

WESLEY FREEDOM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
ABUSE PREVENTION PROCEDURES
Effective September 1, 2019

I. Definitions:

- A. Abuse – As defined in Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law 5-701 (b), Abuse has the following meaning: (1) the physical or mental injury of a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed; or (2) sexual abuse of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not.
- B. Sexual abuse as defined in Md. Code Ann. Fam. Law 5-701 (x)(1) means any act that involves sexual molestation or exploitation of a child by a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member. This includes incest, rape, or sexual offense in any degree, sodomy, and unnatural or perverted sexual practices.
- C. WFUMC or the Church – Wesley Freedom United Methodist Church.
- D. BWC – Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church.
- E. LDT – the WFUMC Leadership Development Team, which is responsible for the functions of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee as defined in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.
- F. Child(ren) – Person(s) under the age of 10.
- G. Youth – Person(s) aged 10-17.
- H. Adult(s) – Person(s) aged 18 or over.
- I. Regular Workers – All Church employees, including clergy hired directly by the Church, as well as any volunteers who work with Children or Youth in any Church-sponsored activity(ies) on a regular basis or for an extended period of time. Such volunteers include by way of example but not limitation, regular Youth leaders, regular Sunday School teachers, Vacation Bible School teachers, and chaperones for retreats. This does not include persons who are covered by other similar policies instituted by the BWC, including by way of example but not of limitation clergy appointed to WFUMC by the bishop.
- J. Occasional Workers – All volunteers who are not Regular Workers and who work with Children or Youth in any Church-sponsored activity. This term includes by way of

example but not limitation, persons who help in a Sunday School class or drive a Child or Youth to an offsite activity. This term does not cover Youth or Adults who car-pool youth to or from UMYF meetings, nor does it cover parents or guardians who attend an activity solely for the purpose of accompanying their own Child or Youth.

- K. Youth Workers – Youth who volunteer to assist with Children or Youth in any Church-sponsored activity. Adults who are 18 years old can be treated as Youth Workers while they are in high school and during the summer after they graduate from high school if they are serving in roles usually assigned to Youth Workers.
- L. Sex Offender Website – the U.S. Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Registry Website (www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/registry.htm) or a similar website with content used for public reporting.
- M. Questionnaire form – the Questionnaire and Response Form on Lay Sexual Misconduct provided by the BWC.
- N. Cover Letter – the letter described in Section II.G. below.
- O. Reporting Year – each September 1 through August 30.

II. Congregational Education

- A. Pastors are encouraged and expected to inform the congregation on issues of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse and on the church and conference policies related to same. Pastors are encouraged to become familiar with the issues of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse through reading, study, continuing education, lectionary groups, clergy support groups, etc.
- B. WFUMC shall make reasonable efforts to enter into a church-wide discussion on these same issues. This may include: newsletter articles, Education Committee meetings, LDT meetings, Youth Council meetings, parents' meetings, small group settings, or meetings of the Church Council.
- C. At or about the beginning of each Reporting Year, parents of Children and Youth shall be invited to attend a training/orientation that includes reviewing Church policies and procedures and state law relating to abuse.
- D. WFUMC shall offer annual Christian education on human sexuality for Youth and their parents/guardians.

- D. WFUMC shall take reasonable steps to make available to the congregation, either on premises or by referral to the BWC, resources about sexual misconduct and abuse, as well as copies of the church's Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures.
- E. WFUMC shall take reasonable steps to attempt to post information to inform Children and Youth of an agency or a person outside as well as within the Church whom they can contact for advice and help if they have suffered abuse.
- F. LDT shall write and update as needed a Cover Letter:
 - 1. explaining: (a) the purpose of the Questionnaire form; (b) the purpose of the BWC Sexual Ethics Policy for Ministry Leaders; and (c) the role of the LDT;
 - 2. containing the following sentence: "It is the strong assumption by the Baltimore-Washington Conference that the great majority of the workers with children and youth within the Conference are above reproach;" and
 - 3. including any additional information LDT believes is relevant.
- G. WFUMC shall make reasonable efforts to provide new members with information about its Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures.

III. Application, Training, Retention, and Staffing Requirements for Workers with Children or Youth

- A. Prior to service or after a break in service of at least 12 consecutive months, all Regular Workers shall:
 - 1. complete a live or an on-line training/orientation, including a quiz, that includes reviewing the Church's Abuse Prevention Procedures and state law relating to abuse;
 - 2. attend any training/orientation offered by WFUMC that is specific to the ministry in which the Regular Worker will be participating;
 - 3. complete the Questionnaire form;
 - 4. submit three (3) Reference forms completed by persons who are not related to the Regular Worker by blood or marriage.
 - 5. sign a Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth form; and,
 - 6. complete the Permission to Obtain a Background Check form and the on-line process for performing a background check.

7. In lieu of number 6 above, a Regular Worker can obtain a current background check from the Maryland State Police Department and provide same to the LDT.

B. Annually prior to each September 30, all Regular Workers shall:

1. complete a live or an on-line training/orientation, including a quiz, that includes reviewing the Church's Abuse Prevention Procedures and state law relating to abuse;
2. attend any training/orientation offered by WFUMC that is specific to the ministry in which the Regular Worker will be participating;
3. complete the Questionnaire form; and,
4. sign a new Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth form.

C. Every five years, returning Regular Workers who have served at WFUMC for the previous five years shall either:

1. complete the Permission to Obtain a Background Check form and the on-line process for obtaining a background check; or
2. obtain a current background check from the Maryland State Police Department and provide same to the LDT.

D. Prior to service and for each Reporting Year, all Occasional Workers shall complete the Questionnaire form.

E. Prior to service, all Youth Workers shall either: (a) submit three (3) reference forms completed by persons who are not related to the Youth Worker by blood, or (b) be interviewed by a Safe Sanctuary-trained adult member of Staff. Interviews may be conducted in a small group setting.

F. Prior to each Reporting Year, all Youth Workers shall:

1. attend an orientation/screening session that includes educating the Youth about appropriate interactions with Children; and
2. sign a Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth form.

G. All workers shall immediately report to the LDT any changes in their answers to the Questionnaire form or any convictions that could affect their qualification to work with Children or Youth.

- H. Prior to service and for each Reporting Year, all LDT members shall:
1. attend a training/orientation that includes reviewing the Church's Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures and state law relating to abuse;
 2. complete the Questionnaire form; and
 3. sign a Covenant of Confidentiality.
- I. Clergy appointed by the bishop must satisfy the policies and procedures of the BWC on abuse prevention.
- J. All outside groups involving Children or Youth that use the Church building, whether long-term or short-term groups, must take responsibility for those in their organizations who work with Children or Youth. For each Reporting Year, LDT or its designee shall contact all such groups and provide them with two options:
1. The group may elect to ask those who work with Children or Youth to meet and sign the Questionnaire form; or
 2. The head of the group may make a signed statement attesting that all those who work with Children or Youth, including parents and volunteers, have been screened and asked the equivalent (at the very least) of the questions on the Questionnaire form.
- K. All outside vendors who are in the Church buildings at regular, scheduled times to provide services under contract with the Church, including but not limited to the cleaning service, shall attest that their employees meet the minimum qualifications established in this policy prior to allowing their employees access to the building. When practical, the contract between the Church and the vendor shall include the following statement:
- Vendor has reviewed the Wesley Freedom United Methodist Church Abuse Prevention Procedures and expressly warrants that any employee of vendor permitted to work at the church shall not have convictions that are included in Section V, paragraphs B(1) and (2). Vendor further certifies that it conducts background checks on its employees, including conducting a review consistent with Section V, paragraph B(3).
- L. Prior to service and for each Reporting Year, all paid and volunteer workers in the Early Years Learning Center shall complete Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) requirements.
- M. Any person refusing to complete the necessary forms shall not be considered for staff positions or volunteer work with WFUMC.

N. Retention.

1. Workers who fail to comply with the Church's Abuse Prevention Procedures may be asked to modify their behavior, to select another type of activity, and/or to discontinue their service.
2. Permission to work with Children or Youth may be revoked by the LDT at any time and for any reason in the sole discretion of the LDT.
3. A person aggrieved of the decision of the LDT to allow such person to work with Children or Youth may request that the senior pastor review the matter. The decision of the senior pastor is final.

O. Staffing

1. The LDT recognizes that it is oftentimes difficult to staff all activities with volunteer workers. However, the following guidelines have been established in order to protect Children and Youth from abuse:
 - a. Regular Workers, except employees, must either:
 - i. have attended WFUMC for at least 6 months and preferably be members of the Church (or be planning to become members in the near future), or
 - ii. be paired with another worker who satisfies the requirement of III.O.1.a.i.
 - b. Occasional Workers must be paired with another worker who satisfies the requirement of III.O.1.a.i.
 - c. Youth Workers must be paired with another worker who is not also a Youth Worker and satisfies the requirements of III.O.1.a.i..
 - d. No Youth Worker shall be assigned a position in which he/she is fully responsible for Children or Youth.
2. In the event that there are not sufficient volunteers as set forth above to staff activities, the workers who are present should exercise reasonable care to ensure compliance with Section VII below.

IV. Time To Complete Requirements

- A. On September 1 of each year, LDT or its designee(s) shall begin distributing the Questionnaire form, Cover Letter, Reference form, Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth form, Permission to Obtain a Background Check form, Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) Summary of Rights, and Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures. In doing so, LDT may allow councils, committees, employees, and volunteers within the Church to distribute the documents as well as may make the documents reasonably available at the Church.
- B. By September 30 of each year, LDT or its designee(s) shall collect all completed Questionnaire forms, Reference Forms, Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth forms, and Permission to Obtain a Background Check forms. It shall be the responsibility of workers, whether Regular Workers, Occasional Workers or Youth Workers to ensure that the required documents are returned to the LDT in a timely manner. Failure to submit the required documents to the LDT may result in disqualification from participation.
- C. The on-line training/orientation and ministry-specific orientations must be completed annually. It shall be the responsibility of workers, whether Regular Workers, Occasional Workers or Youth Workers to ensure that they complete the training/orientation sessions as required. Failure to complete a training/orientation session may result in disqualification from participation.
- D. The Questionnaire, Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth, and training/orientation quiz must be completed for each Reporting Year and are valid only until September 30 of the following Reporting Year.
- E. Any worker who has not met the requirements of Section III.A, through F. by September 30 will be required to do so before working with Children or Youth.
- F. LDT or its designee(s), directly or through Church councils, committees, employees, and volunteers shall make the Questionnaire form, Cover Letter, Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth form, Permission to Obtain a Background Check form, and Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures available throughout the year. Orientation sessions will be offered periodically during the year.

V. Procedure for Screening and Approving Workers.

- A. The following workers must complete an on-line background check, which includes a criminal records check, or obtain a current background check from the Maryland State Police Department and provide same to the LDT or its designee(s):

1. all first-time Regular Workers;
 2. all returning Regular Workers who have continuously served at WFUMC for the previous five years and whose backgrounds have not been checked for five years;
 3. all returning Regular Workers who have had a break in their service of at least 12 consecutive months at any time since their last background check.
- B. The LDT Review Committee shall apply the following guidelines in reviewing background checks that include information regarding criminal convictions:
1. Any person convicted of a crime of violence involving a family member or child, “abuse” as defined above, or “sexual abuse” as defined above shall not be permitted to work with Children or Youth.
 2. Any person convicted of any crime requiring that such person be registered on or reported to a Sex Offender Website shall not be permitted to work with Children or Youth.
 3. For other convictions, the LDT Review Committee shall consider the following factors in determining whether to allow a person to work with Children and Youth:
 - a. The nature and severity of the conviction;
 - b. The age of the person at the time of the offense and the time that has passed since the conviction or the completion of the sentence;
 - c. The relation of the conviction to the nature and type of work to be performed; and
 - d. The person’s history subsequent to the conviction.
 4. For convictions or motor vehicle infractions that are minor and are completely unrelated to and have no bearing upon a person's fitness for working with Children or Youth, the Senior Pastor may determine that the conviction or motor vehicle infraction does not have to be considered by the LDT Review Committee.
- C. When the LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) receives a Questionnaire form with a “no” response to all questions and all other required, completed forms:
1. The LDT Review Committee shall review the references submitted by the workers as required above.
 2. To the extent necessary or appropriate, the references may be contacted in any manner the LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) deems appropriate.

3. Other than if the LDT Review Committee determines that other information is discovered as described in Paragraph E of this Section, the LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) shall be authorized on behalf of the LDT to permit the person to work with Children and Youth.

D. When the LDT Review Committee receives a Questionnaire form with a “yes” response to any of the questions:

1. The LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) will request the person signing the Questionnaire form to complete a Permission to Obtain a Background Check form and the process for an on-line background check, or to provide the LDT with a current background check from the Maryland State Police Department, if the person has not already done so. If the signer refuses to do either of the above, the signer shall not be approved to work with Children or Youth.

The LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) shall attempt to contact the references provided on the Questionnaire form and may request more information from the signer. The references may be contacted in any manner the LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) deem appropriate.

2. After gathering all of the information, the LDT Review Committee will inform the entire LDT of the nature of the answers on the Questionnaire form and the information obtained from checking references and criminal records in a “descriptive manner” without identifying the identity of the signer. After hearing the presentation, the LDT may choose to ask for the identity of the signer in order to make a more informed decision.
3. The LDT is to weigh all of the gathered information (refer to Section V.B.) and then make a determination about whether or not the signer may be approved as a worker with Children or Youth. The LDT is encouraged to work within the following parameters:
 - a. If the signer is able to provide sufficient documentation that the charges against him/her were dismissed or were groundless, the signer may be approved to work with Children or Youth;
 - b. If the signer is unable to provide sufficient documentation that the charges against him/her were dismissed or were groundless, the signer may not be approved to work with Children or Youth;
 - c. If the LDT needs help or assistance in making a determination, the LDT may contact the District Superintendent for WFUMC.

E. Other Situations:

1. If the LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) questions whether a signer should be approved to work with Children or Youth (e.g., no or negative reference, criminal record, information that contradicts an answer(s) on the Questionnaire form, or negative information from a member of the Church), the LDT Review Committee, in its discretion, may take some or all of the following steps:
 - a. The LDT Review Committee will determine the nature and scope of additional information that may be needed in order to make a recommendation regarding whether approval is appropriate;
 - b. The LDT Review Committee may request more information from the signer, such as additional references;
 - c. The LDT Review Committee may conduct a personal interview with the signer and/or the signer's references; and/or
 - d. The LDT Review Committee may request the signer to grant permission for and pay the cost of a criminal record check.
2. After gathering all of the information, the LDT Review Committee shall inform the entire LDT of the information obtained in a "descriptive manner" without identifying the identity of the signer. After hearing the presentation, the LDT may choose to ask for the identity of the signer in order to make a more informed decision.
3. The LDT is to weigh all of the gathered information and then make a determination about whether or not the person may be approved to work with Children or Youth. The LDT is encouraged to work within the following parameters:
 - a. If it is reasonable to conclude that the signer falsified any answer(s) on the Questionnaire form, the person shall not be approved to work with Children or Youth;
 - b. If the LDT needs help or assistance in making a determination, the LDT may contact the District Superintendent for WFUMC.

F. Miscellaneous:

1. LDT shall identify no fewer than 3 LDT members, along with a pastor who is not the senior pastor, to serve on a Review Committee to collect, review, and organize forms, check references, request and review background/criminal records, search the Sex Offender Website, and perform other functions designated in or implied by these procedures.
2. The LDT or LDT Review Committee may designate appropriate staff member(s) or volunteer(s) of the Church to assist with the functions of the LDT Review Committee. Additional staff and/or volunteers may conduct the training/orientation sessions.
3. Such staff member(s) or volunteer(s) designated by the LDT or LDT Review Committee must complete a Covenant of Confidentiality.
4. For any reference checks obtained orally, a Reference Check Form must be completed by the person contacting the reference.
5. A person aggrieved of the decision of the LDT to allow such person to work with Children or Youth may request that the senior pastor review the matter. The decision of the senior pastor is final.

G. Identification of Approved Workers

1. All Regular Workers shall be issued an identification badge by the LDT. The LDT shall designate the contents of the badge, which at a minimum shall contain the name of the person and the ministry year.
2. All persons working with Children and Youth shall be required to wear such identification badges at all times while working with Children and Youth.

VI. Maintaining Information and Documents

- A. For each Reporting Year, the LDT Review Committee or its designee(s) shall maintain records identifying: (1) persons who have been approved as Regular Workers; (2) persons who have been approved as Occasional Workers; and (3) persons who have been approved as Youth Workers.
- B. LDT members, pastors, staff, and volunteers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of personal, sensitive information provided by workers, references, and civil or criminal authorities in connection with screening workers. To that end, each person involved in the process shall sign a Covenant of Confidentiality as a condition to being granted

access to the information. In the event that any person refuses to sign a Covenant of Confidentiality, such person shall not be granted access to the information.

- C. LDT shall keep for a period of at least 22 years all completed Questionnaires, Reference forms, Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth forms, Permission to Obtain a Background Check forms, Covenants of Confidentiality, and documents obtained or created during checks of references, background/criminal records, and the Sex Offender Website. In its discretion, the LDT may maintain such records electronically or in some other secure format that would allow for retention and access to the records.
- D. LDT shall keep all completed Questionnaire forms, Reference forms, Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth forms, Permission to Obtain a Background Check forms, Covenants of Confidentiality, and documents obtained or created during checks of references, background/criminal records, and the Sex Offender Website in a secure place on the Church property. Such documents are not to be mailed to any other committee of the Church or to the BWC.

VII. Requirements for Church-Sponsored Activities Involving Children or Youth.

- A. The senior pastor is responsible for determining whether church-sponsored activities conform to the procedures in this section and whether any such activity should be cancelled due to noncompliance with these procedures. If the senior pastor is unavailable to make that determination, the associate pastor will be responsible for doing so.
- B. For an activity involving Children or Youth that takes place on the premises of WFUMC, no fewer than two non-related Adults, at least one of whom is a Regular Worker at least 5 years older than the Children or Youth with whom they are working, must be present at all times, except that only one Regular Worker may be present in the following situations:
 - 1. in the event of an emergency (e.g., illness or injury of a Child or Youth, fire, storm, or terrorist threat), when reasonably necessary for the safety or well-being of any person or to comply with emergency procedures;
 - 2. for a reasonably short period of time (e.g. to find an additional teacher or leader, to retrieve supplies needed for a class, to counsel or comfort a Child or Youth, or to wait for a parent or guardian to pick-up a Child or Youth), provided the door to the room either has a window or is left open, or the Adult is with the Child(ren) or Youth in a public area such as a hallway or entrance to a building;

3. for an entire activity (e.g., a Sunday School class, a small group meeting, or Vacation Bible School), provided: (1) a hall monitor is present during the entire activity or event, and (2) the door to the room either has a window or is left open.
 4. when (1) groups are meeting in rooms that are adjacent to or across the hall from each other, and (2) the adjoining door or the doors to both rooms are left open.
- C. When babysitting is provided for an onsite activity, one or more Youth Workers may provide the babysitting without an adult in the room if: (1) the babysitting room is adjacent to or across the hall from the room where the activity is taking place, and (2) the adjoining door or the doors to both rooms are left open.
- D. For an activity involving Children or Youth that takes place off the premises of WFUMC, the leader(s) of the activity will put procedures in place that conform as much as reasonably possible to the two-adult rule for on-site activities in paragraph VII.A. above. Such procedures will depend upon factors such as the nature, location, and duration of the activity. For group meetings in public places, such as restaurants, only one Regular Worker may be present for the entire meeting.
- E. For activities involving Children or Youth, the following adult-to-child/youth ratios are recommended:
1. 1 to 3 for nursery;
 2. 1 to 5 for elementary;
 3. 1 to 7 for middle school;
 4. 1 to 8 for high school; and
 5. when WFUMC is hosting a community event that has been generally advertised to the public, such as a speaker or concert, the aforementioned ratios will not apply, and parents or guardians are expected to provide supervision to the Children or Youth attending the event. WFUMC shall not be responsible for supervision of community events.
- F. For all activities involving Children or Youth, separate sleeping, bathroom, and shower accommodations will be provided for males and females. Adult workers shall not share a bed with a Child or Youth unless the Adult is related to the Child or Youth. Transgender accommodations will be provided upon request and to the extent reasonably possible.
- G. When transporting Children or Youth on behalf of WFUMC, the following procedures to protect Children and Youth from abuse are recommended to the extent possible and practical:
1. Drivers should be approved workers by the LDT or its designee(s);
 2. Drivers must be at least 25 years of age;

3. Drivers must have a driving background check;
 4. Drivers must have a current license and insurance;
 5. Drivers are responsible for letting the Safe Sanctuary Administrator, Director of Youth Ministries, or Pastor know, if their license becomes suspended or revoked;
 6. Drivers should attempt to travel in caravans when possible;
 7. Absent permission from a parent or guardian, two non-related Adults should be in each vehicle. If that is not possible under the existing circumstances, the Adult and his/her passengers should meet at the church and return as a group to the church for the Children or Youth to be picked up by their parents or guardians.
 8. No Child or Youth who is unrelated to the Adult should be permitted to remain in a vehicle alone with the Adult. In the event that a Child or Youth remains alone with the driver, the Child or Youth should be permitted to remain in the vehicle while waiting for pick up and the driver should remain outside of the vehicle until the parent or guardian arrives.
 9. If possible, at least one Adult in each vehicle should have a cell phone.
- H. The Church will not allow inappropriate behavior of a Child or Youth that is disruptive and/or detrimental to the operation of the Church and its activities or the safety of other persons. Inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to, intentionally hurting another person, spitting, biting, or possessing any type of weapon. Discipline is the art of helping a Child or Youth learn to control himself/herself and show respect for the rights of others. The ultimate goal is to help each Child and Youth develop self-discipline by establishing age-appropriate routines in a loving and nurturing atmosphere. Opportunities will be provided for Children and Youth to experience natural and logical consequences in a safe and positive environment. More responsibility will be given to Children and Youth as they are able to assume it. Workers with Children or Youth must adhere to the following discipline procedure:
1. The worker should verbally instruct the Child or Youth as to the behavior that is expected of him/her.
 2. The Child or Youth may be redirected to another activity.
 3. If the Child or Youth refuses to behave as requested, the worker may ask him/her to sit or stand for a reasonable period of time away from the remaining Children or Youth in a supervised location. A reasonable period of time is one minute for each age of the child. For example, a five year old child may be asked to sit for five minutes.

4. If after being separated the Child or Youth continues to behave inappropriately, the worker may:
 - a. refer the Child or Youth to a church leader for further action (such as a Sunday School superintendent or pastor); or
 - b. contact the parents or guardians of the Child or Youth to request that he/she be immediately picked-up.
 5. A Child or Youth who consistently refuses to behave as requested may be suspended from any Church activity.
 6. Workers shall not use corporal punishment and doing so may result in disqualification from future services to WFUMC.
 7. Workers shall not verbally abuse a Child or Youth and doing so may result in disqualification from future services to WFUMC.
 8. Notwithstanding the procedures in Sections VII.H.1-7 above, if a worker reasonably believes that a Child or Youth poses a threat to the safety of another person, the worker should take reasonable measures to address the threat. Examples of such measures include using a safe-hold technique (i.e. crossing the child's arms in front and grasping each wrist from behind) with the Child or Youth to prevent imminent harm to the Child or Youth or to any other person who is at risk from the behavior, removing all Children and Youth to a place of safety, notifying the person in charge of the activity or event, contacting all parents and guardians to pick-up their children, and contacting police and/or EMS. The worker should avoid placing himself/herself at risk of physical harm.
- I. Workers should generally refrain from physical contact with Children and Youth. WFUMC believes, however, that some forms of physical contact are appropriate and even necessary for the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of Children and Youth, especially in a church community where the goal is to provide a caring, nurturing, and welcoming environment for Children and Youth. For these reasons, reasonable and appropriate physical contact with Children and Youth is permitted, for example:
1. to assist a Child or Youth who is ill or injured;
 2. to prevent imminent harm to any person;
 3. to comfort, congratulate, show compassion, etc. for any Child or Youth through, e.g., a hug, placing an arm around the shoulder, a pat on the back, or holding a young Child, especially when such contact is initiated by the Child or Youth or when the Child or Youth is visibly upset, frightened, etc.

- J. When dropping off a Child or Youth in the nursery through grade 5, a parent or guardian must sign in the Child or Youth.
- K. When picking up a Child or Youth in the nursery through grade 5, a parent or guardian must sign out the Child or Youth before being permitted to leave any activity, unless the parent or guardian gives written permission for the Child or Youth to be picked up by another Adult or a family member.
- L. Attendance of Youth in grades 6 through 12 must be maintained. Youth in grades 6 through 12 may leave any activity without a parent, guardian, or other adult unless for Youth in grades 6 through 8, the parent or guardian submits in writing to the leader of the activity a request for the Youth to be kept at the activity until an Adult picks him/her up. Such request will not apply to community events that are generally advertised to the public.

VIII. Reporting and Responding to Incidents of Abuse

- A. Maryland law provides that a person in this State who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect shall notify the local department of social services or the appropriate law enforcement agency. Md. Ann. Code. Fam Law. § 5-705.
- B. If a worker has reason to believe that a Child or Youth has been abused or neglected, the worker needs to contact the Carroll County Department of Social Services (410-386-3434). If a person has questions, he or she can call this number or go to www.dhr.state.md.us.
- C. In addition to the reporting requirements to law enforcement or Carroll County Department of Social Services, if a worker has reason to believe that a Child or Youth has been abused on Church property or at a Church-sponsored activity, the worker must follow some or all of the following until law enforcement, civil authority, the Pastor or Chair of the LDT arrives:
 - 1. Follow the procedures contained in the BWC Sexual Ethics Policy for Ministry Leaders. This can be obtained through the Church office or the BWC Conference Center. After hours, Workers should contact the Pastor or Chair of the LDT for guidance and advice, subject to the procedures contained below.
 - 2. Take appropriate and immediate steps to assure the safety of the alleged victim until his/her parent or guardian or a civil authority arrives.
 - 3. Assure the alleged victim that he or she has done nothing wrong. The alleged abuser should not be confronted with anger or hostility. The person reporting the incident

and the alleged victim each should be permitted adequate time in which to express what happened in the incident without coaching or intervention by others.

4. The Senior Pastor shall be notified as soon as possible. If the Senior Pastor is not available or is involved in the incident, the Associate Pastor shall be notified. If the Senior Pastor/Associate Pastor is not available or is involved in the incident, the Chair of LDT shall be notified. For the remaining portions of these procedures, the person receiving notification under this paragraph will be referred to as the Contact Person.
5. The parent or guardian of the alleged victim shall be notified as soon as possible. The Contact Person will decide who should contact the parent or guardian. If the nature of the alleged abuse is such that any physical injury could have occurred, the parent or guardian should be advised to have the child examined immediately by a qualified physician.
6. An Incident Report shall be completed as soon as possible by the person reporting the incident and statements should be obtained from all witnesses.
7. The Church's liability insurance company shall be notified as soon as reasonably possible.
8. Everyone involved in the incident should cooperate in any investigation conducted by the insurance company, the Church, the BWC, the agency to which a report has been filed, and/or other governmental authority.
9. The confidentiality of all parties should be maintained to the extent possible and practical.
10. All media inquiries should be directed to the Contact Person. Everyone else's statements to the media should be "no comment."

Related Forms:

1. Poster/Notice to inform Children and Youth of an agency or person outside and inside the Church whom they can contact for advice and help if they have been abused.
2. Questionnaire form
3. Cover Letter for the Questionnaire form
4. Participation Covenant for Workers with Children or Youth form
5. Reference form
6. Reference Check Form
7. Permission to Obtain a Background Check form
8. FCRA Summary of Rights
9. Pre-Adverse Action Letter
10. Adverse Action Letter
11. Permission Slip for Children
12. Request for Middle School Youth to not be released without an adult.
13. Covenant of Confidentiality
14. Incident Report

References:

- The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2000, pp. 180-182.
- The Baltimore-Washington Conference's Sexual Ethics Policy for Ministry Leaders.
- "Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church" by Joy Thornburg Melton, published by Discipleship Resources, reprinted 2005, 2004, 20003, 2002, 2000, and related video by Joy Thornburg Melton, obtained through the BWC.
- Information and forms from Church Mutual Insurance Co., www.churchmutual.com
- Maryland State Law.
- Central Pennsylvania Conference website, www.safesanctuaries.org.