

Child, Youth, Adult Safety Policy for St. Luke's United Methodist Church

Risk Reduction Goal: The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical, verbal and sexual abuse has claimed the attention of our nation and society. St. Luke's United Methodist Church is committed to providing protective care of all children, youth, vulnerable adults and volunteers who participate in church sponsored activities.

Definition of Physical Abuse: Any act of omission or act that endangers a person's physical or mental health, including but not limited to 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.

Definition of Verbal Abuse: Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades, or threatens any child, youth or vulnerable adult.

Definition of Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse of minors includes touching them in inappropriate ways such as fondling, inappropriate touching of the minor's body, and inappropriate kissing. Non-touch abuse includes making remarks of a sexual nature, showing the child explicit pornographic materials, or making the minor watch others engaged in sexual activity.

Plan for Reducing the Risk of Abuse:

I. Screening for paid and volunteer personnel:

- A. Formal application process for all persons working with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
 1. Biographical data and Applicant's Statement.
 2. Educational experience or training.
 3. Previous relevant experience with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
 4. Names of groups or churches providing previous experience.
 5. Personal references.
- B. Reference checks.
- C. Criminal Records Check through appropriate law enforcement and information agencies.
- D. Contact staff and/or lay persons of previous churches applicant has attended.
- E. Forms to be completed:
 1. Personal Information
 2. Church History and Prior Volunteer Experience
 3. Applicant's Statement
 4. Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check

II. Requirements for volunteer applicant consideration:

- A. St. Luke's UMC membership for six or more months prior to beginning of volunteer service. (Exceptions will be allowed for spouses of staff members, for persons who were active in previous church, for VBS, for some off-site activities and some programs. **Exceptions will be allowed only if** applicant provides a letter from pastor and/or relevant staff person at prior location or if written recommendations are received from three current St. Luke's members who have been members for at least six months.)

- B. Adults who have been convicted of a crime involving either sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer and will not be permitted to serve in any church-sponsored activity or program for children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- C. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. Individuals who have such a history are encouraged to discuss their desire to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults with one of the pastoral staff prior to engaging in any volunteer service.
- D. A safe and secure environment is best achieved by using two or more adults when supervising any child or groups of children/youth. We will use the "two adult" rule in classroom settings. The "two adult" rule will be a core value for all settings for children, youth and vulnerable adults, but we recognize that there will be instances, activities, events and circumstances which will preclude us from always having a minimum of two adults. When possible, parents will be notified of this in advance. Volunteers and staff will document instances where two or more adults are not present in programs involving children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- E. Adult and youth volunteers are required to attend initial and continual training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
- F. Adult and youth volunteers should immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate according to the policies and procedures of St. Luke's United Methodist Church.
- G. Adult and youth volunteers will be interviewed by two or more lay or staff representatives. It is strongly recommended that the age-level staff director be present at all interviews of persons who will serve under their supervision.
- H. St. Luke's may conduct criminal records checks on volunteers for each year of service.

Plan for Response to Known Incident of Abuse:

I. Assess needs for emergency care for the victim

- A. Notify parents and/or other legally responsible adult
- B. Provide emergency healthcare as needed
 - 1. First Aid
 - 2. Emergency services
 - 3. Hospital emergency room
- C. Arrange for crisis counseling and/or long-range counseling where deemed appropriate.

II. Take precautions to secure the area

- A. Maintain the integrity of the area and protect all evidence for the professional investigation.

III. Assisting the victim and victim's family

- A. Obtain medical help as needed. The care and safety of victim is the first priority.
- B. Take all allegations seriously and do not prejudge the situation
- C. Offer and provide pastoral resources as needed
 - 1. Show care and support to prevent further hurt