



Rehoboth United Methodist Church

16829 Lappans Road, Williamsport, MD 21795

Safe Sanctuaries

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.



Why We Established this Program?

- 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. We were directed to do something to try & make our churches a safe place for children.
- However, the policy isn't *just* for children. This program *also* protects the church, its staff & its volunteers (YOU), from false accusations or any appearance of impropriety.
- Our formal written guidelines in the document Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Guidelines are intended to prevent the opportunity or appearance of abuse of a minor.
- Because we have these guidelines, we (as a church) are held to a higher standard than the general public. Because we have these guidelines, we are legally bound to follow them & to make sure that our volunteers follow them.



Why Safe Sanctuaries?

- We feel called and mandated to ensure a safe sanctuary for *all* God's people.
- We seek to prevent the occurrence or even the appearance of abuse.
- We aim to protect workers from false accusations and/or suspicions.



Safe Sanctuary Applies To:

- Any church sponsored activity ***on or off*** campus involving children/youth in which their parents/legal guardians have given consent but are not present, ***including but not limited to:***

Sunday School

Youth Group

Sporting Events

Vacation Bible School

Field Trips

Childcare

Mission Activities

Overnighters

Parties

Confirmation Class

Meetings

Counseling Sessions



Who Must be Background Checked?

- All volunteers and employees who have regular and direct supervision of children, students or vulnerable adults.
- All applicants **must** be 15 years of age or older.
- Youth helpers are not background checked and are **never** considered to meet the two adult rule or ration requirements.
- **NOTE:** Someone who only volunteers for a one time event (i.e. Vacation Bible School or similar event that only occurs once a year or less) does **not** have to be background checked, but may **NOT** be left alone with children or youth.



The Process For New Volunteers

- Complete the following forms:
 - Background Check Release Form
 - Laity Sexual Misconduct Form
 - You will need to provide the names & contact information for 3 personal references that are **NOT** staff of RUMC **or** family members

- Complete a training to be offered at least once a year & includes an introduction to the Safe Sanctuaries policy & procedures

- All information provided is confidential & kept under lock & key and access is limited to the Safe Sanctuary Administrator and the Pastor.



The Process For Ongoing Volunteers

- Volunteers that have been through the Safe Sanctuary process and have completed the training class for new volunteers are **required** to participate in an annual training in which they will review the Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures, recertifying & recommitting themselves to upholding RUMC's Safe Sanctuary program. They will do this by:
 - Taking the online PowerPoint Training
 - Completing & turning in the accompanying quiz to the office
 - Passing quiz with 80% proficiency
 - Keeping up on changes to the Safe Sanctuary Policy throughout the year



What is Abuse?

- Child abuse is both a violation of Christian hospitality and illegal!
- An intentional act that threatens or inflicts physical or emotional abuse or sexual maltreatment upon a child/youth
- Abuse also includes failing to prevent an incidence of abuse or allowing a child/youth to be in a situation that results in physical, emotional or sexual injury



Physical & Emotional Abuse

Includes:

- Examples of physical abuse include, but are not limited to:
 - Spanking, Burning, Choking, Shaking, Slapping, Hitting, Kicking, etc.
 - Battery with a weapon (knife, belt, ruler, etc.)
- Examples of emotional abuse include, but are not limited to:
 - Exposing a child/youth to intimidation, humiliation, threats or bullying
 - Sending a message that a child/youth is worthless, bad, unloved or undeserving of love & care
- Controlled or illegal substance misuse (by the adult or by the child/youth)



What is Sexual Misconduct/Abuse?

- Abuse in which contact between a child/youth & an adult (or other older & more powerful child/youth) occurs.
- Examples of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:
 - Behavior that communicates sexual interest
 - Displaying sexually suggestive material
 - Sexualized comments or innuendoes
 - Touching another's body, hair or clothing in a provocative, uncomfortable or intimate manner
 - Touching, rubbing or exposing oneself sexually in the presence of another person
 - Sexual contact including intercourse or oral sex



What if there is an incident?

- Take care of the child/youth. Secure emergency medical help if needed.
- Contact the Pastor or Safe Sanctuary Administrator as soon as is reasonably possible
- Be ready to report on all details of the incident
- Maintain the confidentiality of those involved by not talking about the incident with the media, family members or other church members.



What do I do if someone accuses me of something?

- If you are confronted or accused of abuse, ***immediately*** contact a member of the staff or the pastor.
- Make yourself available for questioning.
- You will be asked to step down from your position with children/youth until the matter is resolved.
- The church will provide access to resources for counseling.



What if Media is Involved?

- A designated spokesperson will be chosen by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee to represent the church in case of an alleged child abuse incident.
- This designated person is the **ONLY** person authorized to speak to the media on behalf of RUMC.
- If you are contacted by a member of the media, refer all questions & comments to the church office who will get them in contact with our church's spokesperson.



Basics All Volunteers Must Follow



Two Adult Rule

- **At least** 2 adults should be present at all church sponsored activities where children/youth are involved regardless of group size.
- **At least** one of these adults **MUST** be background checked.
- The background checked adult is considered the **lead adult** & is responsible for following Safe Sanctuary procedures & ensuring the safety of the event.
- If both adults are related, a third **non-related** adult must be present.
- When one adult is assisting someone in the restroom, another adult **MUST** be in sight line.
- At **NO** time should a non-background checked adult be left alone with children/youth.



“Adult” Supervision

- An 18 year old is **NOT** considered an adult until after they have left high school.
- To be considered an adult leader for an activity, volunteers must be 5 years older than the **oldest** child/youth participant.
 - An 18 year old may **not** work with Senior High youth, but may work with youth and children under the age of 13.
 - 23 is the **minimum** age that can work as an adult leader with Senior High.



Can You See Me?

- We recognize that sometimes unforeseen circumstances make it impossible to have 2 adults present. When this occurs, it is imperative that an individual adheres to the following step to ensure the safety of children/youth and to protect the volunteer:
 - A supervising adult should make periodic observation of the event or visit the class or activity as long as only one adult is present.
 - **Stay visible** to others by staying in an area where others can see you.
 - Keep the door open unless there are windows in the classroom, make sure windows are unobstructed.
 - Ask yourself, “Does my behavior seem suspicious or inappropriate if viewed from a distance?”
 - A good rule of thumb is: If I can’t see another adult, then they can’t see me.



Safety in Numbers

- Whenever a child/youth is present, there should always be **at least** 2 adults present, **even if** the 2nd adult is not part of the activity/event taking place.
- At **NO** time should an adult be alone with **only one** child/youth.
- At **NO** time should a youth be left alone with **only one** child.
- If a volunteer finds themselves alone with a child/youth they should:
 - Seek out another adult to stay with you until the event is over or the child/youth has been picked up
 - If this is not possible, follow the Line of Sight rule of thumb and stay in an area where you are **highly visible**.
- **Try to avoid these type of situations but above all, be smart if you find yourself in one!!**



Restroom Assistance for Children

- If possible, use the **buddy system** when sending children to the restroom.
- If this is not possible and the child does not need assistance, check the restroom for adults before sending them in to use the facilities **alone**.
- If you must accompany a child into the restroom alone, alert the other adult present and leave the door ajar.
- If a child needs assistance with wiping or clothing, leave the door ajar.
- If a child/youth needs extraordinary assistance, such as required because of a handicap or accident, two adults should be present.



Diaper Duty

- Unless a parent/guardian has instructed you to call them in the event of a diaper change, it is absolutely appropriate to change diapers as needed.
- Diapers should be changed in an ***open*** environment and all possible health precautions should be followed (i.e. washing hands & disposing properly of changing materials).



Setting Healthy Boundaries – Social Media

Definition – Websites and other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information and to develop social & professional contacts. These means of communication include but are not limited to: Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, texting, email, blogs, Instant messaging, any online gaming platform.

- No matter where or how communication occurs with a child/youth and whether it is connected with church or not, Safe Sanctuary rules apply.
- **All** communications and contact should be initiated by the child/youth. Including requests to be “friends,” for cell numbers, emails, usernames, etc.

NOTE: If the child is under the age of 13, permission from their parent/guardian **must** be obtained first before engaging in **ANY** communication.

- If you don't feel comfortable interacting with a child/youth outside of church, it is okay to decline “friend” requests, tweets, texts, etc.
- Key to social media interactions is that they should be seen as the same as face-to-face interaction. **What would you say or do if you were in front of the person?**



Setting Healthy Boundaries – Pictures & Videos

- Photos or videos of children/youth whether on cameras, camcorders, cell phones, etc. should **only** be taken if their parent/guardian has signed an RUMC Photo Release.
- Photos or videos of children/youth can **only** be posted online if their parent has signed an RUMC Photo Release.
- If a child/youth does not feel comfortable having their picture taken or being on film, respect their privacy.
- Be sensitive when posting **any** images of children/youth.



Setting Healthy Boundaries - Verbal

- Always be aware of where a conversation might go between you and a child/youth or between children/youth. Steer conversations appropriately.
- Discourage name calling, foul language and other verbal attacks between children/youth. Any language that makes another feel embarrassed, worthless or unloved is considered bullying and is not okay.
- Encourage children/youth to resolve their differences amongst themselves before stepping in to mediate.
- Disagreements between volunteers or negative or disparaging remarks about other volunteers should **NEVER** occur in front of children/youth. Try to resolve differences after the group or event is done. If a resolution cannot be agreed upon, contact a staff person to help mediate.



Setting Healthy Boundaries - Physical

- Physical boundaries change as the individual ages. Holding a child 5 years of age or younger in your lap is appropriate. Holding an older child or youth in your lap is **NOT** appropriate. Males should **NOT** allow a child of **ANY** age to sit in their laps.
- Prolonged back rubs, massages, kissing or similar contact is **not** allowed.
- Hugs should be initiated by children/youth, **not** adults.
- Side hugs should be used whenever possible.
- Handshakes are less threatening than hugs for older children/youth.
- Remember children/youth are often shy about telling adults “No,” especially since they are taught to respect their elders and often get in trouble for telling adults “No.”
- Be aware of each child/youth’s level of comfort with physical boundaries and act accordingly.



Sexual Harassment

- Sexual harassment is **ANY** unwanted sexual advance or demand, either **verbal or physical**, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive.
- Avoid comments or compliments of a personal nature unless you are sure how they will be received.
- The key factor in sexual harassment is **PERCEPTION.**



Tips for Healthy Interactions:

- Be a good example - treat **everyone** with respect.
- Ask yourself:
 - “Would I act this way if my child, youth or significant other was present?”
 - “Would I want someone to act this way to my child, youth or significant other?”
 - “If the child/youth’s parents were watching, would they think it was inappropriate?”
 - Is there equal participation between you and the person you are interacting with? If not, back away.
- Read other’s verbal and physical cues.
- When in doubt, back away!



Abuse Towards Volunteers

- Verbal and physical abuse of our volunteers by children/youth is just as unacceptable as abuse towards children/youth.
- If you feel your boundaries are being violated by a child/youth or another volunteer, contact a staff person or the pastor as soon as possible after the incident has occurred.



Driver's Ed

- Driving children/youth is a great responsibility.
- To transport children/youth, a driver must be **at least** 25 years of age.
- Driver's must provide a copy of a current license and a copy of current insurance to be able to transport children/youth.
- Drivers are responsible for letting the Safe Sanctuary Administrator or Pastor know if their license becomes suspended or revoked, if they receive a ticket for a driving offense or if their auto insurance lapses.

NOTE: Tickets for minor offenses do not automatically disqualify a worker from future driving.



Overnight & Trip Rules

- Overnights and trips are a privilege, **not** a right. Children/youth violating the rules may be prevented from future outings and may be asked to return home early at their parents' expense.
- Written permission and medical consent forms must be completed by legal guardians prior to the trip for all children/youth.
- In the case of overnight events, males and females must have separate sleeping areas. At **NO** time shall an adult share a bed, sleeping bag, blanket or pillow with a minor.
- Males and females must also bathe in separate areas or at different times. At **NO** time should an adult bathe with children/youth.
- If a group decides to split up, there should be **at least** one adult accompanying each group. **NO** child/youth should be allowed to go off on their own or with a group of other children/youth, even if one of the members of the group is 18 years old.



What's Next?

- Print and take the quiz from the link provided at <http://www.rehobothumc.org> under Ministries, Safe Sanctuaries and return it to the office in person, via email or mail. If you have problems accessing the link, stop by the office for a paper copy or email the Safe Sanctuary Administrator listed in the PowerPoint.



Questions??

We know this is a lot of information. Please feel free to contact any of the following ministry leaders with any questions or concerns you may have:

Vicki Bender, Safe Sanctuary Administrator –
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