

Updated: June 13, 2015

**Doylestown United Methodist Church**

**Safe Sanctuaries**

## **Doylestown United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Program**

### **Purpose:**

Doylestown United Methodist Church (DUMC) believes that as a congregation we must be committed to the safety of the children and youth who attend our church and/or church sponsored activities. We must do everything within our power to protect these children and youth from abuse and negligence and to protect the congregation from false claims of abuse. We want DUMC to be a safe sanctuary for all.

### **Goals:**

1. To protect the children and youth who attend our church, and are involved in church sponsored programs, from harm due to abuse or negligence.
2. To protect our staff members and volunteers from the possibility of false allegations and litigation.
3. To respond appropriately to concerns related to abuse or negligence.
4. To educate our congregation about related child abuse issues.

### **Screening Requirements:**

1. All DUMC employees and volunteers who desire to work with, or are required to transport children and youth, must complete the screening process as outlined below prior to working or volunteering with children. The screening process includes:
  - a) Completing the "Employment and Volunteer Application"
  - b) Completing the "PA Child Abuse History Clearance"
  - c) Signing the "Consent/Release of Information Authorization" form.
  - d) Signing the "Acceptance of Notice Requirement" form.
  - e) Reading the "Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures".
2. If the volunteer has not lived in PA continuously for the past 10 years, an FBI background check and fingerprinting must be completed.
3. If the volunteer has lived in PA for the past 10 years, the "Volunteer Statement (to make FBI report unnecessary) must be completed.
2. Every staff member or volunteer working with children or youth at DUMC must either attend a "Safe Sanctuaries" Training Workshop, or meet individually with the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator, the Pastor of Student Ministries, the Director of Children's Ministry or the Pre-School Co-Directors depending on what age of child or youth the applicant desires to work with.
3. Any volunteer applicant for church activities must have been attending DUMC for at least 6 months prior to working with children or youth.
  - This does not apply to parent volunteers in the Pre-School program.

4. Any person who is currently under investigation for or has been convicted of a) criminal sexual conduct, b) neglect of a child or c) physical abuse of another person will not be permitted to serve as a worker with children or youth at DUMC. Church leadership reserves the right to disqualify any applicant, or review the employment status of any current staff member or volunteer, based upon application information, results of background checks or current criminal investigation.

### **Safe Sanctuaries Procedures and Policies:**

1. The “Staff/Volunteer ID Rule”

All staff and volunteers of the church will be required to wear ID badges at all times while in the church.

2. The “Members and Friends Rule”

All members and friends of Doylestown United Methodist Church who enter the church while the Pre-School is in session will be required to sign in at the office and wear a “DUMC” sticker.

- Exceptions will be made to these rules for special events such as funerals, luncheons etc. Procedures will be adjusted as necessary according to the nature of the event.

3. The “Visitor Rule”

All visitors to the church while the Pre-School is in session will be required to sign in at the office and wear a “DUMC” sticker.

- One exception to this rule is Pre-School parents who are bringing children to their classrooms between 8:55am and 9:10am, and between 12:25pm and 12:40pm.

The Lobby area will be monitored during this time by the Pre-School Co-Directors.

- Other exceptions may be made for special events such as funerals, luncheons etc.

Procedures will be adjusted as necessary according to the nature of the event.

4. Annual Orientation for Volunteers/Staff

All volunteers/staff working with children and youth will be required to attend an orientation session facilitated by the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator in which they will be informed of:

- DUMC’s policies for the prevention of child abuse.

- DUMC’s procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth.

- appropriate steps to report any suspicions or incidents of child abuse.

The Pre-School will provide annual orientation for their staff facilitated by the Pre-School Co-Directors.

5. No Volunteers under age 18 without an Adult Supervisor  
A youth volunteer will always be supervised by an adult when working with younger children. This applies particularly to the church nursery and Sunday School.
  
6. The “Two Adult Rule”  
Every effort will be made to have at least two adults present during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children under the age of 12. If two adults are not able to be present, the adult in charge must make sure that they are never alone with one child. A parent or another adult must be asked to stay until other children are present. Where youth over the age of 12 are involved in a church sponsored program, event or ministry, one adult may be permitted. However, under no circumstance, should one youth be in a situation where he/she is alone with an adult at any time. There should always be at least one other youth or adult present at all times.
  
7. The “Buddy System”  
Children and youth will not be allowed to roam the church building and grounds by themselves. The “buddy system” will be encouraged at all times. Children under the age of 6 should always be escorted by a parent. If a parent is not available the child will choose a “buddy” and will be escorted by an adult volunteer/staff member. Children and youth over age 6 should always be with a “buddy”.
  
8. Registration of all Children in Sunday School  
All children attending Sunday School classes need to be registered so parents or guardians can be contacted in an emergency situation. All classrooms will have extra registrations forms on hand in the event that a new student enters Sunday School without prior registration. Visitor forms will also be provided for parents of children who are visiting the Sunday School.
  
9. The “6 Month Rule”  
All volunteers (does not apply to staff members) must have been attending DUMC for at least 6 months before they are eligible to apply to work with children and youth.  
- This does not apply to parent volunteers in the Pre-School program.
  
10. The “Open Door Rule”  
If, due to extenuating circumstances, an adult volunteer/staff member is left alone with children under the age of 12, the door to the room will be left open and the other volunteer/staff member will return as soon as possible or alert another adult to provide assistance.

11. The “Sunday Morning Rule”

No child or youth will be permitted to roam the hallways on Sunday mornings. All children and youth must be with a parent or guardian, in worship, or in Sunday School during these times.

- Children up to and including 4<sup>th</sup> Grade must be signed in and out of Sunday School by a parent or representative of the parent. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Graders may sign themselves into Sunday School but parents should pick them up.

12. Counseling Sessions

Any counseling sessions involving staff members/volunteers and children or youth must be conducted in a staff member’s office or a room with the door open, or in a public place. Another staff member must be notified when a session is in progress.

- This also applies to events such as choir/music rehearsals and auditions.

13. The “Eye-to-Eye Pick Up and Drop Off Rule”

At all church events involving children in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and below, parents or guardians must drop off and pick up their child by entering the building and touching base with the adult in charge of the event. Children WILL NOT be released to the parking lot to meet parents or guardians. This applies especially to Children’s Choir on Thursday evenings and Bell Choir practices. Parents are asked to be on-time for pick-up so that an adult staff member/volunteer is not put in a position where they are alone waiting with a child.

14. The “Transportation Rule”

No child or youth may be transported alone in a vehicle by an adult staff member or volunteer without the verbal permission of the parents or guardian directly to the adult driver. If parents or guardians cannot be contacted, alternative transportation must be found.

15. Overnight Activities

On overnight activities involving children and/or youth, there must be at least two leaders of each gender. Separate changing areas and sleeping accommodations must be designated for males and females and designated as off limits to members of the opposite sex. When leaders are sharing sleeping accommodations with children/youth, care should be taken to ensure the privacy of children and/or youth.

16. Displays of Affection

Proper displays of affection are an important means of demonstrating our love and concern for children.

*“Touching should be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult. Touching should be with the child’s permission – resistance from the child should be respected. Touching should avoid breasts, buttocks and groin. Touching should be open and not secretive. Touching and other physical contact should be governed by the age and developmental stage of the child. Refrain from tickling and never touch a child under his/her clothing.”* (From “Child Abuse Prevention for Your Organization” by John Patterson.)

17. Suspicious Behavior

All staff and volunteers will be instructed to introduce themselves to individuals who are not properly identified and/or are wandering or loitering around areas where children or youth are present. Suspicious behavior will be immediately reported to church leadership.

18. Reporting of Suspicion of Child Abuse

Any volunteer or staff member who suspects that there has been an incident of child abuse must call Childline at 1-800-932-0313 to report it. The Senior Pastor and Director of Children’s Ministries must also be notified.

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