

SAFE SANCTUARIES

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth



Succasunna United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Last updated: 10/5/2017

Adopted by Church Council: October 5, 2017

Next Review / Revision Due: Fourth Quarter 2018

Part One: Screening and Selection of Workers with Children and Vulnerable Adults¹

1. All future employees of Succasunna United Methodist Church must:
 - Complete an application for employment (with three references).
 - Undergo an interview with the Pastor and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
 - Undergo a background check utilizing a Greater New Jersey Annual Conference-approved service and submit evidence thereof to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

2. All current staff will be required to:
 - Undergo a background check utilizing a Greater New Jersey Annual Conference-approved service and submit evidence thereof to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

3. All volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must:
 - Be a member of this congregation, a regular attendee of this congregation for at least six months, OR if not a member of this congregation/not a regular attendee volunteer must obtain two letters of recommendation from church members. In the latter case, certification is subject to approval by the Education Committee.
 - Undergo a background check utilizing a Greater New Jersey Annual Conference-approved service and submit evidence thereof to the Pastor or Safe Sanctuaries coordinator.
 - If a prior background check was completed, (e.g., for school teachers and others who work with children) documentation certifying same is required. When more than five years have elapsed between the application and the last background check, the individual must complete a new screening.

4. For non-US citizens, or in other cases where a background check is prohibitively expensive or impractical to obtain, two letters of recommendation from church members shall be required. In this instance, certification is subject to approval by the Education Committee.

5. The church will reimburse the expense of any background check.

6. These files will be maintained in the confidential files of the church. An annual review of these records will be conducted by the Pastor or Safe Sanctuaries coordinator to ensure all credentials are up to date.

¹ Vulnerable adults are individuals with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.

Part Two: Supervision and Procedures

1. Two Certified Adult Rule

Certified adults are defined as those individuals age 18 or older who have met the requirements for training and background checks under our policy. At least two certified adults, (whom it is strongly suggested are not related) shall be present everywhere children, youth and vulnerable adults are gathered for worship, education, games, recreation, arts & crafts, and other activities. This includes the nursery, church school classes, youth programs, and any other activities where children, youth, and vulnerable adults are present, whether these activities take place on-site or off site.

No unrelated adult should be alone on church property with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult for any reason at any time.

2. Age Requirements

All counselors and volunteers age 18 or older must be Safe Sanctuary Certified. All counselors and volunteers working with high school age youth must be at least 22 years old.

3. Bathroom Procedure

Young children (grade 2 or younger) or vulnerable adults who need assistance in using the bathroom shall be escorted by an adult. The certified adult is to remain in the hallway with the bathroom door open while the child is in the bathroom stall. If assistance is requested by the child, then the certified adult may enter and give assistance. At the end of church school or any other activity, the parent or guardian will be informed that bathroom assistance was requested by the child and provided by a certified adult.

4. Church School Arrival/Dismissal

Students Pre-K - 4th grade must not be dropped off and left by their parent/guardian unless 2 certified adult teachers are present in the room. Students in the Pre-K/K class must be signed in upon drop off. At the time of dismissal, students Pre-K - 4th grade will not be allowed to leave until their parents/guardians pick them up from the classroom. Students 5th grade and up should not leave the church building without a parent/guardian. Parents/guardians of students 5th grade and up should agree on a designated pickup/meeting area.

5. Nursery

- The nursery will be available for children ages 3 and under while being accompanied with their parent.
- If parent is not present and a child's diaper needs changing, the nursery attendant will be sent to retrieve the parent from the sanctuary, or the parent will be contacted via cell phone.

- All parents using the nursery for their child must sign in and out of the nursery log.
- The nursery attendant will maintain the log and the log record will be kept on file a minimum of two years.

6. Trips

- A parental consent form must be completed for all church related trips/events (e.g. Soup Kitchen, Confirmation trips), with appropriate medical information provided.
- All drivers must be at least 22 years of age and be Safe Sanctuaries certified. The driver must provide evidence of a valid driver's license and insurance at the time of a trip or event. This information will be checked by the trip/event organizer.
- Two certified adults should be present in the vehicle. However, parents/guardians must be advised when only one certified adult will be present in a vehicle during transit. This information must be included on the trip permission slip form.
- Trip forms will be retained in the confidential files of the church for a period of one year from the date of the trip.

7. Overnight Trips (Sleeping Accommodations)

- These guidelines are in addition to the guidelines listed under "Trips."
- Trips requiring overnight travel will need a hotel room(s) or a home with the amount of beds* provided equal to the number of youth staying overnight. In a hotel room and a home there must be one bed available for each youth. (Rooms must be gender specific /or any transgender youth should have separate rooms). For example, if staying in a hotel room with two beds the room can only house two same sex youth. If staying in a home with 6 beds the home may only house 6 people. (Exceptions apply.)
- Adults may not share the same room as a youth. Adults should be in nearby room. Adults may share a room with another adult of the same sex.
- If staying in a hotel adults should have a key to every room a youth is occupying. If staying in a home all adults present should have keys to the home.
- Adults should do random checks throughout the night/day to hotel rooms or bedrooms where youth are residing for the overnight trip.
- Exceptions to room policy apply to siblings, parent/child relationships and married couples. If same sex siblings wish to share a bed this is permitted. If a parent wishes to share a bed with their own child this is permitted. If a married couple wishes to share a bed this is permitted.
- *Beds – Included but not limited to beds, sleeping cots, sleeping mats, etc.

Part Three: Training and Education

1. Staff and Volunteer Workers (with Children and Vulnerable Adults)

All staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults must attend a training workshop provided by SUMC or at the District or Conference level. The purpose of the workshop will be to equip workers in:

- Defining abuse in all of its forms
- Recognizing the signs of abuse
- Becoming familiar with causes of and consequences of abuse
- Understanding the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and learning how to respond to and report abuse or allegations of abuse.

All staff and volunteers shall sign a consent form indicating that they have read and understand the Safe Sanctuaries Policy of the Succasunna United Methodist Church and will abide by the requirements of the policy. The Pastor or Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that volunteers have met the requirements for training and screening outlined in the policy. All individuals shall complete a new application and undergo a new background check utilizing a Greater New Jersey Annual Conference-approved service and submit evidence thereof to the Pastor/Associate Pastor or trained volunteer every five years.

2. The Congregation

- The pastor will preach the importance of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in worship and the life of the church.
- The congregation will be encouraged to attend Safe Sanctuaries workshops or training sessions offered by SUMC or at the District/Conference level.
- All parents and/or guardians who have children, youth, or vulnerable adults under the care of the church will be given a hard copy of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, upon request.
- The policy will be posted in conspicuous locations throughout the church, including Fellowship Hall.
- The Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be available to view digitally on the church website, www.sumcnj.org.

3. Outside Groups

Outside groups requesting use of the church for activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults will receive a copy of this policy. Leaders will be asked to sign a form certifying that they have received and read this policy, and these forms will be kept on file for one year from the conclusion of the activity. At a minimum, all outside groups will be expected to abide by the two-

adult rule. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, whose organizations have their own child protection standards, are expected to abide by those standards.

Part Four: Reporting and Responding

Under state law anyone who suspects or witnesses abuse of youth, children, and vulnerable adults has a legal obligation to report it to Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P - formerly the Division of Youth and Family Services, DYFS). Failure to do so may result in criminal prosecution.

Defining Child Abuse and Neglect - Abuse, as defined by The State of NJ Department of Children and Families, is the physical, sexual or emotional harm or risk of harm to a child under the age of 18 caused by a parent or other person who acts as a caregiver for the child.

Neglect, as defined by The State of NJ Department of Children and Families, occurs when a parent or caregiver fails to provide proper supervision for a child or adequate food, clothing, shelter, education or medical care although financially able or assisted to do so.

The above definitions apply to abuse and/or neglect of youth, children, vulnerable adults and the elderly.

1. Initial Response

If a suspected abuse incident occurs while a church worker or volunteer is on duty, the following actions should be taken:

- The first action will be to remove the child/youth/vulnerable adult from any immediate harmful situation.
- Report the incident/allegation to the adult in charge of the event/activity and the pastor. The pastor will then coordinate the reporting in #3 below. [Note: If the pastor is the alleged perpetrator, the charges will be reported to the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Mr. Jim Haupt, 973-598-9359, who will then coordinate the reporting in #3 below.]
- The pastor, in consultation with the SPRC, may remove the alleged perpetrator from ministry positions involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the matter is resolved.

2. Documentation

The process of documenting the incident will begin immediately and will follow the direction of the appropriate state investigating officials, the pastor, and the district superintendent. As a church community, we recognize that allegations of abuse must be handled with the utmost sensitivity to all those involved.

3. Handling of Reports

If the incident takes place during a church-related activity, the following will be notified immediately:

- The Pastor: Myounghun Stephen Yun
Office: (973) 584-7349
Cell: (203) 928-8899
- The Parent(s) or Guardian(s)
- Child Protection and Permanency
1-877-NJ-ABUSE
- Skylands District Superintendent: Rev. Dr. Steven G. Bechtold
Cell: (973) 270-5391

We understand that CP&P and the District Superintendent may instruct further reporting (for example, to law enforcement, the church's insurance company, legal counsel, etc.) and we will comply with such instructions.

4. Suspected Abuse Occurring Outside of the Church

If a staff member or volunteer has reasonable cause to believe that a child, youth, or vulnerable adult in our church community is being abused or neglected, at a minimum the following will be notified:

- Child Protection and Permanency
1-877-NJ-ABUSE
- The Pastor: Myounghun Stephen Yun
Office: (973) 584-7349
Cell: (203) 928-8899

5. Communicating with the Public

One person will be chosen to act as our official spokesperson to be available to the media to answer questions and interpret our Safe Sanctuaries Policy. With the advice of legal counsel a prepared statement shall be the means by which our Safe Sanctuary Policy will be described to the public. The statement should reinforce that the church is prepared to handle the allegation and cooperate with all appropriate agencies and law enforcement to see that the matter is resolved in a manner that is just.

Part Five: Annual Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually and approved by the Church Council within 1 year of prior approval.