

# **Hendersonville First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

## **Introduction**

Hendersonville First United Methodist Church is a part of The United Methodist Church, and shares a common history and heritage with other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies. From our inception, we have been a denomination governed by a book of law (The United Methodist Book of Discipline) and covenant that prescribes how we will live our lives together. This covenant calls us to connect, grow, serve, share and worship as Apprentices of Jesus Christ in an environment that provides nurture and safety to all persons within our community.

In an effort to effectively carry out our ministry, this policy is designed as a guide for how we are to live our lives together in order and in safety.

### Hendersonville First United Methodist Church Task Force on Policies and Procedures

Jeff Rice- Staff Parish Relations Committee  
Dawn Goodwin- Children's First Director  
Kristi Huffine-Children's Ministry Assistant  
Gavin Richardson-Youth Minister  
Sue Heinze-Health and Wholeness Ministry  
Amanda Jordan-Legal assistance  
Beth Morris-Lay person representative, Safe Sanctuaries Ministry Team Leader  
Amanda Diamond- Pastor of Families and Young Adults

## **Purpose**

In 1996 the General Conference adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. In keeping with the resolution of the General Conference, the purpose of the Safe Sanctuaries policy of Hendersonville First United Methodist Church (HFUMC) is as follows:

- (1) To provide a safe environment for our children, youth, and adults while they are involved in the ministries of HFUMC;
- (2) To provide the leaders and workers with children, youth, and adults with knowledge of rules, regulations, and guidelines to minimize the risk of child or youth sexual abuse, exploitation, or other abuse;
- (3) To reduce the possibility of children, youth, and adults being exposed to abuse or exploitation;
- (4) To protect our compensated workers, volunteers, caregivers, and church from being falsely accused of inappropriate behavior with our children, youth, and adults.

## **1. Application of policy**

The policy applies to all compensated workers of Hendersonville First United Methodist Church. The policy applies to all volunteers engaged in the supervision and care of children and youth on HFUMC church property or at church sponsored events held off-site.

## **2. Screening of Workers**

### ***Screening:***

All compensated workers and volunteers/caregivers, who work with children, youth, and adults, must be properly screened. Screening includes the following: (1) Each person completes an Employment or Volunteer Application Form and Consent to Criminal Background Check Form; (2) HFUMC will conduct criminal background checks on all volunteers/caregivers and compensated workers.

After their initial screening, all compensated workers and caregivers will be required to go through the screening process/background check every five years.

### ***Required training:***

Prior to beginning work as a volunteer or compensated worker, each person must complete Safe Sanctuaries policy instruction and educational training. Safe Sanctuaries training will take place at least two times a year. All caregivers are required to attend Safe Sanctuaries training, which may be held in conjunction with other ministry training. Caregivers cannot work with children or youth until they have attended the required training.

### ***Emergency Volunteers:***

An emergency volunteer does not need to be fully screened, but must meet the age requirements of this policy. All emergency volunteers must be accompanied by a caregiver who has been approved through the screening process and attended Safe Sanctuaries training. The Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry should be observant of such situations and initiate the screening process once an emergency volunteer is used. Emergency volunteers should only be used when necessary to achieve compliance with the Safe Sanctuaries policy. In the case of events lasting for more than one day such as basketball camps and Vacation Bible School, emergency volunteers are not eligible to serve more than one day.

## **3. Selection of Workers**

### ***Age Requirements:***

All primary caregivers for an event involving children and youth will preferably be 21 years of age. All primary caregivers must be at least 18 years old. If the primary caregiver is between the ages of 18-21, that person must be a high school graduate or have a GED.

In addition to the two adult primary caregivers, all other caregivers shall be at least three years older than the oldest participant in the program.

***Six-Month Rule:***

All volunteers/caregivers must be an active participant at HFUMC for six months before they are eligible to serve with children and youth. Exceptions will be granted on a case by case basis by the Safe Sanctuaries Board.

***Two-Adult Rule:***

At least two adults must be present at all times during all programming with children and youth. If only two adults are present, then they should be unrelated and should not be married. Married couples and related adults can work together when a third person is present.

***Adult/Child Ratios:***

*Definitions:*

*Primary Caregiver- An adult, who is preferably 21 years of age, but at least 18 years old.*

*Secondary Caregiver- A caregiver who serves in addition to the two adult primary caregivers. The secondary caregiver shall be at least three years older than the oldest participant in the program.*

Where similar ages of children are gathered together, the ratio for the younger age group shall apply.

Infants

For programs involving infants, the minimum standard is that two adult primary caregivers must be present at all times. When there are more than 8 children present, additional caregivers shall be added as set out below:

1-8 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers
9-10 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 1 caregiver
11-12 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 2 caregivers
13-14 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 3 caregivers

Toddlers/Twos

For programs involving toddlers and twos, the minimum standard is that two adult primary caregivers must be present at all times. When there are more than 12 children present in this age group, an additional caregiver shall be added as set out below:

1-12 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers
13-18 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 1 caregiver
19-24 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 2 caregivers

### Preschool-Kindergarten

For programs involving preschoolers and kindergartners, the minimum standard is that two adult primary caregivers must be present at all times. When there are more than 16 children present, an additional caregiver shall be added as set out below:

1-16 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers
17-20 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 1 caregiver
21-25 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 2 caregivers

### Elementary School Age and Youth

For programs involving elementary school age children and youth, the minimum standard is that two adult primary caregivers must be present at all times. When there are more than 25 children present, an additional caregiver shall be added as set out below:

1-25 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers
25-40 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 1 caregiver
Over 40 children	=	2 adult primary caregivers + 2 caregivers

Additional adult caregivers should be added to groups over 40 to continue these ratios.

### ***Special Needs Adults and Children:***

Special consideration should be given for special needs adults and children. HFUMC welcomes special needs individuals to assist in the classroom and that individual would be in addition to the prior ratio requirements of the Safe Sanctuaries policy. Special adults who assist with children or youth are required to go through the screening process.

## **4. General Rules**

### ***Lodging on Overnight Trips:***

With parental consent, children may room with other children without an adult. With parental consent, youth may room with other youth without an adult. In situations where adults must room with children or youth in a hotel, cabin, tent, or other similar situation, there must be two adults. These adults must be the same sex as the children or youth. Adults may not sleep in the same bed with children or youth unless they are the parent or guardian of that child.

### ***Open Door Rule:***

All counseling sessions shall take place in an office with a window or the door shall remain open while the office is in use and should be in a visible or highly trafficked area. This also applies to individual drop-in visitors to staff offices.

### ***Transportation:***

All Safe Sanctuaries policies, including the two-adult rule, apply to all personal vehicles and all transportation for events involving children and youth.

When driving as a group in a church vehicle, one additional qualified driver shall be present.

### ***Facilities:***

All staff doors must have windows. The exception to the two-adult rule is for the staff. In order to have conversations that require privacy, they either need to leave their door open or have a window in their door to provide the appropriate privacy while maintaining the purpose of the Safe Sanctuaries policy.

### ***Restrooms:***

No caregiver shall be alone with a child in a restroom.

### ***Adult Ministry:***

Every effort shall be made to keep all of our adults safe. In adult ministries, where adults are one-on-one with other adults, there shall be close monitoring of these relationships to ensure the safety of both adults.

### ***Awareness of Building Safety:***

Everyone should be aware that our church building is often used by groups outside our congregation. There may, at any time, be outside groups consisting of non-church members, using the building. Therefore, program responsibility begins and ends at the advertised location of the program. It is the responsibility of the parents or guardian to ensure the safety of their children and youth to and from the meeting room.

### ***Doors:***

Exterior doors will remain locked as the calendar dictates.

## **5. Children First:**

The HFUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures do not apply to the Children First program except for the policies set out in this section. HFUMC expects Children First to abide by all state laws and regulations. Children First is expected to maintain its three-star rating. If at any time, Children First falls below Tennessee's three-star rating, the Safe Sanctuaries Board will be made aware of the rating and address the situation. Children First will inform the Safe Sanctuaries Board of its plan to remedy the situation and to improve its rating.

In recognition of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, background checks will be done every five years on all staff of Children First, whether part-time or full-time. Background checks are already conducted on all employees when they are hired per state law.

Three additional teachers will be hired to work in the six classrooms where there is a single teacher. These teachers will work the 9-3 shift. This policy will be phased in over a three-year period beginning in Fall 2009.

## **6. Approval and Changes to Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures**

Following the approval of this policy by the HFUMC Council of Stewards, the Safe Sanctuaries Policy can only be changed by the Council of Stewards. The HFUMC Safe Sanctuaries Board approves the Safe Sanctuaries Procedures and can make amendments to the Procedures when necessary. The HFUMC Safe Sanctuaries Board will be held accountable to the HFUMC Council of Stewards.

## **7. Outside Groups**

Leaders of outside groups, involving children and youth, are strongly encouraged to attend Safe Sanctuaries training. All outside groups will be given a copy of the HFUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy and are required to sign for receipt of the policy. Though HFUMC recommends these outside groups to comply with our Safe Sanctuaries policy, they are not required to do so.

## **8. Accountability**

Staff will be expected to enforce the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures in their individual areas of ministry.

- A. Pastoral leadership will be held accountable to the Annual Conference for the full implementation of this policy after it is adopted.
- B. The Program Staff will be held accountable for implementing this policy for 2009 summer events and all other programs by August 2009.
- C. All other compensated workers will be held accountable for assisting and enabling the compliance with the church policy after it is approved.