

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
ARLINGTON, TEXAS  
313 North Center Street  
Arlington, Texas 76011**

**POLICY OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, ARLINGTON, TEXAS, FOR  
THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE  
ADULTS**

*“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mark 10:14*

*“Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful.” I Corinthians 4:2*

**1. Statement of Purpose:**

The Members of First United Methodist Church, Arlington [FUMC] come from a variety of experiences, backgrounds and needs. Many of the FUMC ministries involve married and single adults who have children in the nursery, preschool, special needs ministry, children ministry and youth ministry. FUMC is committed to providing a safe environment for all children, youth and vulnerable adults who attend FUMC or any FUMC sponsored programs or activities. FUMC is also committed to protecting church staff and volunteers from false accusation or unwarranted suspicion.

FUMC recognizes the need to have a policy for the prevention of abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults. The policy as set forth herein is not based on a lack of trust in church staff workers or volunteers but it is intended to protect children, youth, vulnerable adults, church staff, workers, employees, volunteers and the ministries of FUMC.

**2. Definitions:**

A. “Protected Persons” when used herein shall mean all children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in any, programs and activities of FUMC.

B. “Workers” when used herein, shall mean all ministers, church staff, employees, scout leaders, program directors, and volunteers who have been approved as provided for herein to work in programs and activities of FUMC with Protected Persons.

C. “Vulnerable Adult” when used herein, shall mean an adult who requires special care and supervision because of a mental or physical condition or disability.

D. “Protected Persons Ministry” when used herein, shall mean all programs and activities for children, pre-school children, special needs children, youth or vulnerable adults, including but not limited to the nursery, Sunday School, Sensational Journey, Confirmation

Class, youth groups, ECYC, children's choir, youth choir, vacation bible school, Mission trips, retreats, recreational trips, service projects, summer children's programs, and scouting activities.

- E. "Director" when used herein shall be the Director of the area of ministry (i.e. Youth Minister shall serve as the Director for the Youth).
- F. "Supervising Worker" when used herein, shall mean all ministers, staff, employees, scout leaders, program directors and volunteers who have been approved as provided for herein to supervise programs and activities with Protected Persons.
- G. "Approved Driver" when used herein, shall mean any volunteer that has completed an application which shall be screened by FUMC's insurance carrier and the State Department of Motor Vehicles and determined that the Workers driving record is acceptable to the Director and otherwise approved for inclusion as an approved driver for FUMC.

**3. Application and Prohibited Conduct:**

A. The terms and provisions of this policy statement shall apply to all programs and activities for nursery children, preschool children, grade school children, youth and vulnerable adults conducted by FUMC including but not limited to nursery, ECYC, Sunday School, Sensational Journey, Confirmation Class, youth groups, children's choir, youth choir, Vacation Bible School, mission trips, retreats, recreational trips, service projects, and scouting activities.

B. The following conduct is prohibited for all Workers:

- (1) Threatening or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury upon a Protected Person.
- (2) Committing any sexual offense against a protected person or engaging in any sexual contact with a Protected Person.
- (3) Making any kind of sexual advance, making a request for sexual favors, or engaging in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature with a Protected Person.
- (4) Participating in any criminal activity with a Protected Person.

**4. Worker Approval and Screening:**

- A. All current Workers and persons desiring to serve in a Protected Persons ministry at FUMC shall complete the appropriate Employment Application or Volunteer Application and sign an Authorization for Release of Information for National Criminal Background Check annually.
- B. All ECYC employees/workers/directors will follow all Department of Family and Protective Services regulations as mandated by the state of Texas for all licensed Day Care facilities and will include the following:
- 1) Fingerprint-based criminal history check of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) (otherwise known as an FBI check)
  - 2) Fingerprint-based criminal history check of the Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC)
  - 3) A name-based check through the Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC);
  - 4) A name-based check of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services central registry for child abuse and neglect.

C.. Church Business Administrator and/or Director shall be responsible for obtaining completed Employment or Volunteer Applications and the Authorization for Release of Information for National Criminal Background Check from all persons applying to work with Protected Persons.

D. All persons applying as a Worker shall provide personal references on the Employment or Volunteer Application. These references shall be contacted by the Church Business Administrator and/or Director or other authorized church staff to confirm the information provided by the applicant. All communications and other information received from the personal references provided by the applicant shall be reduced to written form and kept confidential in the applicant's file.

E. A national criminal background check shall be completed on all applicants prior to any service by an applicant with Protected Persons. All current Workers shall sign, complete and submit to the appropriate Director the required Application and Authorization for Release of Information for National Criminal Background Check within 30 days of the adoption of this policy by FUMC.

F. Persons having a criminal history, including charges and arrests where the person is awaiting trial and no verdict has been rendered, convictions and deferred adjudication for any of the following types of offenses at any time shall not be allowed to work with Protected Persons:

- (1) Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglectful;
- (2) Violent offenses, including but not limited to murder, rape, assault or family violence.

G. Other criminal offenses, depending on how recent, the frequency, and nature, may also preclude an applicant from approval as a Worker with Protected Persons. The Director of the area of ministry, the church business administrator and minister reviewing the application and criminal background records shall, in their sole discretion, determine whether such other matters in a person's criminal history should prevent the applicant from serving as a Worker, taking into consideration the best interest, safety and well-being of the Protected Persons.

H. Approval of an applicant to serve as a worker in a Protected Persons ministry shall be made by the Director of the area of ministry, the church business administrator and one minister of FUMC upon review of the application, the information obtained from the applicant's personal references, and the information obtained through the use of the Authorization for Release of Information for National Criminal Background Check. Approval of the applicant shall be unanimous. The Director, business administrator and minister may require a personal interview with the applicant before approval.

I. An applicant who is approved as a Worker with protected persons shall be notified by the Director of the approval and shall be provided a name tag identifying such person as a Worker approved for service with Protected Persons.

J. All Workers have a duty to report to their Director any change of circumstances in their criminal history promptly after any arrest or formal charges are brought against such Worker. Whether or not such Worker is allowed to continue working with Protected Persons prior to any conviction for such alleged offense shall be made solely by the Director, business administrator, and minister. The Worker shall be given the opportunity to explain the circumstances in a meeting with the Director, business administrator and minister. Misstatement of facts or non-disclosure of full and complete information shall be cause for removal the Worker as an approved worker with Protected Persons.

K. All Workers approved for service with Protected Persons are responsible for monitoring the actions of other Workers and their compliance with this policy.

L. All Workers have a duty to report any violation of this policy to their Director, business administrator or a minister.

M. Volunteer workers are not allowed to work with any covered group until they have been active and participating at the church for a minimum of six months.

**5. Protected Persons Ministry, Sixth Grade and Younger and Special Needs Children**

A. Workers with Protected Persons in the sixth grade and younger, and special needs children, shall comply with the following procedures:

- (1) A minimum of two Workers shall be present in any classroom, program or activity where children are participating.
- (2) All classroom activities at FUMC shall be observable from the hallway through an open doorway, a window in the door or by keeping the top portion of Dutch doors open.
- (3) Classroom doors at FUMC shall not be locked while occupied by Workers and children.
- (4) Classes at FUMC should remain in the assigned classroom location; however, if a class needs to be combined or moved to a different location, a notice shall be posted on the classroom door providing specific notice of such change and identifying the room where the class has been relocated.
- (5) Workers shall not allow children to leave the classroom alone, except as provided below.
- (6) Workers shall wear the nametags provided to them by their Director, identifying such Worker as a Worker, approved for service with Protected Persons while serving in such capacity.
- (7) Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Workers shall not touch children in genital areas except as necessary to change diapers or assist a child in the bathroom.
- (8) Diaper changing should be done in the open and not behind closed doors.
- (9) In pre-school children's classrooms and special needs children's classrooms which have attached restrooms, a Worker may assist a child in the restroom while keeping the door open at all times.
- (10) Children taken to the restroom outside the classroom shall be accompanied by a Worker. The Worker shall check the bathroom before the child enters to ensure it is safe. The Worker shall not accompany a child into the restroom, except a Worker may assist a special needs child as necessary.
- (11) Workers assigned as hall monitors shall be used as needed in order to comply with the two-adult requirement and to assist children who temporarily leave the classroom.

B. Identification procedures for child pickup from a Protected Persons ministry:

- (1) Newborns to five years. A positive identity security system shall be developed and implemented by the Director so that the person picking up the child following a program or activity can be positively matched to the child.
- (2) Kindergarten (five years old) through third grade. A parent shall complete a form which identifies all persons who may pick up a child at the end of the activity and where the parent(s) can be found while the child is participating in the activity. Only a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent may pick up the child from such activity.
- (3) Fourth grade through sixth grade. A child may be released by the Worker without being picked up by a parent or other designated person if a parent provides the Worker with written permission to do so.
- (4) Children who have not been picked up from the program or activity within ten minutes after the end of the program or activity will be taken to the church office and a notice posted on the classroom door so advising the parent or other designated person.

C. Discipline of Children

- (1) Physical discipline (corporal punishment) of a protected person shall never be permitted by a Worker and shall be reported immediately to the Director if observed.
- (2) The Director shall advise all Workers on age-appropriate behavior management techniques for Protected Persons.
- (3) The behavior of a child who is a disruption to a class, activity or program should be discussed by the Worker with the Director. The Director shall determine whether or not there is a need for a conference with the child's parent(s) to discuss the child's behavior. A child whose behavior is a danger to him/herself or other children shall be removed immediately by the Worker to the church office with the parents promptly notified.

D. Training of Workers

- (1) The Director may require Workers to attend workshops, seminars, or other training sessions. Books and articles of relevance may also be provided to Workers by the Director.

- (2) The Director shall communicate this FUMC policy for prevention of abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults to all Workers and all Workers must agree to comply with this policy.
- (3) Mandatory training of all Workers shall be provided by the Director on a regular basis for fire and building safety, the statutory requirements for the reporting of child abuse, the identification of abuse and other matters as deemed mandatory by the Director.

E. Communication with Parents

- (1) Workers should attempt to keep open lines of communication with parents. Parents shall always be permitted to observe all programs and activities of the Protected Persons ministry.
- (2) Parents shall be made aware of the procedures for late pickup of a child from a program or activity.
- (3) Parents shall be informed by the Director to report suspected abuse and other concerns regarding any protected person to the Director, business administrator, or any FUMC minister with the assurance that such reports will remain confidential.
- (4) All details and information concerning the sleeping accommodations for children participating in any overnight program or activity shall be approved by the Director of the area of ministry, the church business administrator, and a minister of the church and such details and information shall be communicated in writing and in advance to the parents of all children participating in such program or activity, including an emergency contact telephone number where a parent or guardian can contact the Director or worker supervising the activity or program in the event of an emergency.
- (5) No child shall be allowed to participate in any FUMC overnight program or activity unless the child's parent or guardian has signed a consent form for such child authorizing the child to participate in such activity or program. The consent form shall be approved by the Director and must provide specific details as to time, place and location of such event, the sleeping arrangements, and all travel arrangements to and from such program or activity. The consent form shall identify the FUMC organization, class or group involved in the activity or event and shall identify by name all Workers and other adults attending such program or activity. The consent form signed by the parent shall also provide an

emergency contact telephone number where the Director can contact the parent in the event of an emergency. A current medical consent form signed by a parent or guardian of the child shall also be provided to the Director for each child participating in such activity or program and shall be in the possession of the Director or Worker supervising the activity or program throughout the event.

F. Staffing of Children's Programs and Activities:

- (1) There shall always be a Director or a supervising worker designated by the Director on duty while classes are in session and present at all programs and activities for children, whether located on the campus of FUMC or elsewhere. The Director or supervising worker designated by the Director shall make random checks of all classrooms and groups at all programs and activities for children to make certain that the requirements set forth herein are met.
- (2) The Director shall make contingent plans for the last minute replacement of a worker who cannot be present for a children's program or activity. If the required number of workers cannot be achieved, the class, program or activity shall be cancelled or may be combined with another class or group in order to achieve compliance with the required number of workers in a classroom or at a program or activity.
- (3) The Director shall make certain that there are sufficient substitute workers available when regular workers cannot attend a children's class, program or activity. The Director shall develop a substitute list of workers who have undergone the mandatory approval process in order to serve as workers with Protected Persons.
- (4) ECYC (Enrichment Center for Young Children) shall be required to meet at least the minimum standards for staff/child ratio set forth by the State of Texas.

G. Driving Rules

- (1) Only Workers or professional commercial drivers may transport children to and from programs and activities held away from the FUMC campus. All Workers serving as drivers must have a valid driver's license and proof of current insurance which shall be provided to the Director in advance of any program or activity where transporting children from the FUMC campus is required.

- (2) When one vehicle is used to transport children to and from a program or activity held away from the FUMC campus, the two-adult rule still applies unless written parental permission and consent is obtained in advance of such program or activity. When more than one vehicle is used to transport children to or from an activity program or event, the two-adult rule shall be deemed to be complied with provided that the Workers who are driving the vehicles keep at least one other vehicle driven by a Worker in sight at all times.
- (3) The number of persons occupying each vehicle transporting children to or from a program or activity must not exceed the number of seatbelts in such vehicle and all occupants must wear seatbelts. Busses not equipped with seatbelts are exempt from this rule.
- (4) Workers who drive children must be approved by the Director by completing an application for inclusion on the approved driver list for FUMC. The Worker must complete the required application which shall be used to screen the applicant through FUMC's insurance carrier and the State Department of Motor Vehicles for the purpose of determining that the Worker's driving record is acceptable to the Director and otherwise approved for inclusion as an approved driver for FUMC.

**6. Protected Persons Ministries: Youth and Vulnerable Adults.**

A. Workers with Protected Persons that are youth (7<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade) and vulnerable adults shall comply with the following procedures:

- (1) A minimum of two Workers shall be present in any classroom, program or activity where youth or vulnerable adults are participating.
- (2) All classroom activities at FUMC shall be observable from the hallway through an open door, a window in the door or by keeping the top portion of Dutch doors open.
- (3) Classrooms at FUMC shall not be locked while occupied by Workers and youth or vulnerable adults.
- (4) Classes at FUMC should remain in the assigned classroom location; however, if a class needs to be combined or moved to a different location, a notice shall be posted on the classroom door providing specific notice of such change and identifying the room where the class has relocated.

- (5) Any one-on-one meeting between a youth, vulnerable adult and Worker shall be conducted in an open area within visual sight of other Workers and never in an enclosed area.
- (6) Workers shall wear the nametags provided to them by their Director, identifying them as an approved Worker, for service with Protected Persons while serving in such capacity.
- (7) Backrubs, massages, kissing, full body contact or other similar physical contact between Workers and youth or vulnerable adults is prohibited. Workers must be aware of how physical contact appears to others and how the youth or vulnerable adult may interpret any physical contact by the Worker.
- (8) At no time shall a Worker pursue a dating relationship with a youth or vulnerable adult

B. Discipline of Youth and Vulnerable Adults

- (1) Physical discipline (corporal punishment) of a Protected Person shall never be permitted by a Worker and shall be reported immediately to the Director if observed.
- (2) The Director shall advise all Workers on appropriate behavior management techniques for youth and vulnerable adults.
- (3) The behavior of a youth or vulnerable adult who is a disruption to a class, activity or program shall be discussed by the Worker with the Director. The Director shall determine whether or not there is a need for a conference with the youth or vulnerable adult's parent to discuss such behavior. A youth or vulnerable adult whose behavior is a danger to himself or herself or others shall be removed immediately by the Worker to the church office with the parents promptly notified.

C. Meetings between Director and Youth or Vulnerable Adult

- (1) It shall not be a violation of the two adult rule for the Director to confer with a youth or vulnerable adult one on one provided such conferences are held at the FUMC church offices during office hours. The Director shall keep a log of all such one on one meetings identifying the time, date, purpose and duration of each such meeting and the name of the youth or vulnerable adult with whom the Director met. The accuracy of such log shall be verified by a minister or another Director. Any one on one meeting between a Director and a youth or vulnerable adult held away

from the FUMC church offices must be approved in writing by the youth or vulnerable adult's parent in advance which approval shall identify the specific time, date, purpose, expected duration and location of such meeting.

- (2) It shall not be a violation of the two adult rule for the Director to confer or work with more than one youth or vulnerable adult on the FUMC campus. Conferences or meetings between the Director and more than one youth or vulnerable adult which take place away from the FUMC campus may be held provided the Director, in advance, notifies another minister or Director of such planned meeting and maintains a log of the specific time, date, purpose, location and expected duration of such meeting and further provided all such meetings are held in a public place.

#### D. Training of Workers

- (1) The Director may require Workers to attend workshops, seminars, or other training sessions. Books and articles of relevance may also be provided to Workers by the Director.
- (2) The Director shall communicate this FUMC policy for prevention of abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults to all Workers and all Workers must agree to comply with this policy.
- (3) Mandatory training of all Workers shall be provided by the Director on a regular basis for fire and building safety, the statutory requirements for the reporting of child abuse, the identification of abuse and other matters as deemed mandatory by the Director.

#### E. Communication with Parents

- (1) Workers should attempt to keep open lines of communication with parents. Parents shall always be permitted to observe all programs and activities of the Protected Persons ministry.
- (2) Parents shall be made aware of the procedures for late pickup of a youth or vulnerable adult from a program or activity.
- (3) Parents shall be informed by the Director to report suspected abuse and other concerns regarding any protected person to the Director, business administrator, or any FUMC minister with the assurance that such reports will remain confidential.

- (4) All details and information concerning the sleeping accommodations for youth or vulnerable adults participating in any overnight program or activity shall be approved by the Director, business administrator, and a minister of the church and such details and information shall be communicated in writing and in advance to the parents of all youth and vulnerable adults participating in such program or activity. Including an emergency contact telephone number where a parent or guardian can contact the Director or Worker supervising the activity or program in the event of an emergency.
- (5) No youth or vulnerable adult shall be allowed to participate in any FUMC overnight program or activity unless the youth or vulnerable adult's parent or guardian has signed a consent form for such youth or vulnerable adult authorizing the youth or vulnerable adult to participate in such activity or program. The consent form shall be approved by the Director and must provide specific details as to time, place and location of such event, the sleeping arrangements, and all travel arrangements to and from such program or activity. The consent form shall identify the FUMC organization, class or group involved in the activity or event and shall identify by name all Workers and other adults attending such program or activity. The consent form signed by the parent shall also provide an emergency contact telephone number where the Director can contact the parent in the event of an emergency. A current medical consent form signed by a parent or guardian of the youth or vulnerable adult shall also be provided to the Director for each youth and vulnerable adult participating in such activity or program and shall be in the possession of the Director or Worker supervising the activity or program throughout the event.

F. Staffing of Workers for Youth and Vulnerable Adult Programs and Activities

- (1) There shall always be a Director or a supervising worker designated by the Director on duty while classes are in session and present at all programs and activities for youth and vulnerable adults, whether located on the campus of FUMC or elsewhere. A minimum of two workers shall be present for all programs and activities with a ratio of not more than twenty youth and vulnerable adults to one worker.
- (2) The Director shall make contingent plans for the last minute replacement of a worker who cannot be present for a youth and vulnerable adult's program or activity. If the required number of workers cannot be achieved, the class, program or activity shall be cancelled or may be

combined with another class or group in order to achieve compliance with the required number of workers in a classroom or at a program or activity.

- (3) The Director shall make certain that there are sufficient substitute workers available when regular workers cannot attend a youth or vulnerable adult's class, program or activity. The Director shall develop a substitute list of workers who have undergone the mandatory approval process in order to serve as workers with Protected Persons.
- (4) The two-adult rule shall be followed throughout any overnight program or activity unless exceptions to such rule are clearly stated on the consent form. All details and information concerning the overnight activity or program shall be approved by the Director, business administrator, and one minister of the church in advance of the overnight program or activity with all details and information communicated in writing and in advance to the parents of all youth and vulnerable adults participating in such program or activity. The total number of workers required on each such overnight program or activity will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities as approved by the Director, business administrator and a minister of the church.

#### G. Driving Rules

- (1) Only workers or professional commercial drivers may transport youth or vulnerable adults to and from programs and activities held away from the FUMC campus. All workers serving as drivers must have a valid driver's license and proof of current insurance which shall be provided to the Director in advance of any program or activity where transporting youth or vulnerable adults from the FUMC campus is required.
- (2) When one vehicle is used to transport youth or vulnerable adults to and from a program or activity held away from the FUMC campus, the two-adult rule still applies unless written parental permission and consent is obtained in advance of such program or activity. When more than one vehicle is used to transport youth or vulnerable adults to or from an activity program or event, the two-adult rule shall be deemed to be complied with provided that the workers who are driving the vehicles keep at least one other vehicle driven by a worker in sight at all times.
- (3) The number of persons occupying each vehicle transporting youth or vulnerable adults to or from a program or activity must not exceed the number of seatbelts in such vehicle and all occupants must wear seatbelts. Busses not equipped with seatbelts are exempt from this rule.

- (4) Workers who drive youth or vulnerable adults must be approved by the Director by completing an application for inclusion on the approved driver list for FUMC. The worker must complete the required application which shall be used to screen the applicant through FUMC's insurance carrier and the State Department of Motor Vehicles for the purpose of determining that the applicant's driving record is acceptable to the Director and otherwise approved for inclusion as an approved driver for FUMC.

Policy Approved:

June 10, 2008 by Board of Trustees

June 24, 2008 by Church Council