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- 16. Transportation Options:** Church-owned vehicles need to have regular maintenance and upkeep, current insurance, and adult drivers properly insured. PVUMC has issued requirements for fifteen-passenger vans which include: no more than ten passengers, not loading the top of the van, and not overloading the cargo area at the rear.
- 17. Special Settings:** Additional safety considerations may need to be added for other settings outside the local church such as retreats, mission trips, musical & drama productions, choir trips, lock-ins, service projects, and others. The ultimate goal is that no minor is ever left alone, and no adult is ever alone with a minor. A checklist of requirements for each Special Setting will be prepared in advance of the event, and submitted to staff in charge no later than 3 working days before the event. A list of participants, and emergency contacts will be provided to the church office staff. Special Settings might include, but are not limited to:
- a. Transportation plans
 - b. Interpersonal boundaries in relationships
 - c. Sleeping Arrangements
 - d. Bathroom Arrangements
- 18. Drugs and Alcohol:** While in the supervision of minors, vulnerable adults, or participating in an event or program that includes minors or vulnerable adults, PVUMC has a no tolerance stance towards the use of illegal drugs or alcohol both on or off campus.
- a. If an adult is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, selling it to another person, encouraging its use, or in an altered state, they will be removed from the setting immediately.
 - b. If a minor is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, selling it to another person, encouraging its use, or in an altered state, the parents/guardian of the minor will be contacted and arrangements made to remove the minor.
 - c. Before a previously removed individual returns to any event, an agreed upon plan will be completed with the staff-in-charge. If the behavior continues, the minor or adult may be banned from ministry programs.
- 19. Behavior:** If anyone behaves in a way that is inappropriate or disruptive to the church-sponsored event, the staff/adults-in-charge has the right to send them home if they do not respond to requests to stop the negative behavior.

V. VULNERABLE ADULTS

Ministering to vulnerable adults is similar in safety concerns to that of the minors.

Some additional things to note are:

- The four-year-old policy does not apply to workers with vulnerable adults.
- Certain ministries require one on one visitation. The ideal is to be in an area where others can see you or provide accountability where someone knows you are there.
- Vulnerable adults can be abused financially in addition to the other abuses.
- Every state does have elderly and child abuse reporting statutes.
- Training is necessary to teach appropriate interpersonal boundaries, appropriate relationships, and teaching any specific skills needed for a specific kind of ministry.

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VI: REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE

If you reasonably believe that a minor or vulnerable adult has been a victim of abuse, then you have a duty to report.

1. Safely compile as much of the following information as you can, and write it down:
 - a. Who (names, ages, addresses of individuals if involved)
 - b. What type of suspected abuse are you reporting
 - c. Where (did the abuse take place at PVUMC, home, a different city, etc)
 - d. When the suspected abuse took place
2. If the suspected abuse **took place at Paradise Valley UMC, or through a church-sponsored activity** please follow these steps:
 - a. If this is an emergency and immediate assistance, or medical care is needed, call 911
 - b. For all other reports call the Paradise Valley Police Department non-emergency number: 480-948-7410, or the local police where the suspected abuse occurred. Document the following
 - i. Date/Time of call
 - ii. Who you spoke to and badge number
 - c. If the suspected abuse was done by a parent/guardian, or caretaker also call 1-888-SOS-CHILD (1-888-767-2445) when the victim is a child, or 1-888-SOS-ADULT (1-888-767-2385) when the victim is an adult. Document the following
 - i. Date/Time of call
 - ii. Who you spoke to and their employee/badge number
3. If the suspected abuse happened **away from Paradise Valley UMC, and did not occur during a church-sponsored activity** please follow these steps:
 - a. If this is an emergency and immediate assistance, or medical care is needed, call 911
 - b. If the suspected abuse was done by a parent/guardian, or caretaker also call 1-888-SOS-CHILD (1-888-767-2445) when the victim is a child, or 1-888-SOS-ADULT (1-888-767-2385) when the victim is an adult. Document the following
 - i. Date/Time of call
 - ii. Who you spoke to and their employee/badge number
 - c. Contact the local police department where the suspect abuse occurred. Document the following
 - i. Date/Time of call
 - ii. Who you spoke to and their badge number
4. Once a report to the authorities has been made, please do the following:
 - a. Notify the staff person in charge, or a member of the clergy that a report has been made.
 - b. The staff person in charge, or member of the clergy, will provide instructions to you to submit a written report for PVUMC records within 72 hours. Be sure to include all of the notes you have taken.
 - c. Participate fully with the investigation, and be prepared to provide additional documentation as requested.

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- d. Keep everything confidential. Do not discuss the situation with anyone who is not directly involved in the investigation. If approached by anyone requesting information direct them to the senior pastor.

SOURCES

The following materials were used as our sources. These are United Methodist approved resources and will be used for additional information in the Safe Sanctuaries educational classes.

Melton, Joy Thornburg. *“Safe Sanctuaries” Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth*, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, Third printing 2012.

Website: Desert Southwest Conference (DSC) policy: desertsouthwestconference.org

1550 East Meadowbrook Avenue. Phoenix, AZ 85014 602.226.6959 or 800.229.8622

Additional resources for planning ministry with vulnerable adults: www.gbod.org, www.discipleshipresources.org, and www.aarp.org, www.swfac.org (aarp and SWFAC are not Methodist sites).

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