

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Sunset Drive United Methodist Church

Updated November 15, 2021

Sunset Drive United Methodist Church in Broadway, Virginia adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Covenant Statement

Sunset Drive United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia law.

Staff SELECTION Policies

All volunteer and paid staff who work with children and youth at SDUMC

- Must be at least 16 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must work with and under the supervision of an adult volunteer.
- Youth volunteers (under the age of 18) must have signed parental permission (on screening form and volunteer agreement) before they can be authorized to serve with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
- Attend SDUMC for at least 6 months.

All paid staff and volunteers who work with children and youth at SDUMC will:

- Complete and sign an Authorization and Release for the Procurement of a Criminal Records Screening form giving permission to check background information.
- Undergo a criminal background check at no expense if they will have supervisory program responsibility for children/youth. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

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Staff SUPERVISION Guidelines

Whenever supervising activities involving children and youth at SDUMC,

- Two adults will be present, if possible. This may not be possible in cases of hardship (e.g., lack of adequate volunteers). An adult roamer may check on activities.
- One-on-one interactions with children and youth will be with an open door and visibility to the hallway.
- There will be access to a phone when groups are at or away from the church facility.
- Ministry events involving transportation will require signed permission from parents.

Whenever SDUMC sponsors an activity involving children or youth,

- Anyone has the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time.
- All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility to the hallway or remain open while occupied.
- Windows will be kept free from adornment.

Whenever SDUMC hosts an activity involving children or youth from another church or community organization,

- The groups using the church facility will follow SDUMC's Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures in addition to the organization's child protection policies.

Whenever children and youth are participating in out-of-area and over-night outings,

- They must have a written consent form and medical release form signed by a parent.
- There should be access to a phone or cell phone when groups are away from the church.
- On youth overnight outings, there will be a 1:7 staff: youth supervision ratio observed. Female staff will supervise female youth in their sleeping quarters and male staff will supervise male youth.

SDUMC volunteers and paid staff will be given the opportunity to attend training about Safe Sanctuary policies, procedures, and child abuse issues on a yearly basis. <http://vimeo.com/14636182>

If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs at or is revealed to volunteer/paid staff person at a SDUMC sponsored activity, the adult in charge of the activity will

- Ensure the safety of the child or youth.
- Call the church pastor or designee.
- Call the County Office of DSS.

Policy Review: Updates to this policy shall be reviewed by the Administrative Council.

Conclusion

In all our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth, and vulnerable adult 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 Book of Worship*, p.96).