

**Foundry United Methodist Church**  
**Safe Sanctuaries Policy**  
For the Protection of Children, Youth and Other Vulnerable Persons

Foundry United Methodist Church  
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## **Foundry United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the members and staff of Foundry United Methodist Church do all they can to provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, and all persons entrusted to our care. The following policies and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, employees, volunteers and our entire church family at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, DC. By establishing these policies and procedures, we demonstrate our commitment to provide a safe environment for our children and youth as they grow in their relationship with God. Although it is unlikely that we can completely prevent abuse in every circumstance, it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk of abuse by following these guidelines and procedures.

### **Statement of Covenant**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the physical safety, emotional well-being, and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of those who work with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers regardless of their gender, race or sexual orientation; we will implement prudent operational procedures in our ministries; we will educate all of those who work with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for responding to a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of law; and we will be prepared to respond to the media should such an incident occur.

### **Policy Governance**

Foundry's Safe Sanctuaries policy will be approved by the Church Council and as an act of faithful accountability:

1. All church members will have access to and receive Foundry's Safe Sanctuaries policy.
2. Staff and volunteers with children and youth will receive a copy of Foundry's Safe Sanctuaries Policy.
3. The Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be included in new member's packets, available for pick-up in the church Main Office, and available online at [www.foundryumc.org](http://www.foundryumc.org).
4. Foundry's Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be reviewed annually by a task force consisting of the six persons who fill the following positions:
  - i. Minister of Children and Families
  - ii. Youth Minister
  - iii. Lay Representative from the Discipleship Council
  - iv. Lay Representative from the Children Ministry Team
  - v. Lay Representative from the Youth Ministry Team
  - vi. Lay Representative from the Personnel Ministry Team
5. Foundry United Methodist Church shall maintain liability insurance coverage in the event that allegations are made regarding sexual abuse of children, youth or other vulnerable persons.

## **Definitions**

**Adult** – An adult is a person over 21 years of age. While persons are legally considered an adult at age 18, to encourage adherence to the 5-year rule, Foundry's Safe Sanctuaries Policy requires that "adults" be over 21 years of age.

**Children** – A child is a person sixth grade and younger.

**Volunteer** – An Adult who has completed the volunteer application process and has been approved for service.

**Youth** – A youth is a person attending grades 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>.

## **General Safety Procedures**

These procedures are for all areas of ministry.

1. All volunteers with children and youth must complete the volunteer application process and participate in Safe Sanctuaries training. Each volunteer must resubmit their volunteer application and participate in training every two years.
2. All reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that two adults will be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children. One adult must be present at all times.
3. Volunteers who serve as teachers and leaders must be at least five (5) years older than the oldest child in the activity.
4. Children/youth attending a church-sponsored event may not leave prior to the ending of that event without previous contact between the parents and the adult/volunteer/staff person in charge.
5. Permission forms will be required for each off-campus event involving children and youth.
6. There will be at least two adults of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single-gender overnight events, at least two or more adults present will be of the same gender as the participating children/youth.

## **Policies for the Supervision of Children & Youth**

### **Adult/Staff Ratio in Nursery/Toddler Rooms**

The paid Nursery/Toddler Coordinators will maintain a presence and the oversight of the Nursery/Toddler Rooms. A minimum of two adults should be in attendance at all times, with a minimum targeted ratio of one adult for every five children in attendance.

### **Bathroom Use Procedures for Children**

An adult from the classroom should accompany two or more children to the nearest bathroom. The adult should check the bathroom to make sure that no one else is inside. The adult should wait outside the bathroom for the children to finish, and accompany them back to the classroom.

### **Bathroom Use Procedures for Youth**

Adults should check occupancy of bathrooms on a regular basis, with a “knock and enter” protocol. Only one person should be in the bathroom at any time, with an adult nearby. Adult leaders must know the whereabouts of all youth in attendance, including bathroom usage.

### **Floater**

At times when multiple groups of children and/or youth are present, the floater will move in and out of the classroom. A ‘floater’ will constitute the second adult in the event only one adult is available.

### **Visualization**

Classroom doors with windows must remain unobstructed at all times. Classrooms with windows must be accessible to viewing at all times. Classroom doors without windows shall remain open at all times when only one adult is present. If there is more than one adult present, the door may be closed. All doors must remain unlocked.

### **Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries**

A protocol for appropriate dress, language, gestures, humor, physical contact, and other interpersonal behaviors should be discussed with and made clear to all participants.

### **Behavior Guidelines**

All discipline will be handled in a non-physical manner. Behavior that jeopardizes the safety of any person should be handled by removing the offender from the situation. In the case of disruptive and/or violent behavior, parents and supervisory staff should be notified. The parents and the leaders should develop a behavioral strategy that the child and/or youth must adhere for future participation in activities.

### **Counseling**

At any counseling session with children, youth, or adult with diminished capacity, an employed staff must notify their supervisor. A volunteer should notify the supervisory staff member or another volunteer. During all counseling sessions the counselor and/or counseled must remain visible from outside the room throughout the entire session.

## **Group Travel Policy**

### **Advance Parent Notification**

Parents should be provided with detailed written information regarding proposed activities involving children and youth. Parents must complete a **Consent and Emergency Care Form** for both one-day offsite and overnight trips. A copy of the Consent and Emergency Care Form should be filed at the church office. Parents will be informed regarding expected duration of each activity and the timeframe for supervision by staff and leaders. Parents must pick up their children and/or youth at the time specified for the end of each event.

### **Overnight Trips/Events**

To minimize the possibility of danger at hotels, dormitories or other accommodations, guidelines for ongoing group supervision, room assignment, and behavior expectations must be clear. Consequences of misbehavior shall be explained and upheld.

### **Interior Rooms**

When possible, hotels will be chosen where the rooms open to the interior of the building, rather than the outside.

### **Adult-Between**

If possible, room assignments will be arranged so that an adult room is between two children and/or youth rooms.

### **Random Checks**

There will be a plan for periodic room checks during the night.

### **Large Group Sleeping Arrangements**

Two approved adults must be present at all times.

### **Car Safety and Insurance**

Volunteers who drive on field trips and overnight events must complete the **Volunteer Driver Checklist**. All adults who volunteer to serve as drivers for children and/or youth activities must possess a valid driver's license and must be at least 25 years of age.

## **Recruiting and Screening Procedures for Paid Staff**

All paid staff positions that require or allow contact with children, youth and other vulnerable persons shall be recruited and screened through Foundry's Personnel Ministry Team. The recruiting, screening and hiring procedures are designed to provide the controls and security necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of all children, youth and other vulnerable persons participating in the life and ministries of our church. These procedures also ensure the confidentiality of all information gathered in the process of recruiting, screening and hiring a person.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers who work with children and youth will be required to submit the following three forms:

1. Volunteer Application
2. Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire
3. Child and Youth Protection Policy Statement
  - a. Volunteers will be carefully screened by contacting given references.
  - b. If needed, background checks for Foundry's volunteers will be paid through the church budget. Background checks for volunteers for other organizations are the responsibility of that organization.
  - c. Only the Senior Minister and/or Church Administrator will see the results of the background checks. Other staff members will be informed of individuals who are not cleared. All background checks will be kept confidential.
  - d. Background checks must be renewed every 5 years if the individual serves consecutive years.
  - e. Persons who fail the background check will not be permitted to serve as teachers, leaders or helpers with children and youth.

Volunteers are supervised by the staff person of that area. It is the responsibility of the staff person to collect and submit all forms in order to finalize the clearance.

## **Reporting Procedure for Suspected Abuse**

### **Rationale**

All reasonable suspicions of child abuse must be reported to the church leadership following the procedures described below. Child abuse thrives when it goes unnoticed and unreported. Often, an abusive situation continues because of someone's failure to report it. It is each staff member's responsibility to caution each other regarding inappropriate behavior, to monitor suspicious behavior, and to report abusive behavior.

D.C. law may provide certain immunities for a person or institution participating in good faith in making a report of abused or neglected children.

### **Reporting Procedure**

Allegations or suspicions of child abuse should be reported to the supervisory staff person as shown in the following diagrams. If, however, the allegations or suspicions involve the supervisory staff member, the report should be made to that staff member's supervisor. Allegations of child abuse involving the Senior Minister should be made directly to the chairperson of the Personnel Ministry Team.

Volunteer Staff or Parent → Minister to Children and Families → Minister of Discipleship and Congregational Life → Senior Minister

Volunteer Staff or Parent → Youth Minister → Minister to Children and Families → Minister of Discipleship and Congregational Life → Senior Minister

Volunteer Staff or Parent → Director of Music → Senior Minister

### **Not “If It Happens,” but “When It Happens”**

Since child abuse happens every fifteen seconds and in any location, it is not so unimaginable that Foundry could be called upon to respond to an allegation of abuse. When an allegation of child abuse is made against a staff member, a volunteer, or member, Foundry’s leadership must do the following:

- a. Notify the parents of the victim, and take any necessary steps to assure the child’s safety until the parents arrive. The safety of the victim must be the church’s primary concern.
- b. Notify the proper law enforcement agency immediately. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases. Be prepared to cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials.
- c. Keep a written record of the steps taken in response to handling the incident. Use the **Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse** form.
- d. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or youth is secured and do not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility. Treat him or her with dignity, but immediately remove him or her from further involvement with children and youth.
- e. Report the incident to the District Superintendent and Foundry’s liability insurance agent.
- f. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim’s family. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim are our highest priority.
- g. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, it may be appropriate to relieve that person temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, it may be appropriate to make arrangements to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- h. Call upon your designated spokesperson to make any necessary statements or responses to the news media. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
- i. Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim’s privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.

### **Education of Staff, Volunteers and the Congregation**

All adults who work with children and youth will attend a Child and Youth Protection workshop at the beginning of each year’s Christian Education calendar. The workshop will be offered and coordinated by the Minister to Children and Families and Youth Minister. The training program will focus upon:

- Awareness of typical child abuse situations that can occur within the church setting.
- Recognition of children’s behaviors that may be indicative of abuse.
- Review and discussion of the Foundry United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy documents.

- Classroom strategies that can empower children to resist or to seek help if abusive situations threaten their safety.
- Review of D.C. laws regarding reporting of alleged child abuse.
- Review of general personal safety guidelines for persons involved with any activities held in the church facility.

### **Congregation Members**

Members of the church congregation will periodically be made aware of the formal Safe Sanctuaries Policy. An overview describing practices which have been implemented for children's safety will be shared with the congregation members and others. This will be done through the website, the weekly *Focus*, the monthly *Forge* and new member orientation.

### **Community Building Use**

All outside organizations, individuals and institutions that use the church building for events at which children and youth under the age of 18 will be present (including childcare) will do the following:

1. Receive a copy of *Foundry United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy*
2. Adhere to the policy
3. Complete the Building Use Request Form

At any time during the period of the building use agreement, failure to follow the agreed-upon child protection policy shall result in termination of the building use agreement.

Any allegation of noncompliance shall be reported to the Safe Sanctuaries Team for discussion with the Board of Trustees.

Any allegations of abuse shall immediately be brought to the attention of the Pastor for investigation. The Pastor shall follow protocol for reporting allegations of abuse as listed in the church's policy.

### **Policy for Registered Sex Offenders Attending Worship Services**

In the event that it comes to the awareness of a member of the Safe Sanctuaries Team that a registered sex offender is attending the church, that person will be asked by the Senior Minister and the chair of Foundry's Personnel Ministry Team to enter into a Covenant Relationship with the church by signing a **Covenant Agreement**. Such information may come to the Safe Sanctuaries Team through a background check if that person applies to work with children or youth, from reliable public information such as the National Sex Offender Registry, or from the individual himself or herself. Any sex offender refusing to sign the Covenant Agreement will be prohibited from attending worship or other church activities where children or youth may be present.