



HOPEWELL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

for the protection of our Youth and Youth Workers

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Hopewell United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures

Purpose

As adults, we promise to nurture our youth in Christ. Providing a nurturing and safe environment is part of our responsibility as disciples. Safe Sanctuary policies are for the protection of our Youth and Youth Workers.

Definitions

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

1. “Youth” 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, leader or employee, including staff person in charge, as defined in this section, and 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 or independent contractor.
5. “Leaders” of this policy refer to all persons who are unpaid volunteers who work with youth in a supervisory capacity such as, but not limited to, Sunday School and Youth Program Coordinators, as well as chairpersons of the Church committee(s) that oversees those programs.
6. “Staff person in charge” refers to the church employee responsible for Youth Ministries.
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 youth activity or program in which youth are under the supervision of Workers.
9. “Child Abuse” as defined under Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law means:
 - (i) Any recent act of failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 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 youth shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abuse based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the youth’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 Workers for criminal activity using a national criminal records research service or other qualified agency (Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services).

Worker Information and Screening

Hopewell United Methodist Church strives to provide Christian education, guidance and service opportunities for all of its members in a safe environment. Careful screening of its Workers is one way to prevent the abuse of children and youth. Therefore, Workers who serve in youth ministries will:

1. Complete a Volunteer Contact Information Form
2. Complete a Volunteer Disclosure Form that:
 - a. Authorizes staff to conduct criminal background checks and child abuse clearances on Workers (see specifics below).
 - b. Affirms that the Workers have reviewed the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Basic Procedures for Safe Ministries with Youth.
 - c. Will be maintained in confidence and used solely for the purpose of determining whether participation in youth programs or ministries is appropriate.
3. Complete Private Vehicle Use Form (if Worker is providing transportation)
4. Participate in a Youth Ministries 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 premises. 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. Specified Workers who have direct contact with youth shall undergo criminal background checks. This includes:

- All paid church *staff*
- Unpaid Sunday School and Youth *leaders* and *coordinators*
- *Any person*, whether paid or volunteer, involved in *overnight activities and off-site church activities*

Until checks and clearances are complete, Workers will not be permitted to provide direct service.

Worker Disqualification

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, certain offenses will automatically disqualify a Worker from participating in the leadership or supervising of any activities or programs with minors. No person who has been convicted of child abuse will be permitted to work with youth in any church-sponsored activity. See Addendum II for details.

Training

Hopewell United Methodist church commits itself to educating all church leaders, employees and Workers who work with minors in our children and youth programs within our church 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 Youth will be held annually. A copy of this policy will be available for review in the Church office.

Youth ministry Workers 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 and are considered optional; pending the level of service the Worker is providing.

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 Workers 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 Workers to nurture safely within ministerial relationships by understanding your Worker role, being attentive to self-care, participating in educational opportunities and referring those in need to supportive and appropriate resources. Such resources and referrals are available through our 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 the church. 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 and 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 powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action. It includes 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. All persons involved in Youth Ministries of our 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 volunteer and youth
 - An adult volunteer with another adult volunteer
 - A youth with another youth
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 staff person or the Worker in charge of the activity. 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 that person's immediate supervisor.
 2. The staff person or Worker in charge of the activity in which the abuse was observed or disclosed, shall immediately attempt to obtain necessary information such as the name of the alleged victim and his or her address and family information and complete the Incident Reporting Form.
 3. Upon receiving the above information, the staff person or Worker in charge of the activity will contact the Director of Youth Ministries and/or the Chair of Youth Council and relate the information.
 4. The Director of Youth Ministries and/or the Chair of Youth Council will inform the Lead Pastor and/or Church Council Chair prior to making a report to Pennsylvania Childline and Abuse Registry (1-800-932-0313). The Director of Youth Ministries and/or the Chair of Youth Council shall then send a completed PA CY47 form to the local Children and Youth Services agency. This line of reporting shall be followed in all such incidents.

5. Any person who is the object of the report will be required to refrain from all youth ministry-sponsored activities until the incident report is resolved.
6. In any removal of a person from any activity, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.
7. 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 spokesperson will communicate to the media with regard to any alleged accusation or abuse as defined in this policy.

APPENDIX I

Basic Procedures for Safe Ministries with Youth (Grades 6th-12th)

1. **Supervision:** Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse to youth and to protect Workers from unwarranted accusations. No youth will be left unsupervised while attending a church-sponsored youth activity. It is strongly recommended that there is a staff/youth ratio of 2 to 20 (plus 1 adult for each additional 12 youth) for ages 12 and up to ensure adequate supervision and safety.
2. **Two-Adult Procedure:** The two-adult procedure requires that no matter the size of the group there are always two unrelated adults present during an activity involving youth. 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-to-one mentoring or consulting should be conducted in sight of another Worker and/or in a open/public location and the parent and/or guardian must be notified of any one-to-one interaction. At no time will paid staff, adult or teen workers 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 youth’s legal parent or guardian stating otherwise for specific situations or programs.

3. **Accessibility Procedure - Windows and Doors:** There will be windows into rooms where youth programs take place or doors will remain open or unlocked to allow access to meeting spaces.
4. **Buddy System:** Understanding there is safety in numbers; youth should be instructed to use, at least, the “buddy system”, particularly during off-site church activities as appropriate.
5. **Teen Workers:** Youth must work with a Worker and must be 12 years or older to assist with the care of minors.
6. **Bathroom/Shower Procedure:** Workers should give youth as much privacy as possible. Showering at camps and overnight events, when facilities are less than private, requires careful planning. Adults will not shower with any youth. Adults should not be in showering facilities in the presence of a youth without the presence of another adult or youth. At no time shall adults be in the presence of youth without wearing suitable clothing or bathing suits..

7. **Overnight Chaperone Procedure and Guidelines:** It is strongly recommended that for overnights there is no less than a staff/youth ratio of 2 to 20 (plus 1 adult for each additional 12 youth) for ages 12 and up.

Adults will not sleep in the same bed as youth at any time. In a hotel-type setting, it is recommended that if possible, an adult room be between two youth rooms. Adults should arrange among themselves to check on the youth rooms on a random schedule during the night. When possible, choose a hotel where the rooms open to the interior of the building rather than the outside.

In open space sleeping settings, it is strongly recommend that at least two (2) leaders be present in every room. Recognizing accommodations may be restrictive in some cases; one leader is adequate, so long as any one leader is never alone with any one child/youth. 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.

8. **Five Years Older Guidelines:** Volunteers and employees working with youth are expected to be at least five years older than the youth they are teaching or supervising. If there is a youth volunteer fewer than five years older than the youth in the group, he or she will be paired with an adult Workers.
9. **Advance Notice to Parents:** Parents or guardians will be given advance notice and full information regarding activities in which their children will be participating. In a church-sponsored mentoring role or program, always obtain the appropriate parent/guardian permission before making plans to meet or take the youth anywhere. Parents must be made aware of their child's participation for off-site church sponsored activities.
10. **Participation Records:** Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all youth activities. At a minimum, these records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of the youth participating, and the names of the adults involved directly in the activity.
11. **General Activity Waiver and Medical Information & Release Form:** All youth participating in church-sponsored events or activities outside the church premises must provide a signed General Activity Waiver. This waiver contains a general grant of permission for the youth to participate in the event or activity. The Medical Information and Release Form will authorize supervising adults to seek emergency medical care if necessary and provide emergency contact information. Blank copies of these forms are available on in the church and youth ministries office and church website.
12. **Internet Safety Guidelines:** We understand that use of the Internet is the means of communication for many youth and that emailing is an important tool to connect Workers to youth. We also understand that the Internet offers many dangers and parents are often concerned about the safety and appropriateness of their child's Internet interactions. Therefore, Workers should be aware that any and all direct communications with Hopewell Youth may be subject to audit.
13. **Auto Safety:** Drivers are responsible to see that youth wear seatbelts when being transported for church-sponsored activities. No more passengers than can be safely restrained will be carried in a vehicle for these activities. If only one adult is taking a carload of youth, they should all meet at one location, travel together and return to the location to be picked up by a parent or guardian. If there are two related Workers or one Worker driving alone with a Youth, the parent and/or guardian will need to be notified prior to traveling. If possible, there should be a cell phone or some other way to communicate in an emergency.

14. **Drivers License and Insurance:** Drivers must have a valid driver's license in order to drive any youth on a church-sponsored event. In addition, volunteers should have auto insurance coverage on the vehicle in use. Drivers should be adults over the age of 21. Drivers must have a clean driving record and a vehicle in good repair.
15. **Physical Safety:** Workers should be conscious of safety concerns when leading and supervising activities and games. Proper equipment and adequate supervision of the activity should always be in place.
16. **First Aid/CPR:** Training is strongly encouraged for Workers that have direct supervision of youth.
17. **Alcohol/Drugs:** Alcohol and recreational drug use are prohibited at any church-sponsored program or mentoring situations.
18. **Reporting:** Workers who observe alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported are required to report the incident immediately to the staff person in charge of the activity.

ADDENDUM II Worker Disqualification

If the Church 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 youth 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 will not be permitted to participate in youth activities:

- 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 adult or 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 Youth Ministries and Youth Council.