

Trinity UMC Child Protection Policy
Presented to TUMC Administrative Board – Mon. May 9, 2005

PURPOSE: Trinity United Methodist Church is committed to living out its calling to share the gospel through our mission which is: To GATHER people to Christ, to GROW people in Christ, to GO and serve Christ in the world. As a part of that ministry Trinity UMC will endeavor to share the good news of Christ with the children and students of our faith family. We will strive to provide a safe and secure environment to the children and students we minister to while remaining true to our purpose of ministry.

GOAL: Our goal is to protect children from sexual abuse, child molestation or any type of inappropriate behavior by employees or volunteers in this church and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

DEFINITION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines such abuse as “any sexual activity with a child, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care institution, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any setting including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent or another child.

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital or anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.”

DEFINITION OF A MINOR: A minor is any individual under 18 years of age.

The policy and procedure set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities whether clergy, paid staff or volunteer.

This policy will address four (4) areas that are critical for the protection of the children, our employees and our church: selection process, protection policy, reporting procedures and responses to allegations.

I. Selection Process

A. Employee – anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with preschoolers, children and/or minor students.

1. Current/New Employee
 - Complete a confidential application form.
 - Complete a consent to release confidential information.
 - Criminal records check and/or DHR records check
 - Receipt of appropriate clearances of all checks to work with minors

All records, forms and reports will become part of the employee’s confidential personnel file.

Any criminal activity in the following areas will preclude participation as an employee working with children and students: violations related to (1) a minor; (2) child molestation; (3) any type of sexual offense; (4) any pornographic or obscene material; (5) any type of physical violence; and (6) child abuse.

B. Volunteer – anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis and is serving in any position involving the consistent supervision or custody of minors for ongoing church programming such as nurseries, Sunday School classes, student ministries or overnight activities.

1. Current/New Volunteer
 - Complete a confidential application form.
 - Complete a consent to release confidential information.
 - Criminal records check and/or DHR records check
 - Receipt of appropriate clearances of all checks to work with minors

All records, forms and reports will become part of the volunteer’s confidential personnel file.

Any criminal activity in the following areas will preclude participation as a volunteer working with children and students: violations related to (1) a minor; (2) child molestation; (3) any type of sexual offense; (4) any pornographic or obscene material; (5) any type of physical violence; and (6) child abuse.

In addition to the above requirements, a volunteer must be a member of Trinity United Methodist Church, or regular attendee, for at least six (6) months. A volunteer who does not meet these membership requirements may serve only upon the approval of the Minister of Christian Formation.

II. Protection Policy

- A. Classroom/activity staffing approach
Age-group ministers, staff, or lay leaders will be present, or nearby, and available in children and student areas and in the hallways where minors are present. Reasonable effort will be made to have two (2) adult workers present, or nearby, with preschoolers, children and minor students during church activities. Reasonable effort shall be made to assure that one adult is not left alone with one minor. A husband and wife working the same room will be considered as one adult for purposes of this policy. All people working with minors should avoid being alone with a child without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings.
- B. View Windows/Open Doors
Reasonable effort will be made to place preschoolers, children and minor students in rooms with view windows or open doors for all teaching/learning activities. Doors are never to be locked.
- C. Training and Support
Trinity will make this Child Protection Policy, as well as practical guidelines available for all persons working with children and minor students. New workers will be trained in the policy and the practical guidelines in orientation and ongoing workers will review the policy and the practical guidelines annually.
- D. Professional Teachers
Due to the professional relationship of the teacher and student, parents understand that only one teacher may be present in certain learning or artistic performance programs. All professional teachers shall complete the selection process even if they are volunteers.
- E. The Special Class and Parents Day Out shall adopt and abide by Trinity's Child Protection policy, in addition to other policies that guide day-to-day operations and safety.
- F. Any minor participating in a Trinity sponsored event will be under the supervision of an approved Trinity adult staff member or volunteer at all times.

All Employees and Volunteers as defined by this policy will be required to read, sign and comply with all of the Child Protection Policies of Trinity UMC.

III Reporting Procedures

Observed or reported child sexual abuse, physical abuse or child molestation should be reported immediately to the appropriate age group minister or any Pastor of the Church. Reporting abuse can result in severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if reasonable cause exists to suspect abuse this concern should be reported immediately to an appropriate staff member of the church to implement approved procedures and guidelines to protect the child and help the family. When time and circumstances permit, the report should first be made to the appropriate age-group minister, who will then initiate the correct and proper reporting process.

In the case that a member of the appointed clergy is suspected of abuse the report should be made to the Chairman of the Staff Parish Relations Committee who will then initiate the appropriate procedures.

IV. Responses to Allegations

- A. All allegations will be taken seriously and church staff will take action in accordance with the laws of the State of Alabama, insurance policy requirements and based upon the advice of the church's legal counsel.
- B. The official spokesperson of the church in any of these matters will be the Senior Pastor or someone officially designated by the Senior Pastor to serve in this capacity. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media or any other individuals and/or entities in an official capacity.

- C. The church staff will document (in writing with date and signature) all efforts in the handling of any incident that may pertain to this policy, or incidents involving reported or suspected child abuse.
- D. The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. Church staff will minister to all involved, as well as cooperate with authorities.

V. Resolution of Disputes

Trinity United Methodist Church believes that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 6:1-8). Therefore, any civil claim or dispute arising from or related to allegations by or against workers, employees, volunteers, church members or their families, may, at the request or consent of the parties involved, be submitted to biblically based conciliation in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries. That forum could provide an opportunity for resolving issues in a fair manner while seeking to preserve or restore the relationships fractured by the dispute and allowing the Church to continue its ministry to all people.

ADOPTION OF POLICY

The Administrative Board of Trinity UMC formally adopts this policy on May 9, 2005 with the understanding that reasonable effort will be made to execute and implement the operational changes by Sept. 30, 2005.

AMENDMENT OF POLICY

These policies may be amended with the approval of the Administrative Board and will become effective no sooner than 30 days from such approval to allow for distribution of materials and communication to affected parties.

ADDENDUM: Submitted and approved by the Board of Trustees, June 3, 2008

The Board of Trustees of Trinity United Methodist Church (TUMC) reserves the right to employ whatever means necessary to restrict or deny admission to TUMC premises or any services associated with TUMC of any member or other person who is accused by a church member or a minor of a church member of sexual misconduct of any shape, manner or form. The Board of Trustees of TUMC may enforce this clause at its sole discretion in order to protect church members and their families while balancing fairness to all parties involved.

The Board of Trustees of TUMC, upon being placed on actual notice, shall restrict any person who is formally charged with sexual misconduct involving a minor from TUMC premises and/or services until such time that the matter is disposed of or is adjudicated. The Board of Trustees of TUMC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to restrict or deny admission to TUMC premises or services associated with TUMC regardless of any judicial findings, plea or settlement of said charges.

Revised 1/7/2011