

## St. Mark UMC Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy Summary

In an effort to provide a safe community all church employees and volunteers must commit themselves to follow the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy. Children and youth are defined as minors that are anyone under the age of 18. The law recognizes that no minors can consent to sexual contact or physical abuse because of their age and vulnerability. The church affirms this position and will not tolerate any abuse.

Abuse is defined as any sexual contact, sexual language, indecent exposure, or communication for immoral purposes, as well as physical abuses such as corporal punishment or physical assault.

**Background Checks:** Every two years, SMUMC conducts background checks on volunteers working with children/youth/venerable adults. Volunteers authorize SMUMC to request information regarding any record of charges or convictions contained in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file. Including, but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law.

### Nursery

- The only person allowed to pick-up a child will be the parent who dropped off the child unless other arrangements were made when the child was dropped off.
- Only trained, assigned workers will be allowed in the nursery areas. No other individuals will be allowed in these areas without the approval of the nursery supervisor.
- No worker may take a child to an unsupervised area without permission from the parent.

**Two Adult Rule** -Whenever practicable, a minimum of two teachers shall be present during any activity. When two adults are not available, the door to the classroom must remain open, or an adult classroom visitor age 25 years or older or a youth assistant 15 years of age or older may serve as an observer.

**Open-door-policy** - All children's classrooms must have either a viewing window that will remain free of covering or a dutch door where the top door will remain open at all times. If the classroom does not have a dutch door or viewing window, the door must remain open at all times. The teachers and volunteers shall never be in a closed-door situation with any children.

**Visible Presence:** A Sunday School coordinator or staff person will be in the hallways whenever volunteer teachers are teaching children. This person will act as a visible presence in support of teachers, as well as a deterrent of any potentially harmful situations for our children.

**Restroom Policies:** In situations where an escort is needed for a trip to the restroom, a teacher will stand outside the restroom and only assist the child if needed. Whenever a teacher is in the restroom with a child the door will remain open. If a child soils themselves every attempt will be made to have two adult volunteers present while cleaning up the child.

**Discipline:** Corporal punishment, of any kind, is never appropriate. Teachers are asked to redirect a child if they should display inappropriate behavior.

**Youth Protection Procedures** – These procedures cover the activities of the youth beginning with 6th grade through the summer after 12th grade.

- *For safety purposes*, with high school and middle school students there will be, whenever possible, one adult for every seven youth.

- *For purposes of supervising youth*, an adult is defined as anyone who is at least 23 years old. Anyone under the age of 23 must be approved by the Youth Director before being allowed to be in a leadership position.

*Counseling with youth* by someone of the same sex is encouraged. When occasions of counseling by someone other than the same sex occur, a youth worker should seek to abide by the two adult rule.

- *In a situation where the two adult rule is not feasible*, a youth worker is expected to move him/herself and the youth being counseled towards the rest of the group, in hope of finding a second adult.

- *In Sunday School* or a small group setting, the goal is to have two adults in every room; if not the open door policy will be in effect.

- *In Youth Fellowship*, the goal is to have one adult for every seven youth in attendance. If possible, when dividing into small groups, we will strive to have two adults, per group.

### **Transportation Procedures**

- All vehicles shall be in good running order, have a current valid license plate, insurance and passenger restraints. The passenger restraints must be used while transporting children/youth.

- No motorcycles, scooters, or mopeds will be allowed, and no vehicle will be allowed to carry more than the passenger capacity as specified by the vehicle manufacturer.

- All drivers must have a current valid driver's license with the classification for the vehicle being driven and must obey all traffic laws.

- A minimum of two adults shall supervise all groups of children and youth on off-site events.

- No driver is to transport any child/youth alone, without permission from the parent. If possible, there will always be more than one youth in the vehicle. In the event there is one child or youth in the vehicle they must be seated in the rear seat of the vehicle.

### **Procedures for Children/Youth Overnight Activities**

- A signed parent permission form will be required of each child/youth prior to the activity.

- No members of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room unsupervised.

- Adults will not be allowed to sleep in the same bed with a child/youth unless the child/youth is their child and of the same sex.

### **Incident Reporting**

Do not ignore any reported incident of abuse. Any suspicious activity, observed abuse, or victim allegations that are brought to the attention of a church worker or volunteer must be reported immediately to the appropriate program director, the Pastor, or the Chairperson of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee.