

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

CHATSWORTH FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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PREFACE: CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

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 and sexual exploitation, and abuse."

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, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines.

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 grow safe and strong.

from The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church – 1996.

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Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of all types of abuse at Chatsworth First United Methodist Church (Chatsworth First UMC).

Purpose

Chatsworth First UMC's purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, emotional well-being and spiritual growth of all of God's children and youth (i.e. minors).

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and as a United Methodist congregation, we at Chatsworth First UMC pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the physical safety, emotional well-being, and spiritual growth of all of Chatsworth's minors as well as those who work with minors. Chatsworth First UMC will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; will implement prudent procedures in all programs and events; will educate all of our workers with minors regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods; will have a clear procedure for responding to a suspected incident of abuse; and will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Conclusion

In all of Chatsworth First UMC's ministries involving minors, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child 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

Screening and Training Requirements

Requirement	Ministry Team Leader or Staff	Local Driver	Staff not in contact with minors	Helper	Volunteer
Employment Application	Yes (For Paid Staff)	No	Yes	No	No
Criminal Records Check	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Volunteer Short Form Application	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Safe Sanctuaries Training	Yes	Yes	Encouraged	No	Yes
CPR/First Aid	Yes	Encouraged	No	No	Encouraged
Safe Sanctuaries Covenant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, with parent's signature	Yes
Single Event Volunteer Log	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Waiting Period (active at CFUMC for 1 year or 6 months on transfer of active membership)	Yes (except paid staff)	Yes	No	Encouraged	Yes
Driver's Covenant	Yes, If driving minors	Yes	No	Not applicable	Yes
Driver's Record Check	Yes	Yes	No	Not applicable	No, unless driving minors
Minimum Age	21* (25 to drive)	25	18	14**	18*

*Each person must meet the "Five Years or Older Rule"

**Nursery Workers (at any event) must be at least 14 years old and meet the "Five Years Older Rule"

Safe Sanctuary Program Chatsworth First United Methodist Church, Inc.

1.0 Volunteer Requirements

A. Purpose

All volunteers for activities that involve minors must satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth in the Safe Sanctuary Plan.

B. Requirements

B.1 Application

Volunteers must complete the volunteer application packet which includes a reference form, and other forms/information according to level of service applying for, and be approved for service by an ordained staff member and the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator.

B.2 Background Checks (Criminal Records & Drivers Records)

Ministry team leaders, paid staff, and local drivers must clear a criminal background check. A criminal background check is recommended for helpers and volunteers. Driver's Records Checks must also be run on Ministry Team Leaders, Paid Staff (who will be transporting minors), Local Drivers, or anyone else who will be transporting minors to, during, or from ministry events.

Note: Background checks (criminal & driver's) will be kept confidential. Only those approved (*i.e. Pastor, SPR, Staff Supervisor*) by this policy can gain access to these records. Those authorized at Chatsworth First UMC to view these records on an "as needed" basis are the Senior Pastor, the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator, and the Office Administrator.

B.3 Training

Volunteers must complete the initial training. Trained Volunteers must complete a refresher training every two years as specified in Section 10.

B.4 Follow-up

Volunteer applications and background checks must be updated every five years. Volunteers are encouraged to update their application more frequently as necessary. A break in service for one year or more will require participant to begin the application process over. We reserve the option to repeat background checks as needed.

2.0 Adult Leader Requirements

A. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that minors are not left alone with one adult and/or adults are not left alone with one child.

B. Two Adult Rule

All reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that two adults will be present at all times during any church-sponsored event that involves minors. During Sunday School, Children's Ministry Classes, and CFUMC Youth Classes, one adult may teach a group, as long as they would be clearly visible to a roving adult or other leaders. Where there is only one adult teaching, and only one minor is in attendance, an adjustment must be made by adding

another adult or adding more students. If an adjustment cannot be made, the event should be cancelled.

C. Roving Adult

At times when multiple groups of minors are present, one of the two responsible adults may be a rover, if necessary. This rover is a responsible adult who regularly moves around monitoring the safety of the other groups. Events that may use Roving Adults are: Sunday School, Preschool, Children's Ministry classes and events, CFUMC Youth classes and events, Bible Studies, Vacation Bible School, and Lock-Ins.

D. Age Requirements

Ministry Team Leaders, Staff, Local Drivers, Helpers, and Volunteers must be at least five (5) years older than the group of children or youth with which they are serving.

D. Ages 18 - 20

Individuals between the ages of 18 and 20 may serve as a second adult. They must be under the supervision of a Trained Ministry Adult Leader or a Staff member and must be at least five (5) years older than the minors with which they are serving.

3.0 Window-in-Door Policy

A. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that minors are visible at all times from a location outside of the room in which a church related activity is taking place. This room should still be able to be secured from the inside in case of a **lock-down**.

B. General Requirements

Each room that may be used for an activity involving minors will have a door with a window in it or a half-door. The window may not be obstructed and must permit a clear line of vision into the room from the hallway.

C. Counseling Requirements

At any counseling session with children, youth, or adults with diminished capacity, at least one of the participants (counseled and counselor) must remain visible from outside the room throughout the entire session.

4.0 Safety Procedures

A. Purpose

On occasion, where there is a perceived threat in the immediate area, the church may go to a "lock-down."

B. Lock-Down Procedures

All exterior doors to Chatsworth First UMC's building will be physically verified as locked secure. If minors are present, they will return to a classroom with an adult leader/teacher and the classroom door will be locked from the inside. Ministry Team Leaders, Staff, and/or Roving Adults will search and secure the rest of the building. Doors and hallways will be monitored until the lock-down is ended.

C. Fire Procedures

In the event a fire is reported or suspected, a calm, orderly evacuation of all church buildings is required. Everyone should leave the building by the closest exit and gather in the west parking lot. Leaders should do a head count to verify everyone in their care is present. No one may reenter the building until permission is given.

D. Tornado Procedures

Severe storm radios are located in the church office and the infant nursery. In the event a Tornado Warning is issued or suspected, everyone should move to the lowest level of the building they are in and take shelter in the hallway or in the classrooms without windows. No one should leave these areas until an "all clear" is received.

E. Winter Weather

When winter weather (snow, freezing rain, ice) are expected, the following general guidelines will be followed.

E.1 Murray County School System

If classes for the Murray County School System are cancelled or postponed, then daytime activities (i.e. preschool, meetings) at Chatsworth First UMC will be cancelled. The church office and evening activities will be handled on a case by case basis.

E.2 Communication

In the event of winter weather, every effort will be made to communicate timely information. This may include phone calls, email, the church's web page (www.Chatfumc.org), and local news.

E.3 Caution Encouraged

When winter weather occurs, please do not take unnecessary risks in an effort to make it to church. Physical injuries and property damage should be avoided.

5.0 Advance Notice Guidelines

A. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that parents, leaders, and minors have adequate advance notice of official ministry events sponsored by Chatsworth First UMC. When minors are involved, there must be adequate advance planning and proper permission to ensure the safest environment that is reasonable.

B. Requirements

A basic rule for ministry with minors is to always give a parent/guardian advance notice (seven days when possible) and full information regarding the event(s) in which minors will be participating. Advance notice means communicating schedules to parent/guardians and the church office by publication deadline of the bulletin/newsletter.

When last minute changes are required, parent/guardians should be contacted with the changes as soon as possible. In a situation where proper adult supervision cannot be provided, the event must be cancelled or a parent/guardian must give written permission for their minor to participate.

6.0 Transportation Procedure

A. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to outline/insure safe transport of minors to and from off-site church related events.

B. Church Owned/Rented Transportation

B.1 General

All Church events that require transportation for which a (1) church vehicle is used, (2) the church rents or charters a vehicle, and/or (3) private vehicles are used must

comply with the current Chatsworth Transportation Policy and all applicable governmental laws. All vehicle operators must be 25 years old or older.

C. Drivers

Except when a parent/guardian is transporting their own minors, drivers for church events must comply with Chatsworth's current screening and training requirements. (chart on page 3). In addition, to being 25 years or older, there should be a second adult (preferably a Trained Ministry Leader) in the vehicle at all times.

D. Permission

Written parent/guardian permission should be received in advance to minors being transported to or from church events.

E. Chartered Transportation

When Chatsworth First UMC charters transportation from a third party that provides the vehicle and a qualified driver, the company providing transportation assumes the responsibility for safe transportation and to follow all governmental laws and guidelines.

7.0 Property Safety Guidelines

A. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to reduce the physical hazards of the church and grounds in order to minimize personal injury. Additionally, minors should not be in the church buildings or on the church grounds unattended by an adult or a parent/guardian designated attendee.

B. Church Campus

B.1 Parking Lot

B.1.1 General Conditions

The parking lot should be maintained and in good condition which includes clear markings and well lit at night.

B.1.2 Non Parking Lot Use

All use of Chatsworth's Parking lot for events (**i.e. car wash, games, art work, etc.**) needs to occur in a well-defined, cordoned-off area marked with either safety tape or safety cones.

B.2 Church Grounds

B.2.1 General Conditions

The church grounds are defined as the outside area of Chatsworth's campus (not including parking). All church grounds should be maintained and in good condition. Items that could present a danger, should not be stored outside where they could be easily accessed.

B.2.2 Playground

The playground should be maintained and in proper working order. Chatsworth's Trustees, Preschool, or Safe Sanctuary Team have the authority to close the playground when maintenance is needed or unsafe conditions are discovered. The playground will remain closed to all use until corrective action is taken to resolve the issue.

C. Church Buildings

C.1 General Conditions

Chatsworth's church buildings should be maintained so as to be safe and available for ministry. All interior doors that have a locking door, should remain locked when not in use.

C.2 Cleaning Materials and Tools

Cleaning materials and church owned tools must be stored in locked closets (or similar) when not in use. In the kitchen, dish and utensil cleaning materials should be stored on upper shelves.

C.3 Storage Areas

All storage areas (interior closets or exterior sheds) shall remain locked when they are not in use.

C.4 Detached Buildings

All buildings should remain locked unless it is in use and responsible adults are present.

8.0 Restroom Procedures

A. Purpose

This section sets guidelines and procedures intended to protect minors and the adults who work with them during the use of the restrooms. Chatsworth acknowledges that use of the restroom is one of the most vulnerable situations faced by minors and adults workers. The best practice is for a parent/guardian to encourage minors use the restroom (with parental supervision if needed) prior to the start of an event.

B. Restroom Availability

To be detailed.

C. During Worship Services

Parents/guardians are asked to encourage minors remain in the sanctuary during the worship, using the restroom before or after worship whenever possible. When a minor needs to leave worship to use the restroom, a parent/guardian or older family member is encouraged to accompany the minor and to use the restrooms in the back of the sanctuary. Minors who participate in Children's Church (ages 3-1st grade) will be given the opportunity as a group to use the restroom when they first get to the Children's Church area.

D. Group Restroom Breaks

At times, leaders may wish to take a group to the restroom. When this happens, the class should line up in the hallway, the leader should enter each restroom and verify they are empty, then the leader is to stand in the hallway as a monitor as the girls and boys enter the restroom a few at a time until everyone has had an opportunity to go.

E. Assistance

E.1 Diaper Changes

Diaper changes will be done as needed by the infant nursery, the toddler nursery, preschool classes, or for adults with diminished capacity as needed. The following guidelines should be followed:

- Sanitary procedures must be used.
- Soiled diapers should be disposed of in a diaper pail (unless parent/guardian instructs otherwise). Note: Trash bags containing diapers should be disposed of in the outside dumpster when the event is over. Do not leave diapers in building overnight.
- A "Daily Report" form should be completed by the adult who completes the diaper change that keeps the parent/guardian informed.

E.2 Other Restroom Assistance

If a minor (or an adult with diminished capacity) needs assistance going to the restroom, some or all of these guidelines should be followed:

- The restroom door should not be locked while adult and minor are inside.
- When privacy permits, the door to the restroom should not be closed.
- When possible, another (non-related, trained) adult should be present as a monitor. This adult can stand just outside the door.
- A "Daily Report" form should be completed by the adult who assists that keeps the parent/guardian informed.
- When another (non-related, trained) adult is not available, advise another adult that restroom assistance is being given.
- If anything out of the ordinary occurs, complete an Incident Report Form and file it with the church office.

9.0 Adult Behavior

A. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to ensure that adults should model Christ-like behavior and that minors feel confident and secure.

B. Relationships with Minors

Adults are to maintain a positive disposition, a quiet voice when disciplining a minor, to encourage minors to grow as a follower of Jesus Christ, to emphasis good behavior, and handle misbehavior in a prompt, understanding manner.

C. Punishment

Verbal correction, time-outs, parental notification, and/or suspension from church activities are the only acceptable forms of discipline with minors. Corporal punishment is not allowed.

10.0 Training Procedure

A. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to set minimum levels of training for the various church personnel and volunteers to insure at minimum an understanding of church Safe Sanctuary procedures.

B. Ministry Team Leaders

Ministry Team Leaders who organize and/or lead a church sponsored activity-involving minors must be knowledgeable with church Safe Sanctuary procedures and work to ensure these procedures are followed. Ministry Team Leaders will also be trained in first aid/CPR. Ministry Team Leaders and Volunteers will be trained in their particular area of service (i.e. Sunday School, Children's Ministry, Youth Group).

C. Elected Leaders and All Trustees

Training will be provided to insure that all Charge Conference approved leaders and Trustees have an understanding of the Safe Sanctuary procedures. Such training should be made available no less than once a year. This level of training shall be made available to all church members and friends.

The Church Council Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that training is provided for the appropriate personnel.

D. Non-Clergy Employees

Non-clergy employees and staff will be made aware that the church maintains Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures. Specific sections that may apply to their job function will be identified. The Staff Parish Relations Committee is responsible for this information.

11.0 Reporting Abuse and Alleged Abuse

A. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to ensure that any suspected incident of child abuse is treated seriously and preserves the privacy of the alleged grievant and the alleged abuser.

Chatsworth First UMC recognizes the sensitive nature of abuse and alleged abuse. Church members are asked to refrain from discussing any information with the media and other church members. Chatsworth First UMC's Trustee Team (in consultation with the Safe Sanctuary Team), will appoint a "Church Spokesperson" to respond to questions from the media, congregation, and community.

Important Note: While the state of Georgia allows ordained pastors some discretion about reporting suspected abuse based on clergy confidentiality, Chatsworth First UMC requests their clergy, uphold the higher standard of being a "mandatory reporter."

B. Procedure

All reports of suspected child abuse must be taken seriously. Whenever child abuse is suspected, reports must be made immediately to the Senior Pastor and/or the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator.

The Senior Pastor and/or Safe Sanctuary Coordinator will follow the following Procedure:

- B.1 Ask "What happened?" Do not interview a minor or adult with diminished capacity. After asking what happened, document your answer and any other details. There should be minimal interviews with the minors about the incident. Ensure they are kept in a safe monitored environment while a determination regarding reporting is made.
- B.2 If the suspected incident of abuse involves the Senior Pastor serving under appointment at Chatsworth First UMC, the District Superintendent of the Northwest District must be contacted immediately (706.278.3954.) Home/cell phone numbers may also be available on the North GA Conference Web Site (www.ngumc.org) After contacting the District Superintendent, make sure Chatsworth's Lay Leader, Safe Sanctuary Coordinator, and Trustee Chairperson should also be notified immediately. From this point forward in the process, the Senior Pastor will recuse his/her self and Chatsworth's Lay Leader will complete the duties ascribed to the Senior Pastor in the procedure outlined below. If a

clergy (other than the Senior Pastor) is suspected, notify the both Senior Pastor and District Superintendent.

- B.3** The Senior Pastor and/or the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator complete and sign a "Suspected Abuse Report Form." If the report comes from a third party, they may complete the form and sign it along with the pastor and/or Safe Sanctuary Coordinator.
- B.4** To assist in determining whether an incident should be reported as abuse, contact Child Help USA at 800-422-4453 or Child Abuse Georgia at 800-244-5373. All incidents, even if not reported as abuse should be logged into an incident log book.
- B.5** Contact the appropriate Department of Social Services. Report suspected abuse to one of the following (listed in order): 1) Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS), 2) Chatsworth Police, or 3) the District Attorney's Office.

Murray County GA DFCS----- (706) 695-7315
ask for "CPS Intake" (child protective services)
Chatsworth Police----- (706) 695-9666

- B.6** The Senior Pastor and/or the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator must complete the Suspected Incident Checklist in Appendix VI and attach it to the original Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse outlining the suspected incident.
- B.7** If the alleged abuse has taken place on the church grounds or the alleged abuser is a church member or staff, the District Superintendent of the Northwest District must be contacted (706-278-3954.) The pastor, lay leader, Safe Sanctuary Coordinator, and Trustee Chairperson should also be notified immediately.
- B.8** All records with respect to this event shall be made available to all agencies and persons/parties with a right to know, yet, will otherwise be kept confidential from the congregation and community.

12.0 Exceptions Policy

A. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the conditions and process with which the policies and guidelines set forth in this document may be temporarily suspended under specific circumstances.

B. Eligibility

- B.1** Exceptions may be requested only for single-time, limited duration events.
- B.2** Ongoing programs may not request exceptions through this process, but should instead request in writing that this policy be revised.
- B.3** Exceptions are valid only for a single occurrence of a given event. In case of recurring events, (e.g., annual youth trips) a new exception must be applied for.

C. Exceptions Process

C.1 Requests for exceptions must be submitted in writing to the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator and Senior Pastor. Both must consent in writing to the exception.

The following information should be included in the Exception Request.:

- i. Requestor**
- ii. Work area or ministry**
- iii. Name, duration, location and purpose of event**
- iv. Name of adults attending (for verification that approved volunteer status)**
- v. Expected number of minors participating**
- vi. Reason requesting exception**
- vii. Outline of steps that will be taken to ensure safety of minors and adult participants**
- viii. Other information requested by the Safe Sanctuaries committee**

13.0 Review and Revision Requirements

A. Purpose

The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that the Safe Sanctuary Program remains up to date with the current life of the church.

B. Time Line

The Safe Sanctuary Program will be reviewed at a minimum of bi-annually (two-years) beginning from the adoption of the program by the Church Council.

Chatsworth First UMC Safe Sanctuary Definitions

Adult

For this policy, an adult is a person of 21 years of age or older.

Apprentice Adult

For the purpose of this policy, an individual between ages 18 and 20, who have been trained and must meet the five years older rule whenever he/she is helping.

Child

A child is a person of less than 18 years of age or an adult with diminished capacity. As a general rule, a child in this policy means someone between birth and the fifth grade.

Driver

An adult 25 years or older who has met all the requirements defined on page 4.

Event

An official ministry event at Chatsworth First UMC should meet the following requirements.

- Parent/Guardians should know the specific details in advance (who, what, when, where, how much?). Anything less than 7 days notice is considered inadequate notice.
- If this is an "off campus" event, then permission forms and medical release forms are required unless a legal parent/guardian is present at the event.
- The group invited to participate in this event is clearly identified. (i.e. Pioneer Club, Jr. High Youth, Confirmation Class, Sr. High Youth, High school girls, etc.) To be as inclusive as possible, an effort should be made to invite everyone that qualifies for the group by using newsletter, bulletin, email, or other creative forms of communication.
- All events are encouraged to support Chatsworth's mission.
- Events are expected to abide by governmental laws and the policies of Chatsworth First UMC.
- Events should be properly planned in terms of reserving rooms, arranging transportation, and ensuring proper adult supervision (Ministry Team Leader, Staff, Helper, Volunteer, Driver).

Helper

For this policy, a Helper is a person (ages 14 – 20 years) old. This person must meet the five years older rule wherever he/she is helping.

Lock-Down

On occasion, where there is a perceived threat in the immediate area, the church will go to a "lock-down." This means all outside doors will be locked. If children are present, they will return to a classroom with their leader/teacher and the hallway door will be locked from the inside by the teacher. Ministry Team Leaders, Staff, and/or Roving Adults will search and secure the rest of the building and monitor doors and hallways until the lock-down is ended.

Ministry Team Leader

Any person who supervises a children's or youth activity. This person has regular and direct contact with minors, must be 21 years or older, must meet the five years older rule and is counted in the 2 adult rule.

Minor

For this policy, a minor is anyone under the age of 18. This policy also includes adults with diminished capacity in the definition of a minor.

Responsible Adult

An adult who is responsible for the care of children and youth at a church sponsored event.

Pastor / Clergy

Pastor or clergy at Chatsworth First UMC refers to anyone currently appointed to Chatsworth by the Bishop of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Senior Pastor

Although a church may have more than one appointed clergy, the Senior Pastor is the "pastor in charge" or "charge pastor" as appointed by the Bishop of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Staff

Any paid employees of Chatsworth First UMC (clergy and non-clergy).

Supplemental Restraint

A supplemental restraint is a state statute required harness or car seat for children under the age of six and weighing less than 40 pounds or under the height of 4'09" (according to O.C.G.A 40-8-76 and 40-8-76.1). Only minors over the age of 12 may ride in the front seat of a vehicle that is equipped with airbags.

Unattended Child

A child that not is in the direct line of sight at all times of the parent/guardian or their designated attendee.

Volunteer

An individual (18 or older) who has completed the volunteer application process and has been approved for service.