

GRAYS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April, 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls all churches to welcome the children and also to make our churches safe places for children to grow and learn. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and also to protect those volunteers from false accusations. It is also our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise.

OUR PURPOSE

Grays United Methodist Church's (GUMC) purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to provide a safe environment for our children and youth as they grow physically and spiritually.

OUR COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to Conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the safety of our children and youth as well as of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in educating our staff so they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

PROCEDURES: We adopt these minimum standards for our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

1. Screening and Recruiting:

- A. All workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults will be selected by the leader of the program involved and will provide standard contact information.
- B. All workers **in a supervisory role** with children, youth and vulnerable adults will be asked to complete a PA request for Criminal Background Check and Child Abuse History Clearance, and/or utilize the Trak-1 system
- C. All workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least 6 months before being allowed to be in a supervisory roll.
- D. Volunteers from the community who assist at Vacation Bible School will have certified leaders present. These VBS volunteers will be considered another adult in the room.
- E. Forms and copies of reports will be kept in a locked file on the church premises.

2. Supervision:

- A. There will be 2 adults in each classroom. If this is not possible, there will be a roving teacher who moves amid the classrooms during the program period.
- B. A supervising adult must be 5 years older than the oldest student.
- C. No person under the age of 18 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults.
- D. Each room will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.

- E. Teachers shall be familiarized with this policy and in how to identify and report child abuse.
- F. Field trips or other off-premises activities of the church or Sunday school shall require permission from a parent or guardian.
- G. Activities on church premises, such as Bible School, whereby a parent or guardian is not likely to remain on the premises, shall require one-time registration forms in order to participate.

3. Reporting:

- A. Upon receiving information about abuse, the teacher/adult will report immediately to the Pastor and/or Lay Leader. They will in turn call the Childline and Abuse Registry 1-800-932-0313 with the information listed below. They will also notify the parents of the victim and take any necessary steps to assure the safety of the victim. (Child, youth , or vulnerable adult's safety is first concern.)
 - 1. Names, ages, addresses and telephone numbers of both the accused and the abused
 - 2. The nature of the alleged abuse, with dates where possible
 - 3. The factual details of the report
 - 4. The name of the person making the report and the date that the information was received.
- B. If the abuse occurred on church property or during a church event, by a church volunteer, the volunteer will be removed from further responsibility until the incident reported has been resolved.
- C. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- D. The incident will be handled in a discreet manner, and all parties involved will be directed to the availability of counseling and/or support services.

4. Responding:

- A. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously, nothing will be covered up.
- B. **All requests for statements should be directed to the Lead Pastor for referral.** The Media Director of the Pennsylvania Conference or his/her designee is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media.
- C. If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the District Superintendent will be contacted immediately.
- D. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.