



HOPEWELL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

---

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

*for the protection of our Children and Ministry Partners*

***Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me." Matthew 18:5***

***"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2***

***"In particular, children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse." Social Principles of the United Methodist Church 2005-2008***

**Policy Index**

Purpose.....	2
Definitions.....	2-3
Volunteer and Worker Screening.....	4-5
Worker Disqualification.....	5
Training.....	5-6
Code of Conduct/Behavior.....	6
Prohibition of Sexual Misconduct.....	6-7
Child Abuse Reporting.....	7-9
Appendix I: Basic Procedures for Children....	10-14
Appendix II: Worker Disqualification.....	14-15
Appendix III: Report Form for Suspected Incidents of Abuse.....	16-17

Hopewell United Methodist Church  
852 Hopewell Road  
Downingtown, PA 19335  
(610)269-1545  
[www.hopewellumc.org](http://www.hopewellumc.org)

### Purpose:

We recognize our responsibility to ensure a safe, nurturing and protected environment for children to learn, serve and grow in their Christian faith. Safe Sanctuary policies are intended to protect our children and ministry partners.

### Definitions:

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Child", "children" and "minor" shall be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen (18).
2. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
3. "Worker" shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors.
4. "Employees" of this policy refer to all persons who are paid by the Church, whether full or part time, and whether employee or independent contractor.
5. "Leaders" of this policy refers to all persons who are unpaid volunteers who work with children in a supervisory capacity such as, but not limited to, Sunday School Teachers, Program Coordinators, as well as chairpersons of the Church committee(s) that oversee those programs.
6. "Staff person in charge" refers to the Director of Children's Ministries or Children's Ministry Assistant.
7. "Teen Worker" shall be defined as any worker at least twelve (12) years old or older, but under age of eighteen (18) enlisted to assist with the care of minors.
8. "Activity" refers to any children's activity or program in which children are under the supervision of staff persons, employees, leaders or workers.

- 9. "Child Abuse". As defined under Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law means any of the following:**
- (i) Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child less than 18 years of age.**
  - (ii) An act or failure to act by a perpetrator, which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.**
  - (iii) Any recent act, failure to act or series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator, which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.**
  - (iv) Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.**

**No child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child's welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care. (Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law 23 Pa.C.S.A. 6303)**

- 10. "Criminal Background Check" and "Child Abuse Clearance" is the procedure used to perform a national check of the background of adult employees, volunteer workers and leaders for criminal activity, using a national criminal records research service or other qualified agency (Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services).**

### Worker Information & Screening:

Hopewell United Methodist Church strives to provide Christian education, guidance and service opportunities for all of its members in a safe environment. In order to maintain the safest possible environment in Children's Ministry, it is our guiding principle to implement precautionary safety measures including screenings and training. Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children. Therefore, workers who serve in Children's Ministry must:

1. Complete a Worker Contact Information Form
2. Complete a Worker Disclosure Form that:
  - a. Authorizes staff to conduct criminal background checks and child abuse clearances on workers, including employees, staff, volunteer workers and leaders.
  - b. Affirms that the employee, volunteer, worker, staff and/or leader have reviewed the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Basic Procedures for Safe Ministries with Children.
  - c. Will be maintained in confidence and used primarily for the purpose of determining whether participation in Children's Ministry programs is appropriate.
3. Complete Private Vehicle Use Form (if worker is providing transportation).
4. Participate in a Children's Ministries or Hopewell Christian Preschool (for HCP staff only) Orientation/Training.

All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all security background checks, and references or worker disqualification (see below for details) will be maintained in the strictest of confidence. All forms and reference reports will be kept as part of the worker's confidential file. All forms will be kept in a locked file on the church premise. All worker contact information and related forms must be fully completed.

Upon completion of the appropriate forms by the worker, staff will submit appropriate documentation to the appropriate authorities. All workers who have responsibilities in Children's Ministries shall undergo criminal background checks.

This includes:

- All paid church staff and employees
- All unpaid Children's Ministry workers, volunteers, leaders and coordinators.
- Any person, whether paid or volunteer, involved in overnight activities and off-site church activities

Background checks are not mandatory for teen workers (on church premises) provided the church follows the Two Adult Rule. (see page 7)

Until checks and clearances are complete, workers will not be permitted to participate in Children's Ministries Activities.

#### Worker Disqualification:

Any person who has been convicted of child abuse will be considered automatically disqualified from service in Children's Ministries Activities. At the discretion of the staff person in charge, certain other offenses may disqualify a worker or volunteer from participating in, providing leadership for, or supervising of any activities or programs with minors. See Appendix II for details.

#### Training:

Hopewell United Methodist church commits itself to educating all church leaders, employees and volunteers who work with minors in our children and youth programs on the provisions of our Safe Sanctuary Policy, so they are aware of their responsibilities within the framework of this policy, the rationale behind the development of this policy and the applicable guidelines to be followed in ministry. An orientation for workers to review the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Basic Procedures for Safe Ministries with Children will be held annually. A copy of this policy

will be available for review in the Church office, and Children's Ministries web page.

Children's Ministry workers, including employees, staff, volunteer workers and leaders that have attended the training previously will be asked to reaffirm the information by signing the Volunteer Disclosure Form annually and will not be required to attend unless the information changes require additional review. Other training opportunities may be offered throughout the year.

#### Code of Conduct/Behavior:

All persons engaged in the ministry of Hopewell United Methodist Church are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority.

Because volunteers and staff sometimes deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry model healthy behavior to children and youth. It is the policy of Hopewell United Methodist Church to encourage its volunteers to nurture safely within ministerial relationships by understanding your volunteer role, being attentive to self-care, participate in educational opportunities and referring those in need to supportive and appropriate resources. Such resources and referrals are available through the Senior and Associate Pastors and program staff members.

#### Prohibition of Sexual Misconduct, Abuse and Other Discrimination:

Hopewell United Methodist Church is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which all members, friends, staff and volunteers can work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation or intimidation. This church affirms its goal of creating an environment of hospitality

for all persons, male or female, adult or child that is free of sexual misconduct, free of physical and emotional abuse, and that encourages respect, equality, equity and kinship to Christ. We support equity among all persons.

All persons associated with Hopewell United Methodist Church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual abuse and harassment, and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and goal of the church to take the action needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline any person who violates this policy. Sexual abuse and harassment of members or other individuals by anyone engaged in the ministry of Hopewell United Methodist Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior, and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

#### Child Abuse Reporting & Response Procedures:

Child abuse specifically includes verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a minor. Child sexual abuse includes any sexual activity with a child or youth. Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent in nature and is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially and developmentally ready.

Hopewell United Methodist Church is committed to handling all issues regarding their Safe Sanctuary Procedures with confidentiality and respect. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously and shall be handled confidentially with due respect for the privacy of the alleged victim and others involved in the incident.

**All persons involved in Children's Ministries at Hopewell United Methodist Church shall immediately report to the staff person in charge what seems abusive or inappropriate. This includes but is not limited to relationships between:**

- An adult worker and a child**
- An adult worker and another adult worker**
- A teen worker and a child**
- A youth and another youth**
- A child and another child**

- 1. The worker, paid or unpaid, who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported is required to report the incident immediately to the worker in charge. However, in cases where the alleged perpetrator is the person to whom notification should be given, he or she shall be considered absent for purposes of this reporting procedure, and the notification shall be made to the Director of Children's Ministries and/or the Chairperson of Children's Council.**
- 2. The worker will contact the Director of Children's Ministries and/or the Chairperson of Children's Council and relate the information.**
- 3. The worker to which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances and will also make a report that documents all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident. Our job is not to investigate the suspected abuse, but to document the specifics. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.**
- 4. The Director of Children's Ministries and/or the Chairperson of Children's Council shall inform the Senior Pastor and/or the**

**Church Council Chairperson prior to making a report to the Pennsylvania Childline and Abuse Registry (1-800-932-0313)**

- 5. The Director of Children's Ministries and/or the Chairperson of Children's Council shall then send the completed PA CY47 form to the local Children and Youth Services agency. This line of reporting shall be followed in all such incidents.**
- 6. Any person who is the object of the report will be required to refrain from all Children's activities until the incident report is resolved.**
- 7. Where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any worker with knowledge or information about such abuse shall immediately contact another adult to remove the child to safe place. The safety of the child must be the church's primary concern. In connection herewith, any needed emergency healthcare shall be provided, such as (1) first aid, (2) emergency services and/ or (3) transportation to a hospital emergency room. Should it be necessary to remove a person or persons from any activity, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, with utmost respect to both parties; recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.**
- 8. All workers are to refrain from speaking with or otherwise communicating to any form of media. Should it be deemed necessary, a church representative along with the Eastern PA Conference of the United Methodist Church spokesperson will communicate to the media with regard to any alleged accusation or abuse as defined in this policy.**

## APPENDIX I

Procedures for Safe Ministries with Children under age 12; including grade 6.

**Supervision:** Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse to children and to protect staff persons and volunteers from unwarranted accusations. No child will be left unsupervised while attending a children's ministry activity. It is strongly recommended that there be a staff/child ratio of:

- Infants—Toddlers 2:10
- 2 year—4 year 2:16
- 4 year—Kindergarten 2:20
- 1st Grade—5th Grade 2:30
- 6th Grade—12th Grade 2:40

Caregivers may limit children/youth to these recommended ratios or lower to ensure adequate supervision and safety.

**Two-Adult Rule:** A minimum of two adults are required to be present at all times during all church sponsored programs, events or ministries involving children, no matter the size of the group. However, at a minimum, this may include a "roamer", or a system of floating supervision in which an adult moves in and out of rooms.

Any one-on-one interactions between adults and children/youth should be conducted in sight of another worker and/or in an open/public location with the knowledge of another adult. At no time will paid staff, adult or teen workers be permitted to be one on one with a child or youth in an isolated situation; unless there is expressed written permission on file in the church from the child's/youth's legal parent or guardian stating otherwise for specific situations or programs.

**Five Years Older Guideline:** All Workers, including "Teen Workers" are expected to be at least five years older than the children they are

teaching or supervising. Any one under the age of 18 will be paired with an adult volunteer/staff person.

**Teen Workers:** Youth must work with an adult present and must be 12 years or older to assist with the care of minors.

**Parental Guidelines:** We strongly encourage parents, when on the premises with their children, to know where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing at all times.

**Accessibility Through Windows and Doors:** There are windows providing ample viewing into rooms where children's' programming takes place or the doors to those areas will remain open or unlocked to allow access to meeting spaces.

**Programming Location:** Classes shall remain in the assigned room location. If there is to be a change of location, a sign shall be posted on the door providing notice of any change of location.

**Hallway & Classroom Monitor:** One or more adults will monitor the hall of the church building where children's ministry activities are scheduled. Periodically the person or persons serving as monitor shall check all classrooms being used throughout the allotted programming time.

**Buddy System:** Understanding there is safety in numbers; children are to use the "buddy" system during all on and off site church activities as appropriate.

**Toileting & Diaper Changing:** Whenever possible, an adult shall escort any child in preschool through 2nd grade to the restroom and wait outside. For rooms that have attached bathrooms, a Worker may assist a child in the bathroom, while keeping the door open. Workers shall periodically check the bathrooms. No more than one child shall be in a

single bathroom or single stall in a common bathroom at the same time. Children in grades 3-6<sup>th</sup> are encouraged to use the buddy system when visiting the bathroom. Diaper changing shall be done in the open and not behind closed doors, following the Children's Ministry Diaper Changing Policy.

**First Aid/CPR:** Training is strongly encouraged for all workers and volunteers that have direct supervision of children in our programs. When an accident occurs, an incident report shall be completed and the staff person in charge notified.

**Fire Evacuation & Response:**

Fire evacuation plans shall be posted in each room. Workers shall be trained to understand evacuation procedures and locations of fire alarms and fire extinguishers. In the event of a fire, the first priority is to ensure the safety of the children in our care. Evacuation plans shall be reviewed with children/youth periodically.

**Physical Safety:** Staff, leaders and workers should be conscious of safety concerns when leading and supervising children's activities and games. Proper equipment and adequate supervision of the activity should always be in place.

**Participation Records:** Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all children's activities. At a minimum, records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of the children participating and the names of the adult workers directing the activity.

**Advance Notice to Parents:** Parents or guardians will be given advance notice and detailed policies and procedures for all children/youth participating in on site programs, activities and events. Itineraries will

be distributed in addition to policies and procedures for all off site activities, programs and events.

**Trip Permission Slip & Medical Authorization Form:** All parents/guardians of children participating in Children's Ministry events or activities outside the church premises must sign and submit a Trip Permission Slip and Medical Authorization Form, granting permission for the child to participate in the event or activity. The Medical Authorization Form will authorize supervising adults to seek emergency medical care if necessary and provide emergency contact information. These forms are also necessary for on site overnight retreats. Blank copies of these forms are available in the Children's Ministries office, and on the Children's Ministries webpage.

**Medication:** Any prescribed medications to be given during an on site activity must be administered by the parent. Permission forms for prescribed medications to be taken during off site activities or overnight retreats must be completed by a parent. Medications are to be under the control of and administered by an adult in charge.

**Overnight Chaperone Procedure & Guidelines:** On overnight retreats/trips all adult chaperones must be over the age of twenty-one. It is strongly recommended that the following ratios be adhered to: one female adult per every eight girls and one male adult per every eight boys

Adults will not sleep in the same bed as children at any time. In open space sleeping settings, at least two (2) leaders should be present in every room. There should be no permission for boys to enter the room where girls are sleeping; and no permission for girls to enter the room where boys are sleeping.

**Drivers License & Insurance:** Drivers must have a valid driver's license in order to drive any child on a church-sponsored event. In addition,

volunteers must have auto insurance coverage on the vehicle in use. Drivers must be adults over the age of 21. Drivers must have a clean driving record and a vehicle in good repair.

**Auto Safety:** Drivers are responsible to see that all children wear seatbelts when being transported to and from Children's Ministry activities. No more passengers than can be safely restrained will be carried in a vehicle for these activities. Buses not equipped with seatbelts are exempt. Children twelve (12) years and younger, shall not sit in the front seat of vehicles with air bags. Child safety seat laws will be followed when traveling in a motor vehicle.

A child may not travel alone in a vehicle with only one adult unless it is their parent. When multiple vehicles are used for an event, a single Worker may drive if all the vehicles travel together. Every effort should be made for all vehicles traveling together in this circumstance to stay within sight of one another. If possible, there should be a cell phone or some other way to communicate.

**Alcohol/Drugs:** Alcohol and recreational drug use are prohibited at all Children's Ministry programs.

## **APPENDIX II** **Worker Disqualification**

If Children's Ministry becomes concerned that anyone may pose an unreasonable risk of harm to others, then the Church, acting through any of those persons responsible for overseeing the activity, may deny, suspend or terminate the involvement in children's activities of the person posing the unreasonable risk.

The following list, which is not exhaustive, illustrates conduct which poses such an unreasonable risk that persons who have engaged therein may be disqualified from participating in children's activities:

**Any conviction for:**

- **Criminal homicide**
- **Aggravated assault**
- **Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Sexual assault**
- **Aggravated sexual assault**
- **Injury to a child**
- **Incest**
- **Indecency with a child**
- **Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child**
- **Possession or promotion of child pornography**
- **The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor**
- **Employment harmful to children**
- **Abandonment or endangerment of a child**
- **Kidnapping or unlawful restraint**
- **Public lewdness or indecent exposure**
- **Enticing a child**

**All charges for these crimes or charges or convictions for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the Director of Children's Ministries and Children's Council.**

**APPENDIX III**

**Report Form for Suspected Incidents of Sexual or Physical Abuse**

**Document Accuser's Complaint**

**Staff person completing report:**

**Victim's name:**

**Age:**

**Parents/guardians of victim:**

**Location of incident:**

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Brief description of incident:**

**Date/time/location of initial conversation with victim:**

**Notes of conversation:**

**Document Notification of Parents**

**Person spoken to:**

**Date/time/location or phone call of initial contact with parent(s)/guardian(s):**

**Notes of conversation:**

**Document Conversation with Accused (if staff member)**

**Name of person accused of abuse:**

**Date/time/location of initial conversation with accused:**

**Notes of conversation:**

**Document Notification of Person contacted:**

**Date/time of call to child protective services agency:**

**Name of person contacted at agency:**

**Notes of conversation:**

**Document Notification of Law Enforcement**

**Persons contacted:**

**Date/time/location of call to law enforcement agency:**

**Notes of conversation:**