

A Checklist for Creating Your Own Safe Sanctuary© Policy

The Safe Sanctuary Resolution of the Arkansas Annual Conference adopted in 2014 states that all local congregations should:

1. develop and implement an ongoing education plan for the congregation and its leaders on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention;
2. adopt screening procedures (use of application forms, interviews, reference checks, background clearance, and so forth) for workers (paid and unpaid) directly or indirectly involved in the care of children and youth;
3. develop and implement safety procedures for church activities such as having two or more non related adults present in classroom or activity; leaving doors open and installing half doors or windows in doors or halls; providing hall monitors; instituting sign-in and sign-out procedures for children ages ten or younger; and so forth;
4. advise children and young persons of an agency or a person outside as well as within the local church whom they can contact for advice and help if they have suffered abuse;
5. carry liability insurance that includes sexual abuse coverage;
6. assist the development of awareness and self-protection skills for children and youth through special curriculum and activities; and
7. Be familiar with annual conference and other church policies regarding clergy sexual misconduct.

The needs and resources of local congregations vary significantly and therefore local policies and procedures designed to accomplish these things will and should differ. The following checklist is intended as a resource for topics to consider when drafting a local church policy, and not as a substitute for reasonable decision making with the guidance of clergy and local legal counsel.

Safe Sanctuary©Checklist

1. Staff Selection

Age

- ◆ At least 18 years old
- ◆ At least four years older than any youth they will be supervising

Application

- ◆ Complete and sign an application and related waivers giving permission to check references and background information
- ◆ All records will be kept in a confidential in a secure location

References

- ◆ 3 personal references,
- ◆ unrelated to the applicant
- ◆ who have known the applicant for at least two years.

Interview

- ◆ Provide a personal interview

Background Checks

- ◆ Arkansas Maltreatment Registry
- ◆ Criminal Background Check
- ◆ Are persons listed on the Arkansas child or adult maltreatment or similar registries, or who have criminal convictions of a violent, neglectful, abusive or sexual nature will not be permitted to serve in a capacity involving direct contact with children/youth/impaired adults?

Training

- ◆ Do all persons in supervisory capacity over children/youth/impaired adults undergo yearly training?
- ◆ Does the training include a review of the church's policy and procedures?
- ◆ Does the training include information regarding the nature information regarding the nature and indicators of adult and child maltreatment?
- ◆ Does the training include information regarding Arkansas law dealing with reporting and responding to suspected maltreatment?

Agree

- ◆ Sign, annually, a statement indicating his or her understanding and agreement to abide by this policy and any related procedures

Membership

- ◆ Must be members or active participants of the local congregation for at least six months.

2. Staff Supervision

Supervision

- ◆ No child, youth or impaired adult will be left unsupervised at any time

Two Adults

- ◆ Two unrelated adults or "floater"
- ◆ No one in restroom alone w/child/youth/impaired adult with door closed
- ◆ Where will diaper changing occur?
- ◆ One-on-one counseling with children, youth and impaired adults will take place where other adults are immediately available in a room with an open door and/or in sight of others

Youth Volunteers

- ◆ Will remain under the direct supervision of adult staff and/or volunteers
- ◆ Will have no independent supervisory responsibility of others
- ◆ Will not be left alone with children, youth or impaired adults
- ◆ Will not be alone with any other staff or volunteer at any time

Boundaries

- ◆ A statement about adults and youth volunteers respecting appropriate physical and emotional boundaries

Open Doors

- ◆ Any parent or guardian may attend and observe events at any time, unannounced.

Check-in/out

- ◆ Children will be checked into and out of events only by parents, legal guardians or designees
- ◆ Youth events will have a pre-determined start and finish time which will be published to the youth's parents/guardians
- ◆ Youth will sign in and sign out of events

Outside Access

- ◆ Access to phone during church sponsored events.

Transportation

- ◆ Drivers must go through the same selection and training process as other staff/volunteers
- ◆ Drivers must be at least 21 years of age
- ◆ Persons who have been convicted of any offense pertaining to driving while intoxicated or impaired within the five years preceding his or her application will not be allowed to transport children, youth or impaired adults during any church sanctioned events.
- ◆ Youth will not be permitted as drivers during church-sponsored events
- ◆ Drivers must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance
- ◆ Church owned vehicles will be insured
- ◆ Drivers will not transport a non-related child, youth or impaired adult alone
- ◆ Children under the age of 6 or who weigh less than 60 pounds will be restrained in a safety seat

Off Campus/Overnight Events

- ◆ Written permission of a parent/guardian will be obtained prior to the event
- ◆ Parents/guardians will provide contact and medical information
- ◆ Parents/guardians will provide medical permission and liability waivers
- ◆ One adult may not take one child, youth or impaired adult on an overnight or off campus event alone
- ◆ Males and females will be provided separate sleeping areas
- ◆ Co-ed groups should have both male and female staff/adult volunteers present
- ◆ Whenever possible, adults shall not share the same hotel or cabin with children/youth/impaired adults and at least three persons shall be assigned to each room or cabin
- ◆ Adults will make frequent checks on children, youth and impaired adults or as deemed prudent under the circumstances
- ◆ Adults will not occupy the same sleeping bag or bed with a child/youth/impaired adult
- ◆ Dress code?

Social Media

- ◆ No posting of pictures or comments referencing any child, youth or impaired adult at any church-sponsored event on any internet site
- ◆ Staff may post pictures with written permission. Photos or comments will not include personally identifiable information.
- ◆ Text messages, emails and other communications between adults and staff/volunteers will be made by group communication

3. Environment and Resource Use

Location

- ◆ Events held at appropriate locations of the church
- ◆ Children, youth and impaired adults will be discouraged from being elsewhere.

Doors/Windows

- ◆ Doors to rooms remain open when occupied or have a window
- ◆ Windows not have things on them that restrict visibility

Outside Groups

- ◆ Agree, in writing to abide by this church's Safe Sanctuary policy or have a comparable policy
- ◆ Agree in writing to release the church and it's members and staff from liability in case of accident or other allegations.

Insurance

- ◆ The church will maintain adequate insurance to cover the scope of its ministries

4. Responding to Suspected Maltreatment

- ◆ Anyone may make a report of suspected maltreatment without obtaining permission and without fear of retaliation.
- ◆ Mandatory reporters must report immediately
- ◆ Outline procedure for reporting, paperwork to be filed and who to notify.

5. Church Participation by Registered Sex Offenders

- ◆ Outline policy and procedures for a Registered Sex Offender must follow in order to participate in the life of the congregation.

6. Review

- ◆ By whom will this policy be reviewed annually?
- ◆ Documentation of review.