

Safe Sanctuary Policy



Longmont, Colorado

Approved by Heart of Longmont Church Council

May 24, 2017

Safe Sanctuary Policy of the Heart of Longmont

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes [a] child, welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse” (§ 162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse [“ritual abuse” refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be] occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. [From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church-2000*, pp. 180-181. Copyright © 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.]

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy for prevention of abuse and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, mental well-being and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

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 safety and spiritual growth of all individuals in our church community as well as all of those who work (paid or volunteer) in this church community. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each individual will be "surrounded by steadfast love . . . established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" ("Baptismal Covenant II," *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

This Safe Sanctuaries Policy is presented to the Heart of Longmont Church Council from the Staff-Parish Relations (SPR) Team. Changes to this document should be submitted to the SPR team for discussion and revision.

Contents

The following pages provide the specific safe sanctuary procedures that have been adopted by Church Council for application in Heart of Longmont programs dealing with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Child/Youth Safe Sanctuary Procedures

Approved by Church Council

Definitions

Child/youth – any individual under the age of 18.

Staff/Volunteer – any person who is working with any Heart of Longmont program or activity with children or youth. This includes paid staff, and non paid volunteers.

Adult – a staff/volunteer who is 21 years old or older with current screening and training in place.

The terms *children* and *youth* may be used interchangeably for the purposes of this document.

Procedures

Screening and training of potential staff/volunteers will be done using Safe Gatherings.

Safe Gatherings is a comprehensive system that incorporates an online application, online abuse prevention training, several levels of background checks, and paperless reference checks for people who volunteer or are employed with churches, schools, and organizations that serve or work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Contact information and web site information:

Safe Gatherings
9200 Glenwood St., Suite 102
Overland Park, KS 66212
888.241.8258
www.safegatherings.com

We adopt these **minimum** standards for Heart of Longmont ministries with children and youth:

All potential staff/volunteers will have an active relationship with Heart of Longmont of at least six months before being allowed to supervise children or youth. Those who do not hold the above requirement may have that requirement waived by completing ALL of the following:

Employment or volunteer application listing standard contact information, their spiritual gifts for that ministry, and three unrelated references.

Interview with the pastor, applicable staff member, or SPRC representative and/or their designees.

References checked; additional contacts may be made.

Through Safe Gatherings, all potential staff/volunteers will undergo a background check. Background checks will be seen only by the designated office administrator or program director. If a concern arises, it will be reported to the pastor who will decide how the situation will be handled.

For staff at the Heart of Longmont, a finger print background check will also be required. This will be paid for by the Heart of Longmont.

Background checks remain valid for 2 years. All active staff MUST have a completed and cleared background check on file.

Abuse Prevention Training through Safe Gatherings is required for all staff/volunteers working directly with children or youth. The training on the Safe Gatherings web site can be completed either in English or in Spanish.

All staff/volunteers must sign a Policy Awareness Acknowledgment Form every year committing themselves to this policy. That form is found within this policy document.

All staff/volunteers must wear Heart of Longmont shirts or display identification presented to them when working with children or youth designated activities.

The pastor or his/her designee will assure that up-to-date screening and training occurs and that records are maintained.

Supervision:

All screening and training above must be completed and be current before any staff/volunteer works with children or youth. “Adult” in this section always refers to a screened, trained staff/volunteer.

Two-adult rule:

There will be two unrelated adults (21 or older) in each applicable classroom/ministry area. If this is not possible, there will be an assigned roving adult who moves through the area with the ability to see into the classroom/ministry area and with the freedom and responsibility to enter at any time. The two adult rule applies until the last child or youth has left the Heart of Longmont premises. In addition each adult must be at least five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity.

Assistants:

Any other volunteer helper or assistant shall be under the direct supervision of the adults for that classroom/ministry area.

Other Participants:

Guest presenters and observers are also under the direct supervision of the adults for that classroom/ministry area.

Sight-line rules:

Each classroom/ministry area will have a window on the door (or other sight-line into the room from the interior of the building) or the door will be left open at all times. Should an activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this policy, the adult(s) in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, and the children and youth are properly supervised.

Registration Forms:

Registration Forms for all activities in which children or youth are outside the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed written permission and/or release forms that include pertinent health information, and parent/guardian contact information. These forms will remain valid for one year. The registration form shall include parental designation for who has permission to pick up the child or youth.

Transportation to and from Heart of Longmont:

Arrangement of transportation of children and youth to and from Heart of Longmont related activities is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Volunteers may transport unrelated children/youth to or from any Heart of Longmont related activity only with parent/guardian initiated permission. Paid staff may not transport unrelated children/youth to or from any Heart of Longmont related activity unless the two-adult rule is applied.

One-on-One:

Unavoidable one-on-one encounters and meetings are in principle subject to the two adult rule. This may be implemented by incorporation of a roving adult, moving the meeting to a public part of the church facility, or meeting in a fully public place. Conformance with transportation policy above is required.

Records:

Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all church activities where children and youth are specifically entrusted into our care. At a minimum, these records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of the participants, check in / checkout times, and the names of the adults involved directly in the activity.

Social Media

Children and Youth pictures should not be posted on personal Social Media sites. Permission is required prior to posting photographs of children and youth on the church website, bulletin boards, or other promotional media. Parents are able to give this permission on the registration forms.

Ask for parental permission to communicate with youth or children through email, cell phone, texting, and social media.

Children and Youth Directors will develop policies for cell phone use during church related events and activities.

Children and youth full names will never be posted on any website; given names will only be used with written permission.

Bullying

Bullying is the unwanted, aggressive behavior among children and youth that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Verbal, social, physical, and cyber bullying should be responded to quickly by sending the message that it is not acceptable.

Outside groups:

For scouting and other groups involving children or youth that use the church facilities, a pastor or designee will review the **written** policies of the group, to ensure policies are in alignment with Safe Sanctuary policies. If no written policies exist, this Safe Sanctuary policy must be adopted and followed by these groups.

Church-Sponsored Transportation:

When transportation is provided, the implementation of the two-adult rule is required. Use of church vehicles is the preferred method for transportation of children/youth. Parents/guardians must sign permission forms and/or liability waivers. All travel in non-church owned vehicles requires a signed parent/guardian permission form specific to the driver(s) and the vehicle(s) being used.

Conformance to the two adult policy is the preferable method to be followed. If it is not possible or practical to have two adults in each vehicle, the vehicles should make an attempt to stay within sight of one another. All drivers should be encouraged to carry cell phones and have the cell phone numbers of all other drivers.

For any driving trips lasting longer than one hour, a pre-arranged rest stop location(s) must be designated and each driver must stop there and remain there until the entire party has arrived and is prepared to continue on the drive.

Offsite/Overnight Permission:

Specific permission forms are required for all offsite or overnight events, unless that permission is explicit within the (yearly) Registration Form.

Participant Covenant:

Youth participants or child's parent(s)/guardians(s) shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for overnight and offsite activities.

Rooming Rule:

With parent/guardian consent, children or youth of the same gender may room together without an adult during overnight activities. In situations where adults room with youth or children in a hotel, cabin, tent or other similar situation, there must be two adults who are not related and who are the same gender as the children or youth being supervised.

Mandatory Reporting:

Any clergy and any lay employee directing children and youth programming is required to report any suspected child abuse. If a mandatory reporter simply reports to his or her supervisor, but makes no report to the local social services or law enforcement agency, a proper report has not been made under the requirements of State law. The mandatory reporter who initially suspects the child abuse is held responsible for reporting the suspected abuse to a local agency.

Adult volunteers involved in church related activities are not Mandatory Reporters. Volunteers who observe or receive information of alleged abuse, however, are encouraged to report to a paid staff member in charge of the activity or to the pastor.

Reporting:

All reporting shall be handled in a confidential manner.

If child abuse is suspected, **do not** discuss with other parents or childcare workers. **Do not** talk with the child's parent about suspected abuse.

If a staff/volunteer observes or receives information of alleged abuse, he/she will report immediately to a paid staff member who shall then report it to the pastor. The pastor may conduct a preliminary investigation, and shall contact proper civil authorities as deemed necessary.

If the alleged abuse involves a staff/volunteer, the individual in question shall immediately be removed from contact with children or youth until the incident reported has been resolved.

Responding:

All allegations will be taken seriously. A quick and compassionate response to alleged abuse will be initiated. See the addendum: Plan for Reporting.

A pastor or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements must be directed to this individual.

If the allegation is against a pastor, the District Superintendent shall be contacted immediately, and shall assume responsibility for the two responding items above, consistent with this policy, civil law, and The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, particularly paragraph 361 (Complaints), and Chapter Seven (Judicial Administration).

This policy applies, but is not limited to, the following Heart of Longmont activities with children or youth:

- Youth activities
- Childrens' activities
- Choirs and Plays
- Sunday School
- Vacation Bible School
- Confirmation activities
- Mission and other trips from Heart of Longmont facilities
- Unplanned "drop-in" meetings
- Planned consulting or counseling

Recommended Ratios for Adults-to-Children and Youth

Sunday School Classes Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5: Ratio = 2:15

Youth Classes/Youth Group; Middle and High School Age: Ratio = 2:25
adding on an adult for every 10 youth above 25

Adult Sponsors must be 25 years of age or older (there must be a difference of 5 years in age between youth and their sponsor)

1:8 ratio for activities and/or field trips beyond the premises of the local church. Note: The two-adult rule applies for activities where 8 or fewer children/youth are participating.

Proper Ratios of Infants and Children to Adults in the Nursery

Ages of Children Number of Staff

6 weeks to 12 months (infants)	2 staff member to 5 infants
13 months to 24 months	2 staff member to 5 toddlers
2 years to 3 years	2 staff member to 8 children
3 years to 4 years	2 staff member to 10 children
4 years to 5 years	2 staff member to 12 children
5 years and older	2 staff member to 15 children
Mixed age group 2 ½ years to 6 years	2 staff member to 10 children

Based on recommendations from Rocky Mountain Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Vulnerable Adult Safe Sanctuary Procedures

Approved by Church Council

Definitions

Vulnerable Adult – any person within our midst who has a lesser ability to take care of him/herself, and/or interact fully with other adults. The reason(s) may be mental, physical, situational, or emotional. The reason(s) may be permanent or temporary (e.g., having surgery)

Designated Program – any program identified to be associated with vulnerable adults. To date these are primarily the visitation portions of Care Ministries. Church Council may at any time add programs to the Designated Program category.

Staff/Volunteer – any person who is working with a Designated Program (defined above) at Heart of Longmont. This includes paid staff and non paid volunteers.

Procedures

We adopt these **minimum** standards for specified Heart of Longmont ministries with vulnerable adults (Designated Programs):

All potential staff/volunteers will have an active relationship with Heart of Longmont of at least six months before being allowed to supervise children or youth. Those who do not hold the above requirement may have that requirement waived by completing ALL of the following:

Employment or volunteer application listing standard contact information, their spiritual gifts for that ministry, and three unrelated references.

Interview with the pastor, applicable staff member, or SPRC representative and/or their designees.

References checked; additional contacts may be made.

Through Safe Gatherings, all potential staff/volunteers will undergo a background check. Background checks will be seen only by the designated office administrator. If a concern arises, it will be reported to the pastor who will decide how the situation will be handled.

Background checks remain valid for 2 years. All active staff **MUST** have a completed and cleared background check on file.

Abuse/Exploitation Prevention Training through Safe Gatherings is required for all staff/volunteers working directly in Designated Programs.

All staff/volunteers must sign a Policy Awareness Acknowledgment Form every year committing themselves to this policy. That form is found within this policy document.

The pastor or his/her designee will assure that up-to-date screening and training occurs and that records are maintained.

Visibility:

Many meetings and activities, particularly within the Caring Ministries, tend to be one-on-one between two persons. Within Heart of Longmont Designated Programs, a single screened and trained adult must be supplemented in one (or more) of the following ways:

Rules and procedures within the facility (e.g., hospital, nursing care facility) that have been reviewed by Heart of Longmont and deemed to meet HOL criteria for vulnerable adults.

A roving adult who has access to meeting area at any time.

Meeting in a public place or public part of a facility.

Maintaining a confidential log of anticipated and completed visits. Log is to be maintained by someone other than the adult making visits and kept in a secured location. Logs shall be available upon inquiry from pastors or other appropriate authority.

Transportation to and from Heart of Longmont:

Arrangement of transportation to and from Heart of Longmont Designated Program activities is the responsibility of the individual participant. Paid staff may not transport an unrelated vulnerable adult to or within a Designated Program, unless a second adult is present.

Church-Sponsored Transportation:

When transportation is provided, two adults are required. Use of church vehicles is the preferred method for transportation of participants in Designated Programs.

Reporting:

All reporting shall be handled in a confidential manner.

If a staff/volunteer observes or receives information of alleged abuse, stalking, harassment, or exploitation, he/she shall report immediately to the supervisory staff member, who will then report it to the pastor. The pastor may conduct a preliminary investigation, and shall contact proper civil authorities as deemed necessary.

If the alleged abuse or exploitation happened on church property or during a church sponsored activity by a staff member, the staff member in question shall immediately be removed from contact with vulnerable adults until the reported incident has been resolved.

Responding:

All allegations will be taken seriously. A quick and compassionate response to alleged abuse or exploitation will be initiated. See the addendum: Plan for Reporting.

A pastor or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements must be directed to this individual.

If the allegation is against a pastor, the District Superintendent shall be contacted immediately, and shall assume responsibility for the two responding items above, consistent with this policy, civil law, and The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, particularly paragraph 361 (Complaints), and Chapter Seven (Judicial Administration).

(Example of the log referenced above)

Visit Log

Visitor(s) Name(s): _____

Date	Time IN	Time OUT	Name(s) of Person(s) Visited	Type of Visit (home visit, hospital, ..)

Heart of Longmont
350 11th Avenue
Longmont, Colorado 80501

POLICY AWARENESS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

After reviewing the Heart of Longmont’s policy for protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, all clergy, paid staff, and volunteers who teach or work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must sign this form, indicating their familiarity with the policy.

I have read and I understand the Child/Youth Safe Sanctuary Procedures and Vulnerable Adult Safe Sanctuary Procedures adopted by the Heart of Longmont.

I agree to abide by this policy for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor Signature/Title: _____

Addendum: Plan for Reporting

Mandatory Reporting

Any member of the clergy and any lay employee directing children and youth ministry programming or working with vulnerable adults, is required to report any suspected abuse. Note that if a mandatory reporter simply reports to his or her supervisor, but makes no report to the local social services or law enforcement agency, a proper report has not been made under the requirement of State law. The mandatory reporter who initially suspects the abuse is held responsible for reporting the suspected abuse to a local agency.

Basic Steps for Reporting Suspected Abuse

The reporting individual should fill out the form entitled Report of Suspect Incident of Abuse. (See the form that follows this Addendum.) The Children and Family Ministry Director, Youth Director, or Pastor may assist the individual in filling out the form and calling in the report of suspected abuse.

The reporting individual, church staff person, or pastor makes a call to report the suspected abuse. They can call the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437) to report concerns about a child's safety and well-being. All calls are confidential and will be routed to the county where a child resides. If it is an emergency or you are witnessing a child in a life-threatening situation, call 911 immediately. Boulder County's Child Welfare screening line at 303-441-1309 is fully integrated with the state of Colorado's Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

To report suspected abuse for a vulnerable adult the call can be made to the Boulder County Area Agency on Aging at 303-441-3570.

Faithful response to the victim includes taking an allegation very seriously and respecting the victim's privacy, as well as providing sympathetic concern for the victim and his or her family. In no way will the victim be blamed or will it be implied that the victim was in any way responsible for causing the abuse.

The pastor will make confidential contact with the victim's parent/guardian/family in a manner the pastor deems appropriate.

Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse

Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of abuse:

Victim's name and age or date of birth:

Date/place of initial conversation with or observation of or report from victim:

Victim's statement or work's observation of abuse allegation (give your detailed statement here:

Name of person accused or suspected of abuse:

Relationship of accused to victim (staff member, volunteer, family member, relative, teacher, etc.):

Reported to Pastor (date/time and summary):

Call to victim's parent/guardian (unless that is the suspected abuser) date/time and summary:

Call to local social services agency (date/time, contact name, summary):

Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse, continued

Follow-up call to local social services agency (date/time, contact name, summary):

Call to local law enforcement agency (if considered necessary to ensure victim's safety and with the Knowledge of the local social service agency) date/time and summary:

Record of other contacts, if any (date/time, name of contact, summary):

Signature of worker making this report:

Signature

Date

Printed Name