

# A Checklist for Creating Your Own Safe Sanctuary Policy



(It is better to put too little in your policy, than to put in something that you do not plan to monitor or implement)

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** In recruiting and hiring volunteers and paid staff to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults or in any position of authority, a consideration of age must be undertaken (typically 18 years of age or at least 4 years older than the age of the persons they are working to serve).
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Two adult rule:** Two non-related adults or one adult with the door open and a "floater" monitoring frequently.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Check-in/check-out Procedure:** Churches should evaluate the need for check-in/checkout procedures and/or attendance logs for events/programs.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Open Doors:** An open door/window in door environment is one of the best protective measures.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Reference Checks:** It is recommended that church leaders check **at least two** references for each primary worker. The references may be done by phone, email, or in person.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Screening Application: Application** Careful thought should be given to the application process. A sample staff/volunteer application can be found in the back of Joy Melton's book [Safe Sanctuaries](#).
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Background Checks:** It is best practice for all clergy, paid staff and volunteers who have supervisory responsibility for children, youth (e.g. youth group leaders), vulnerable persons and all other church employees, to the extent permitted by law, prior to employment, to determine current or historic child abuse or sexual misconduct, criminal records, violent or pedophilic behavior. It is recommended that churches engage the service of a background investigation service. The Conference recommends the following:
  - To perform a Background check all applicants must sign "Authorization and Request for Criminal Background Check" and a good practice to have applicants sign a "Participation Covenant Statement" form as part of the application process.**

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- \_\_\_\_\_ **Prior Convictions:** There are a number of convictions which indicate an individual may not be a suitable candidate to work or volunteer.

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\_\_\_\_\_ **Confidentiality of Information:** The church will keep confidential all information received (this could be pastor or assigned lay person and files must be locked and accessible only to assigned person or pastor). The Arkansas Conference recommends *Background Information Systems of America* - [www.criminalscan.com](http://www.criminalscan.com)) and an *Arkansas Child Maltreatment* form. Each service will have mandatory authorizations paperwork which must be signed by the applicant/volunteer prior to use of the service; failure to obtain prior authorization is a violation of law.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Training:** It is advisable for all who work with children, youth and vulnerable persons to receive training. Training is also available for helping a local church develop a Safe Sanctuary policy. An online training can be found at [www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org) under Safe Sanctuary resources. For more information about training or policy information contact Karen Swales, 479-751-1994.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Verification of Reading of Policy Statement:** It is recommended Upon receipt of the this policy statement, the volunteer or paid staff person will read and sign a statement that he/she has read \_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church's Child Abuse Protection Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Response by church workers to all allegations of abuse:** If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person should report the incident immediately to the pastor or designee (if the accused is the pastor, see the reporting procedures in *The Book of Discipline* or contact the Arkansas Annual Conference Bishop at 501-324-8000.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Application:** It is recommended an applicant complete and signs an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.

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\_\_\_\_\_ **Forms and Signatures:** sample backgrounds check form, covenant statement, reference form etc. can be found in Joy Melton's book *Safe Sanctuaries* or at [www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org). To process a volunteer or staff person a signature must be received if using a form. A copy of a form should be provided to the signer.