

Oakton United Methodist Church **Abuse Prevention Policy**

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them...” (Matthew 19:14). “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)

Therefore, Oakton United Methodist Church is establishing the following abuse prevention policy, in accordance with the General Conference’s directive.

The purpose of this policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate Oakton United Methodist Church’s pledge to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

*Physical and **sexual abuse within the life of the Church is in opposition to its moral mission. Oakton UMC prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors which are sinful, demeaning and wrong.

Some instances of misconduct can be resolved informally by conversation between the parties or facilitated mediation. In all other instances, the conduct must be reported immediately to the chair or another member of Pastor/Staff Relations Committee and pastor in charge. If the conduct involves the pastor in charge or another clergy person, it must be reported to the pastor’s supervisor, district superintendent or the bishop.

We covenant to follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults; we will appoint an LCA (Local Church Safe Sanctuary Associate), who will educate said workers on our policies and procedures and who will conduct an annual review of our policies/procedures; we will implement and maintain compliance to our procedures. Further, Oakton UMC bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons that they may be confirmed and strengthened in their faith.

This policy statement does not pertain to outside groups of adults who use the facility or familial gatherings for parties and/or receptions of any kind.

*Physical abuse is any deliberate and intentional act that causes bodily injury to a person.

**Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer.

Oakton United Methodist Church **Safe Sanctuary Procedures**

1. Staff/volunteers shall complete and sign a Covenant Application Form. (Included is permission to perform the necessary investigations to complete the review of the applicant.) This procedure shall also apply to persons currently working as staff or volunteers. The pastor in charge of Oakton's Hispanic ministry – in consultation with the Senior pastor – may waive the requirement for a background screening.
2. At least two adults shall be present at all times during any church- sponsored ministry involving children and this includes the bus ministry. If two adults are not available for each small group, then the groups shall meet in an open space in sight and sound of other groups. This 'Two Adult Rule' will be adhered to in some cases by assigned adult "roamers" who move in and out of rooms.
3. Children workers who are younger than 18 years of age may serve only as long as they are under the supervision of one or more certified adults. [Must be at least 16 years old to qualify for Safe Sanctuary training.]
4. All youth must be at least two years older than the participants with whom they work. College students working with youth programs shall be paired with another adult.
5. A ratio of one staff/worker per 15 children/youth shall be required at retreats, rallies and meetings.
6. All adults at church events must be certified through the church certification process (includes application, covenant, background check, training in procedures and leadership approval.) Persons working with children or youth will not be considered until after they have been regularly attending for more than 6 months, unless vouched for by church leaders. [Paid staff may work with children and youth immediately after being successfully screened and verified.]
7. All youth must have a parental permission slip before attending a rally/retreat/camp out.
8. There will be separate sleeping areas for males and females at all church-sponsored events.
9. Visual access shall be allowed (half-door, window in door, or admittance through unlocked door) in any room where children or youth meet.
10. Persons may offer their services as "drivers" to children and youth events without prior screening.
11. Policy takes effect September 1, 2002 and continues henceforth.