

Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy
St Mark's United Methodist Church
Carmel, Indiana

Introduction

St. Mark's United Methodist Church (St. Mark's UMC) is a spiritual community which takes its responsibility with the utmost seriousness to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children, youth, and adults who participate in our ministries. All volunteers and employees who are in leadership roles in these ministries are living out their baptismal vows to nurture our children and youth in the Christian faith. Every church worker plays a key role in fostering the spiritual development of individuals and families in our church community.

In an effort to provide a safe community, this church requires all church employees and volunteers to commit themselves to this policy which has been adopted by the Staff Parish Relations Committee ("SPRC") of St. Mark's UMC. In doing so, church employees and volunteers are asked to provide personal information, review this church policy, give their authorization for a background check to be performed, and understand that in some circumstances, they will be under the supervision of designated leaders.

This policy is not intended to create undue hardship in finding volunteers to help with church-sponsored events, but it is intended to provide a level of protection for children, youth, paid staff members, screened and unscreened volunteers, and to St. Mark's itself.

I. Definitions

A. "Child" and "Youth" and "Adult"

A "child" is defined as anyone under the age of 11. A "youth" is anyone not a "child" and under the age of 18. An "adult" is anyone 18 years of age or older.

B. "Paid Staff Person," "Adult Volunteer," and "Screened Adult"

A **Paid Staff Person** is someone paid by the church, overseen by the SPRC and screened. An **Adult Volunteer** is someone who has not been screened. They can work with a **Screened Adult** or paid staff person. A **Screened Adult** is a volunteer who has signed a form acknowledging that he/she's read and understands this policy, will abide by this policy, and has undergone and satisfactorily passed the necessary background checks.

Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy (Continued)

**St Mark's United Methodist Church
Carmel, Indiana**

C. "Child/Youth Abuse"

For purposes of this Policy, child/youth abuse is defined as any of the following:

1. Physical Abuse: Violent non-accidental contact which results in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

2. Sexual Abuse: Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another youth/child.

3. Emotional Abuse: A pattern of intentional conduct which damages a child/youth's spirit, attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

D. "Undue Hardship"

For purposes of this Policy, undue hardship is defined as circumstances brought upon by the language of this policy that leads to having to cancel the church-sponsored event.

II. Screening and Selection of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers

A. Adult volunteers who regularly work with the Church's children and/or youth, as well as all church paid staff persons, will be screened, including being trained on child protection issues prior to beginning their regular involvement with children and youth. Each person being considered to work regularly with children and/or youth shall complete and submit an application form.

B. Each person applying to work with children and/or youth shall authorize the church to conduct a criminal background check. At a minimum, the background check should include an Indiana background check, but most likely will also include a national background check and a motor vehicle background check. The background check will be funded by the applicant. At least every three years after, the background checks will be repeated to ensure the person is still in good standing.

C. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each paid staff member and screened adult will sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this policy.

D. St. Mark's employees and adult volunteers handling church funds will be subject to satisfactorily passing a more financial-driven background check.

Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy (Continued)
St Mark's United Methodist Church
Carmel, Indiana

E. Adults who have been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any kind of felony or child abuse charge will not be able to work with children or youth at St. Mark's UMC in any capacity. Such prospective volunteers will be encouraged to find a place of ministry within the church, but not with children or youth, or in any other capacity related to the conviction (e.g., someone convicted or pleading guilty to a financial crime will not work in a Finance capacity at St. Marks).. Where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children or youth, those persons involved with the decision should handle it in a sensitive manner. The appointed clergy and or her/his designee should inform the applicant in person.

F. Any adult convicted of driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated (any driving criminal offense) will not be able to help drive other passengers to or from church events until that charge is no longer active on the person's driving record. Also, any adult with 6 or more points on their active driving record related specifically to charges that would put passengers at risk (i.e., speeding, unsafe lane movement, disregarding road signs, etc.) will not be able to help drive other passengers to or from church events until those charges are no longer active on the person's driving record, at which time another background check would have to prove this. Such prospective volunteers could still attend and help with the event, but they are forbidden from driving other passengers to or from the event while on "church event time."

G. Any paid employee, adult volunteer or screened adult who is found guilty of language found in items E or F above agrees to disclose this fact to St. Mark's UMC's office administrator as soon as possible.

H. It is important that all records be kept confidential and in a locked cabinet in the Office Administrator's office. Only authorized individuals will have access to these records.

Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy (Continued)

**St Mark's United Methodist Church
Carmel, Indiana**

III. Supervision of Children and Youth

Paid staff persons and screened adults who regularly work with children and youth shall observe the "two person rule" or the "open door policy" at all times. The "two person rule" requires that those persons shall make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where an employed or screened adult is alone with children or youth. The "open door policy" requires that the door to the room entrance be open at all times when possible and feasible. If not feasible, the room has to have a window, which may be on the door, and the room must be visible to other people. Employees and screened adults/volunteers should make every reasonable effort to apply the two person rule from the time a church event starts (whether at the church or elsewhere) until it ends (including transportation from the church).

IV. Transportation

Transporting youth and children is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating.

The following represents guidelines for safe transportation of children/youth:

1. It's preferable that drivers are paid staff persons or screened adults. However, if an adult (18 years or older) wants to help with transportation and is well known to the designated adult leader and the children/youth, and the driver is not alone with only one children/youth in the vehicle, and is caravanning with other drivers, including the designated adult leader, and if not allowing the driver to volunteer causes undue hardship to the event in question, then the driver will be waived from being screened for purposes of that event.
2. Drivers must require that seat belts be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
3. Drivers should read and sign an acknowledgement form indicating that the Child Protection Policy has been read and will be followed, unless that causes undue hardship.
4. No one will be allowed to drive children/youth if their driving record reasonably leads the designated adult leader or co-leader(s) to believe that lives might be unnecessarily endangered.
5. St. Mark's UMC should retain a copy of a driver's license and proof of insurance for anyone providing transportation.

Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy (Continued)
St Mark's United Methodist Church
Carmel, Indiana

V. Trip and Retreat Supervision

Trip and Retreat settings can call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of the following:

1. There should be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
2. There should be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, it's preferable that at least one of the two screened adults present be of the same gender as the youth.
3. The person in charge of youth for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall have already received parental permission slips including permission for emergency medical care.

VI. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

A. Everyone in the church has a moral responsibility and a legal duty to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to their attention, regardless of where that abuse takes place. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the appointed clergy or other designated persons should inform the accused that abuse has been reported.

B. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by a screened volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, the observer shall report the incident immediately to the appointed clergy and supply pastors. If the appointed clergy and supply pastors are not available, the matter should be reported to another church authority (i.e., Lay Leader). If the accused is the appointed clergy and supply pastors or a member of her/his family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the SPRC and immediately reported to the proper authorities as required by state or local law.

C. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well-being of the child or youth until the parent(s) arrive. NOTE: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.

Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy (Continued)

**St Mark's United Methodist Church
Carmel, Indiana**

D. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the **first** priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.

E. The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.

F. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the Church in response to the reported abuse. The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place. It should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.

G. Any contact with the media should be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson selected by the appointed clergy and supply pastors. The church spokesperson should generally convey a spirit of concern for the spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing of all who are affected, and that the matter is being diligently and appropriately handled.

VII. Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the St. Mark's SPRC to implement this Policy and to work with the qualified St. Mark's paid employees staff to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this Policy.

Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy (Continued)

**St Mark's United Methodist Church
Carmel, Indiana**

VIII. Application

All of those who participate in the life of this congregation and use its facilities – individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside this congregation -- are expected to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.

This Child and Youth Protection Policy is adopted by action of the SPRC of St. Mark's this 28th day of September, 2010

Pastor

7/1/13
Date

Roger W. Schmenner 7/1/13

Chairperson - SPRC Date