

# JOHN N. MCEACHERN MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



**McEachern Memorial**  
A United Methodist Church

## *Safe Sanctuary Abuse Policy*

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Approved by Trustees on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Church Council on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

# Overview of Training Sessions

Safe Sanctuary training sessions shall include an explanation and a discussion of the following topics:

- Who and Why We Protect
- Terminology
- The Risk
  - Profile of a Child Molester
  - The Facts
- Types and signs of abuse
- How Do We Provide a Safe Campus?
  - McEachern Memorial United Methodist Church Policies
  - Guidelines for Prevention
- Procedures for reporting accidents, incidents or suspected abuse (FORMS)

# Definitions of Frequently Used Terminology

(As it relates to this document only)

1. Employed Staff Member: A staff member who receives pay for either full-time or part-time work at the church.
2. Volunteer: An adult seeking involvement with children/students (under the age of 18) that has been a member of this congregation for at least 6 months or a constituent member for at least 12 months, with the exception of Recreation Ministry volunteers. All staff and volunteers must have a background check and be safe sanctuary trained.
3. Supervisory Volunteer: An individual seeking a supervisory role with children/students that has 1) been a member of this congregation for at least 12 months or 2) has had prior supervisory experience with children/students and is defined above as a volunteer. All individuals desiring to be supervisory volunteers need to be approved by Children's Council, Student Ministry Servant Team and/or church ministry staff before serving.
4. Student Staff or volunteer: An individual who is at least 14 (exception may be made during VBS when student may be between the ages of 12-14 in the capacity of an assistant to an adult only). All student staff/volunteers must have prior approval from the director of children's ministries, student ministries and/or church ministry staff and must be paired with at least one adult.
5. The Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS): Falls under the Georgia Department of Human Resources and is responsible for welfare and employment support, protecting children, foster care and other services to strengthen families.
6. Adult: Anyone who is 18 years of age or older.
7. Child /Student: anyone who is under 18 years of age or has the mental capacity of such age is considered a child or student.
8. Vulnerable Adult: any person age 18 or older, or an elder, defined as 65 or older who is mentally, physically or psychologically unable to make responsible legal decisions about his or her own welfare.
9. Accident: when an unintentional act occurs and a child or any other person is hurt.
10. Incident: when an action is observed that does not require reporting to DFCS, but does require attention and/or recording/reporting.
11. Suspected abuse: when one sees, has been told of, or suspects someone has been abused in some way

# **Requirements of Volunteers and Supervisory Volunteers**

1. Individuals must meet the criteria set forth under “Definition of Frequently Used Terminology” in this policy.
2. Individuals must submit to a full background check. Background checks are processed through Background Data, Inc. The background check includes a criminal and driving record check. \*\*A new background check will be done every 2 years providing there has been no change of status.
3. Individuals must be agreeable to taking a random drug test.

Exceptions to requirements # 2 and # 3 include summer camp workers who are under 18 years of age. Personal references will be obtained on those under 18 years of age and approved by the director of the corresponding ministry area.

## **Training of Staff and Volunteers**

1. It is required for all volunteers and employed staff members to attend Safe Sanctuary training every year.
2. All employed staff and volunteers shall attend a Safe Sanctuary training session within 90 days of their first day of service as administered by the church. If there is not a training session scheduled within this time frame, a training video will be provided in the interim to be viewed at church.
3. Each employed staff member and volunteer will receive a copy of this policy and are required to sign a statement certifying receipt. Record of abuse training and signed statement will be kept on file in the administrative office.
4. Background reports are confidential. Staff reports and volunteer reports are filed by the Executive Pastor.

## **Knowing the Facts**

It is important to be familiar with a few statistics concerning the incidence of abuse in the church:

1. ChildHelp USA reports that there are more than three million incidents of physical abuse and/or neglect per year in the U.S. affecting 5.8 million children.
2. Studies have estimated that one out of three girls is sexually abused before the age of 18. Similarly, studies indicate one out of seven boys have been sexually abused before the age of 18. Even more frightening is that these numbers may be underestimated since many children are reluctant to report abuse.
3. ChildHelp USA reports that 1200 deaths attribute to child abuse and/or neglect occurs each year. In light of the statistics, it is a logical conclusion that any organization involved with children is a place where abuse could occur.

## **The Profile of a Child Molester**

Who is the typical child molester? Often, we assume that molesters are “strangers wearing trench coats” or “dirty old men.” These stereotypes not only are inaccurate, but they dangerously contribute to a false sense of security. Researchers in the field of child sexual abuse currently indicate that no one profile fits the various perpetrator of abuse. Church leaders can become preoccupied screening stereotypes, while not suspecting the real molester could be an active adult or teen in the church. Consider the following:

- Over 80 percent of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim
- The majority of offenders are between the ages of 20-30 years old.
- 20 percent of sex offenders begin their activity before the age of 18
- Child abusers often are married and have children
- 1 in 4 offenders is a member of the individual’s family or one entrusted with care of the person
- About half are friends of child or family
- 2 out of 3 who are caught and punished abuse again

# What is Abuse?

The depth and breadth of the problem of abuse is far greater than can be effectively addressed within this resource. For our purposes, we must limit our focus to the prevention of abuse in the church and its related organizations.

## *Types of Abuse*

Generally, abuse is categorized in six primary forms:

1. Physical abuse
2. Emotional abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Ritual abuse
5. Neglect
6. Elder/Financial abuse

1. Physical abuse: Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, etc.), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child's body.
2. Emotional abuse: Abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved, but undeserving of love and care. Children exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and is devastating to the victim. ***Emotional abuse includes bullying, which is the conscious, willful and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror. Includes both "in-person" and cyber-bullying.***
3. Sexual abuse: Abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful student) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.
4. Ritual abuse: Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child, other persons, and animals. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Children making such reports must not be ignored.
5. Neglect: Abuse in which a person endangers a child's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child's self-worth. This is perhaps the most common

form of abuse. Neglect includes abandonment which is the desertion of a child or vulnerable elder by one who has assumed responsibility for care or custody of that person.

6. Elder abuse: Elders are defined as anyone over 65 years old. Elder abuse can be either physical, financial, or by using exploitation. Exploitation can include the unauthorized or misuse of funds or property or assets belonging to the elder by force, misrepresentation or illegal means.

## **Possible Signs of Child Abuse**

Children suffering from abuse often will not tell anyone about it. Therefore, it is important to be able to recognize other signs of abuse. The following characteristics may be Possible Signs of abuse, although they are not necessarily proof. Individually, any one of the Possible Signs may be a sign of a number of other more or less serious problems. When these Possible Signs are observed in a child, they can be considered as warnings and lead you to investigate the situation further.

### **Possible Signs of Physical Abuse**

1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others
2. Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and/or property
4. Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for child's developmental stage
5. Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises

### **Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse**

1. Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal
2. Exhibits severe lack of self-esteem
3. Threatens or attempts suicide
4. Speech and/or eating disorders
5. Goes to extremes to seek adult approval
6. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns

### **Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse**

1. Unusually advance sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and developmental stage
2. Depression – cries often for no apparent reason
3. Promiscuous behavior
4. Difficulty walking or sitting
5. Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas
6. Exhibits frequent headaches, stomachaches, extreme fatigue
7. Sexually transmitted diseases

*In addition to these Possible Signs, children who have been sexually abused at church may exhibit some of the following:*

1. Unusual nervousness or anxiety about being left in the nursery or Sunday School class
2. Reluctance to participate in church activities that were previously enthusiastically approached

3. Comments such as “I don’t want to be alone with \_\_\_\_” in reference to a childcare worker or teacher
4. Nightmares including a childcare worker or teacher as a frightening character
5. Unexplained hostility toward a childcare worker or teacher

**Possible Signs of Ritual Abuse**

1. Disruptions of memory and consciousness
2. Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
3. Flashbacks
4. Fear of the dark, especially at sundown or a full moon
5. Nightmares or sleep disorders
6. Any of the symptoms of sexual abuse

**Possible Signs of Neglect**

1. Failure to thrive
2. Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate
3. Beggars or steals food; chronic hunger
4. Depression
5. Untreated medical conditions
6. Poor hygiene
7. Signs of over or under-medicated
8. In children, signs that education is neglected

**Possible Signs of Elder Abuse**

1. Sudden changes in financial situation
2. Caregiver belittles, threatens, exerts excessive power and control
3. Strained relationships, frequent arguments between elder and caregiver
4. Bruises, pressure marks, abrasions, burns, broken bones
5. Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, unusual weight loss

\*“Caregiver” can be family member or paid worker

## **Prevention Guidelines**

In order to provide adequate supervision to ensure the safety and well being of children participating in activities in the programs of the church, the following ratios are recommended:

*(Note: these ratios fall above the state requirements and should be in alignment with current policies in the areas already in place)*

**Nursery/Childcare/Children’s Classes**

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Infants         | 1:3 infants (under 12 months)                  |
| 2. Toddlers        | 1:5 toddlers (through age 2)                   |
| 3. Early Childhood | 1:8 preschool (3yr. - K)                       |
| 4. Elementary      | 1:10 (1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade) |

## **Special Events, Field Trips and Overnights**

4. Children 1st-5th grade      1:4-6 children
5. Students 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade      1:5-7 students
6. Students 9th-12<sup>th</sup> grade      1:6-8 students  
1:10-12 students – for large group activities on site

**For overnight activities,** provide adequate same gender ratios.

### **Weekday Preschool 3 YR - K**

1. Three Year Old              1:10 children
2. Four Year Old              1:12 children
3. Kindergarten              1:12 children

### **Weekday Preschool Infant – 2 YR**

1. Infants                      1:3 infants
2. One year old              1:5 toddlers
3. Two year old              1:6-8 toddlers

### **Summer Camps**

1. Children 3-K              1:10 (with additional support staff)
2. Children 1st-5th grade      1:10 children (see field trip guidelines for off campus trips)

## **Recreation**

### **1:10**

Ratios for multiple sports activities that are simultaneously on the basketball court, soccer fields, and baseball fields can be determined by the total number of children to total number of adults rather than per team. However, if the children are taken by individual teams into classrooms for devotions the two adult rule must be followed.

**In addition to the ratios the following guidelines shall be used when planning supervision for all church gatherings where children will be in attendance:**

1. Two adult rule: There must be two adults in each classroom for all gatherings, which take place within the church building with the exception of Sunday mornings and high attendance events such as Wednesday evenings and Sunday evening activities during which time there are additional Sunday School Superintendents, Chairpersons, Chaperones, etc, attending to the need of children and student programs/activities.
2. An adult is considered to be anyone 18 years of age or older and five years older than the group for whom they are providing supervision. Volunteers or workers under 18 years of age must be paired with an adult. Summer Camp Directors must be at least 22 years of age.
3. Married couples only count as one unit thus requiring another adult to be present to meet recommended ratios.

4. Appropriate Touch – use a side hug, high five, or a pat on the back. Never give a full frontal hug.
5. All activities/programs involving children/students should occur in a room with a windowed door or a “half door” of which the top half is left open or a full non windowed door must be left open.
6. Groups of fewer than four persons should be in open visible areas and not meet in closed rooms or obscured places.
7. Unauthorized visitors will not be allowed to remain with the group.
8. Children should not be allowed to leave the designated meeting area without written permission and supervision. Children should only be released to an appropriate adult.
9. Children/Students should be in a designated program area or be with a parent or in childcare.
10. Parents should sign child into the room of the program/activity (third grade and under). If the child is moved to a different room or area for any reason, parents will be informed of new location for pickup.
11. All trips for children and students through grade 12 will require a written and signed document of parental permission for groups who leave the church property.
12. On overnight trips in hotels, adult and students will have separate rooms. Creative monitoring is essential and should be determined prior to arrival. If lodging is a cabin with multiple beds, at least 2 adults will be present.
13. For offsite trips, the drivers should have at least 2 student riders in the vehicle and another adult. Plan for everyone to meet at the location or provide transportation from the church with adults driving.
14. Periodically, local trips for students may be taken for which verbal permission will be sought if written consent was not obtained. The supervisory volunteer or staff person will speak with the parent or guardian confirming that the student may participate in the activity with church sponsored transportation to and from. The supervisory volunteer or staff person shall document the activity, date, permission granted and from whom. (i.e. Afterglows, local Dairy Queen, etc.)
15. Attendees at off-site events will be monitored by adult chaperones upon arrival and departure of the property and premises in accordance with the proper ratios as stated herein.
16. Provision will be made to have access to a telephone for emergency purposes at all times.
17. As a means of good record keeping and communication between parents, staff and any volunteers, the enclosed Accident Report Form will be filed with the Director of the corresponding ministry area.

## Special Overnight Activities and Trips

1. Written and signed parental permission shall be obtained for groups who leave the church property. If a child/student brings a friend the evening of an event without a permission form, the parent or guardian will be called for permission and speak to the supervisory volunteer or staff person to go on the outing.
2. Children and student events away from the church campus and/or an overnight event held at the church require strict adherence to the policy ratios for supervision.
3. There shall always be two adult chaperones, or more depending on ratios, responsible for monitoring behaviors and shall report any inappropriate behavior. At no time is any adult to be left alone with a child or teen.
4. In any overnight situation, adults must not sleep in the same bed with a child or teen. Exceptions are only for a father and son or a mother and daughter.
5. Headcounts should be taken each time there is movement from one area to another.

## Diapering and Restroom Activity (“Potty Policy”)

*Diapering of infants and toddlers* should be done in a visible area with another adult present. *Toddlers and preschoolers* need to be allowed as much independence as possible when using the restroom. The building facility will dictate how much direct adult supervision is required.

- when the restroom is attached to the classroom
- when a single toilet restroom is located away from the classroom
- when a multi-stalled public restroom is used

Young children in the early stages of becoming “potty trained” may require adult assistance, especially in the case of “accidents.” When an adult helps with the incidents, special care and common sense is necessary. Tell another adult that you are assisting the child in need, and inform the parent what was done.

Older children should not be sent to a multi-stalled public restroom alone. It is advisable that an adult accompany at least two children, check the restroom before sending the children in. Stand outside, allowing children complete independence. In case of an emergency and a child needs adult help, care must be taken to avoid having an adult alone with a child in a stall, if possible.

## Discipline Recommendations to Assist You

1. Use positive words.
2. Establish rules and expectations.
3. When in need of communicating bad news to a parent or guardian, remember the “sandwich rule” - good news, bad news, good news.
4. Involve church staff whenever necessary or if you are not sure of what to do in any circumstance.
5. Plan strategy for dealing with one who is a threat to safety of self or others.

# Procedures for Reporting Alleged Abuse

Should an adult in charge suspect abuse or a child, student, or vulnerable adult report abuse by any member of the church staff, volunteer or employed staff, OR by any person present at a church-sponsored meeting or activity, be prepared to immediately do the following:

1. Take all necessary steps to assure the child, student's, or vulnerable adult's safety. The safety of the child/student/vulnerable adult must be the church's primary concern. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger and hostility. Treat the accused with dignity, but immediately remove him or her from further involvement with the children or students and report the same.
2. The adult in charge (employed staff or supervisory volunteer) shall document the incident in writing. Documentation will include a written record of the steps taken by the church in response to the allegations of abuse. Documentation shall be signed and dated.
3. Notify the Sr. Pastor or Executive Pastor, the ministry area director, parents. If any of these reporting people is the accused, that individual will not be notified at this time.
4. If "reasonable cause" is established, the reporting adult along with the Sr. Pastor or Executive Pastor or ministry area director shall require notification of the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS).
5. In emergency situations, the reporting adult shall notify the proper law enforcement in emergency cases and/or Georgia Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) immediately. The Sr. Pastor and the ministry area supervisor should be notified as well.
6. The Sr. Pastor, and/or the ministry area director shall notify the following persons:
  - a. District Superintendent
  - b. Insurance Carrier
7. The Sr. Pastor and the ministry area director will notify the following persons:
  - a. Attorney to file report
  - b. Pastoral Care Consultant
    1. Provide counseling if desired
    2. Offer appropriate referrals
8. Only the designated spokesperson, MMUMC church Lay Leader, will make any necessary public statements or responses.

A brief and honest statement will be prepared by a staff person that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.
9. Be prepared to cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

# Suspected Abuse Perpetrated Away from Church Property and Non-Church Related Events

If an adult in a supervisory position suspects OR a child or student reports abuse occurring away from church-sponsored functions, the following procedures shall apply:

1. The adult in charge shall document the incident. The documentation shall be signed, dated, and turned into the ministry area director.
2. Notify the Sr. Pastor, the ministry area director, and the parents. If any of these reporting people is the accused, that individual will not be notified at this time.
3. If “reasonable cause” is established, the Sr. Pastor shall require notification of the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

## **Georgia Code:** The following is what is written in the Georgia Legal Code 19-7-5, Code Section 10-14-96

(a) “The purpose of this Code section is to provide for the protection of children whose health and welfare are adversely affected and further threatened by the conduct of those responsible for their care and protection. It is intended that the mandatory reporting of such cases will cause the protective services of the state to be brought to bear on the situation in an effort to prevent further abuses, to protect and enhance the welfare of these children, and to preserve family life wherever possible.”...

(b) “Child” is any person under age 18.

“Child abuse” means:

1. Physical injury or death, not accidental, by parent or caretaker.
2. Neglect or exploitation by same.
3. Sexual abuse of a child
4. Sexual exploitation of a child
5. However, no child who in good faith is being treated by spiritual means through prayer because of religious beliefs shall be considered “abused”.

“Sexual abuse” means a person’s employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor who is not that person’s spouse to engage in any act which involves:

(See Official Georgia Legal Code 19-7-5 3.1)

(c) Those required to report:

1. Physicians, nurses, hospital personnel
2. Dentists
3. Psychologists
4. Professional counselors, social workers or marriage & family therapists
5. School Teachers
6. School Administrators
7. School guidance counselors

8. Child welfare agency personnel
9. Child service organization personnel
10. Law enforcement personnel

(d) Persons who are required to report abuse shall notify the person in charge of that facility, or a designated delegate. That person shall report or cause a report to be made in accordance with the Code. Once report has been made to the person in charge/delegate, the initial reporter is said to have fully complied with the law.

Any other person, other than those specified above may report or cause reports to be made.

***What is the reporting procedure?***

(e) “An oral report, shall be made as soon as possible by telephone or otherwise, and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Resources” or appropriate police authority.

If DHR has reasonable cause to believe that the report shows evidence of child abuse, then the agency shall immediately notify police or district attorney.

(f) any person partnership, firm, corporation, association, hospital or other entity making a report to a child welfare agency or police authority pursuant to this Code section or any other law or participating in an judicial proceeding shall in so doing be immune from any civil or criminal liability.

(g) Suspected child abuse is required to be reported even if communication with the child is made privileged or confidential by law.

(h) “Any person or official required by subsection C of this Code section to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.”

(i) A report of child abuse shall not be subject to public inspection even though such report is contained in closed records compiled for law enforcement or prosecution purposes unless:

- 1.) Needed in a court case
- 2.) Superior court in the county permits inspection of records for legitimate research for educational, scientific, or public purposes

The superior court to which an application is made shall not grant the application unless:

(A) Application includes description of research project with a statement of info required, the purpose the project needs the info and the methodology to make sure the info is not arbitrarily sought.

(B) Applicant must show legitimacy of project

(C) Names and addresses of individuals, other than officials, employees, or agents of agencies receiving or investigating a report of abuse which is the subject of the report, shall be deleted from any info released unless the court determines that having the names and addresses open for review is essential to the research and the child, through his or her representative, gives permission to release the information.

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## References and Resources

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### **Web Sites**

<http://www.childabuse.org>

<http://childlures.org>

<http://www.state.ga.us.us/gbi/sorsch.cgi>

### **Videos:**

Boy Scouts of America, (1989). *A Time to Tell.* Audiovisual Service, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079 AV-09V004.

Boy Scouts of America, (1999). *Student Protection: Personal Safety Awareness.* Audiovisual Service, P.O. Box 152079, Irving TX 75015-2079 AV-09V027

Boy Scouts of America, *Student Protection Guidelines for Volunteer Leaders & Parents for Basic Training.* Audiovisual Service, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079. AV-09V010

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, *Bless Our Children: Preventing Sexual Abuse.* 206-634-1903.

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, *Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse.* 206-634-1903

EcuFilm, *Ask Before Your Hug: Sexual Harassment in the Church,* 1-800-251-4091.

The United Methodist Church. *Caring Shepherds.* Available from the Risk Management Department of the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church, 847-869-3345.

