

Dayspring United Methodist Church  
**Safe Sanctuary Policy**

April 2016

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." Mark 10:14

As Christians, we are called to create a safe sanctuary in our church. It must be a holy, safe, and protective community for all of God's children, regardless of age or ability. **The purpose of this policy is to address the safety of our children and youth who participate in all church sponsored events and activities.** The necessity for a formal, written policy is 1) to help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or appearance of abuse of children and youth and 2) to help protect workers from false accusations and/or suspicions. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify necessary information, and to have an accurate record in the case of an incident.

**Definitions**

- An Adult **Leader** is someone who is paid or a volunteer, and is 21 years or older with a high school diploma or equivalent.
- A **Young Adult Leader** is between 18 and 21 years old. Must be under the direction of an adult (21 yrs or older) leader.
- A **Helper** is someone who is under 18 years old. Must be under the direction of an adult (21 yrs or older) leader. The staff leader and/or pastor have sole discretion regarding the appropriate use of a helper for Safe Sanctuary purposes
- A **Child Caregiver** is paid by the church for child supervision. Must be 18 years or older.

**Requirements:**

All persons seeking to work with children and/or youth will comply with the following:

1. Agree to nationwide criminal background check, to be conducted annually.
2. Attend training provided by the church.
3. [Be a member of Dayspring UMC or active participant at Dayspring UMC for at least six consecutive months.](#)
4. Employees and volunteer staff\*\* will be required to submit two character references

\*\* for this purpose, "volunteer staff" is defined as anyone involved in a daycare or school, or overnight activity involving minors, counseling of minors, or one-on-one mentoring of minors.

*Note: Adults who have been convicted of a crime involving either sexual or physical abuse will not be permitted to serve in any church-sponsored activity or program for children and youth. All information generated in this process shall be maintained in strict confidence.*

**Supervision:**

To achieve compliance with the Safe Sanctuary policy it may be necessary to combine groups; recruit, train, and reference additional volunteers; or cancel an event. Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, children and youth will be instructed to use the "buddy system."

1. **Two-Leader Rule:** Two adults (or a minimum of one Adult Leader and one Young Adult Leader or Helper) must be present at all times during any church-sponsored program or event for children and youth.
2. **The Three Years Older Rule:** At least a three-year difference between the ages of the Young Adult Leader or Youth Helper and the children/youth they are working with.
3. **First Aid/CPR:** It is recommended to have one adult present that is certified in First Aid and CPR in each area where children/youth are present.
4. **Clear Sight Lines:** There shall be unobstructed visibility to all activities where children and youth are present. Changing a diaper and assisting a young child with the bathroom as needed should take place where the worker and the child are in sight with the child's privacy protected.
5. **Open Door Counseling:** Any counseling sessions with children or youth should be done in a room with the door open, or in an area of the room out of earshot, but not out of sight of another adult leader.
6. **Safety in Numbers:** Understanding there is safety in numbers, one leader may be present with multiple youth (6th – 12th grade) when in line of sight of other leaders or in a public setting such as a restaurant, mall, etc.

**Events which require overnight accommodations:**

1. Two leaders must be present in every room, unless a dormitory-type setting or unless otherwise stipulated by signed consent of parent.
2. When staying in a hotel, leaders must sleep in separate beds from youth.
3. Co-ed overnight activities require male and female leaders, without exception.

**Outside Groups:**

All outside organizations, groups or individuals who use any of the facilities of Dayspring UMC shall sign a statement that they are in compliance with this policy.

**Definitions of Abuse:**

1. **Verbal Abuse** - Any verbal act that humiliates degrades or threatens any child or youth.
2. **Physical Abuse** – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the physical health of a child or youth.
3. **Sexual Abuse** – Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) incest; 2) rape; 3) prostitution; 4) romantic involvement with any participant; 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in Church sponsored activities; 6) sexualized behavior that communicated sexual interest and/or content. Examples (not limited to): displaying sexually suggestive visual materials; making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body; touching another person's body, hair or clothing; touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person; kissing; and sexual intercourse.

**Screening for Leaders, Helpers and Child Caregivers:**

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children and youth. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment.

1. Prior to employment or acceptance as a Leader or Child Caregiver (paid or unpaid) the applicant will complete an application/consent form. This form gives permission to the Church Administrators to contact references and perform the necessary investigation to complete the review of the application.
2. The Church Staff will conduct screening, which shall be done in accordance with established guidelines, and shall receive and review completed forms and reports. If any reports raise questions about the fitness of an applicant, the Staff Event Leader and/or Pastor may disapprove the application and notify volunteer. Dayspring UMC reserves the right to turn away any persons for service.
3. Any conviction of a crime involving the exploitation of children or youth shall result in disqualification.
4. Results of screening will be kept confidential. Determination of whether a specific crime is serious enough to result in a negative recommendation shall be made by the Church in its sole discretion. Serious crimes can be determined by (but not limited to) the following examples:
  - a. Child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect.)
  - b. Violent offenses (murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.)
  - c. Persons having a Criminal History of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
  - d. Persons having a Criminal History of a drug related conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application should not be allowed to participate with youth or children.

### **Training**

The Children and Youth Directors will develop and implement training and orientation opportunities for all persons in leadership who work with children and youth in Dayspring sponsored events. Training shall include but is not limited to appropriate discipline, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries, leader misconduct and this Safe Sanctuary Policy. No person after implementation of this policy shall have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth until they have completed this training program. Training sessions shall be offered as needed.

When at a District, Conference, or multi-church event or working in cooperation with other churches from the conference, Dayspring will honor the safe sanctuary training that the other adult volunteers have received from their respective organizations.

### **Report of Incidents:**

1. When a leader suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the Texas Penal Code is taking or has taken place at a church sponsored program, event or activity, the abuse shall be reported to the appropriate church administrator or event coordinator immediately, using the appropriate written form<sup>1</sup> and cooperate fully with any

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<sup>1</sup> See Addendum.

- investigation conducted. If an assigned Pastor is implicated, the District Superintendent will be immediately notified.
2. Address any needs the child or youth may have, medical or otherwise. Report to the parent(s) and/ or legal guardian(s).
  3. **The safety and well being of the victim must be the church's primary concern.** Take necessary steps to ensure the child's safety until parents arrive.
  4. The person suspected of abuse shall be removed with dignity from further contact with children or youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential. If the event coordinator is implicated, then the report should be made to that person's supervisor.
  5. The Church shall:
    - a. Call 911 when needed and/or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (800-252-5400)
    - b. Contact an attorney and follow legal advice.
    - c. Notify of the Conference/District authorities
    - d. Notify the Church's insurance agent.
  6. Following the report of an incident, the event coordinator or supervisor in charge shall document the report and interview the alleged victim, being careful to use open-ended questions. A second adult shall be present as a witness.
  7. Documentation will include: a) the name of the leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse; b) the date time and place of actions taken by this person; c) the alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth; d) any statement made by the alleged victim; e) the name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent; f) any action taken, i.e. Suspension of the respondent; g) Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation, and case number assigned; h) Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.
  8. It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current *Book of Discipline*, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.
  9. Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential Church Safe Sanctuary Certification Authority file for future screening purposes.

### **Media Response**

The Senior Pastor shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall come through the Senior Pastor or spokesperson designated by the SPRC. **Do not give out any information, simply state that all inquiries will be answered by our spokesperson.**

Dayspring United Methodist Church  
Abuse Report Form

The name of the leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse: \_\_\_\_\_

The date time and place of actions taken by this person: \_\_\_\_\_

The alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any statement made by the alleged victim:

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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(Include additional pages if additional space is necessary)

The name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any action taken, i.e. Suspension of the respondent:

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Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation, and case number assigned:

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Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident:

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