

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Recommended Outline

Introduction:

The 2014 Synod of the Moravian Church, Southern Province, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of children, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse in the church. The adopted resolution is stated as follows:

The Moravian Church of America, Southern Province mandates that each congregation of the Southern Province and each board or agency shall:

- 1. Develop, adopt, and implement a “Safe Sanctuary” policy and procedures related to safety issues for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults.**
- 2. At a minimum, incorporate into this policy and its procedures components that:**
 - Establish procedures for reporting and responding to incidents of abuse or injury.**
 - Apply to all paid and volunteer staff that works with children, youth and vulnerable adults.**
 - Establish a screening process for workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults.**
 - Establish training, supervision, and support procedures for workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults.**
 - Provide information and training on safety issues for those who accompany children, youth and vulnerable away from their congregation: and,**

The Human Resource and Compensation/Benefits Committee and the Provincial Support Services Board of the Moravian Church of America, Southern Province provide for congregations, boards, and agencies examples of existing policies and guidelines to assist them in developing their own policy and consultation as needed.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is first of all to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the spiritual, physical and emotional growth of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults that come to us. The second is to protect our staff, both paid and volunteer, from potential allegations of abuse.

Statement of Covenant:

- We will conduct the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ in ways that strive to maximize the safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
- We will follow the Recruiting and Screening guidelines in selecting paid Church staff and volunteers;
- We will provide resources for selecting Church paid staff and volunteers and use appropriate procedures in conducting programs and events for children, youth, and vulnerable adults; and,
- We will clearly define procedures for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law.

Scope:

The scope of this policy applies to all Church paid staff and volunteers working with programs and activities involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Effective Date: _____

Approved by: _____

Definitions:

- Pastor – The ordained and appointed clergy of the Church.
- Abuse – refers to any non-accidental injury or injuries or pattern of behavior to a child/youth/vulnerable adult. Abuse includes non-accidental:
 - Physical Abuse – Examples of physical abuse include, but are not limited to: beating, harmful restraint, use of a weapon or instrument, or action that could result in serious injury.
 - Sexual Abuse – Sexual abuse is any sexual behavior imposed on a juvenile or vulnerable adult. This involves a range of activities, including fondling or other inappropriate contact; it also includes exhibitionism, pornography, and any suggestive behaviors or comments.
 - Emotional Abuse – Emotional abuse is expressing attitudes or behaviors toward any person, child or adult that may create serious emotional or psychological damage.
 - Neglect – Neglect can be defined as any serious disregard for a person’s supervision, care, or discipline.
- Adult – Any person eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- Youth – Any person from grade 6 to grade 12 (Usually 12 through 17 years old).
- Child – Any person between birth and grade 5 (Usually from birth through 11 years old).
- Staff – Any person that is an employee of and paid by the Church.
- Volunteer – refers to any person who performs an unpaid job for the Church.
 - Ongoing Volunteers refers to anyone who teaches, supervises or counsels children, youth, or vulnerable adults on a regular basis (week-to-week basis) and includes those who chaperone off-site events or overnight events. Sunday school teachers, mission camp leaders, youth fellowship leaders, etc. would fall into this category. Ongoing Volunteers must be a minimum of 21 years old.
 - Occasional Volunteers refers to those who volunteer to assist staff or Ongoing Volunteer leaders on as-needed basis.
- Ministry/Youth Leader – Any person responsible for overseeing a church program designed for children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- Province – Moravian Church, Southern Province
- Children/Youth Activities – Any activity or program in which persons are under the control or supervision of church staff or volunteers responsible for the activities.
- Church – Local Congregation
- Vulnerable Adult – Any person 18 years of age or older with diagnosed diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.

Recruitment and Screening Requirements:

Pastors, all paid and volunteer workers in the church who have either direct, unsupervised access or indirect and/or supervised access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults in any ministry setting are required to be recruited and selected using the following procedures:

- Job Descriptions/Written Position Guidelines - Applicants will be provided written position guidelines for positions in children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries, including identification of essential function of the job. The Safe Sanctuary Policy will be attached to each position guideline.
- Applications, References, Interviews – All paid staff must complete an application, provide two non-family and preferably work related references, and be interviewed by the appropriate committee or board before beginning to work in children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries in the church. Volunteers who express an interest in working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must complete a **Volunteer Interest Form** followed by an interview with the ministry leader subsequent to the background check and prior to beginning ministry in order to discuss position guidelines.
- Background Checks/Drug Screens - All Church paid staff and volunteers who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be required to sign a Provincial **Authorization and Release of Information and Records** form. The information requested on the form will be used by the Provincial Human Resource manager to obtain a Nationwide Criminal Records check, a Sex Offender Registry check and a Drug Screen.
- Drivers – Adult drivers of church owned vehicles must provide their current driver's or appropriate licenses and proof of insurance policy to the ministry leader prior to any event requiring driving. No person under the age of 21 will be considered as a driver.

Orientation:

- A copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy will be provided to all staff and volunteers.
- All staff and volunteers will be required to sign a statement that they have read and understand, and agree to abide by the requirements of the policy.
- Policy orientation is required for all staff and volunteers and is also open to all church members.
- A paid church or volunteer staff member(s) will be trained in safety issues to assist leaders in making appropriate decisions when medical issues occur.
- Additional training will be provided when appropriate.

Reporting of Inappropriate Behavior:

Once an incident of abuse or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with in a timely and in a clearly outlined manner. It should also be stressed that while all allegations will be taken seriously, they are still allegations until proven otherwise. In that spirit, all

incident information should be kept strictly confidential until a resolution is achieved. However, records will be made available to all agencies and persons with a right to know.

- All reasonable suspicions of abuse must be reported to church leaders immediately. Each church should determine which committee (executive committee, board, personnel committee, specially appointed committee, designated individuals, or counselors in the congregation, etc.) should determine their process as appropriate for their church.
- Considerations to be made to:
 - Ensure the protection of and tend to the immediate needs of the victim as the situation requires.
 - Determine who will notify the parents or family of the victim?
 - Determine who will obtain information from the victim and complete the Incident Report Form.
 - Determine who does the incident get reported to? Board, etc...In what time frame?
 - Determine who will notify the PEC
 - Determine, if appropriate, who will notify the appropriate authorities
 - Determine who would make statements to the media (typically should only be made by the PEC or with their authorization)
- Depending on the severity of the accusation, appropriate action should be taken to protect the accused and the victim. For example, the accused should be asked to abstain from involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Care must be exercised so that those reporting the incident are not identified or are not falsely accused must be balanced with the need to share specifics or important facts.

Accidents and Injuries:

If in doubt of the seriousness of an injury, call 911. Accidents and injuries should receive attention in a timely manner depending on the seriousness of the injury. Accidents include bumps, bruises, minor scrapes and cuts. Caution is advised when treating any injury or unusual condition.

- Never leave an injured child alone.
- Notify group leader as soon as possible.
- Notify parents only after authorization from group leader.

Supervision of Children and Youth Areas of Considerations:

- Recommended ratios of adult to child/youth:
 - 1:4 for nursery/preschool age
 - 1:5 for elementary age
 - 1:5-7 sixth through eighth
 - 1:6-8 ninth through twelfth gradesNote: minimum for any size group is 2 adults.
- Classroom window/open door policy.
- Sign-in/out procedure for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- Diaper changing/bathroom usage.

- Electronic or paper Parental Consent form.
- A 5-year separation in age is recommended with teens teaching youth or youth teaching children.
- Ministry/Youth leaders must be 21 years old or older.
- The use of prescription, non-prescription or illegal drugs, tobacco, and/or alcohol is prohibited during children, youth, and vulnerable adult's activities.
- Ministry/Youth leaders or Staff will ensure all supervisors/chaperones of children or youth in overnight programs have completed the necessary Background Checks/Drug Screens, etc.

Bullying:

Bullying is not acceptable under any circumstances. Anyone observing bullying behavior intervene and stop the behavior. Bullying means a physical act or gesture or a verbal, written or electronically communicated expression directed at one or more persons that:

- Creates an actual or reasonable expectation that the conduct will
- Causes physical harm or emotional distress to a person or damage his or her property, or
- Places a person in reasonable fear of physical harm, emotional distress or damage to his or her property; or
- Creates or is certain to create an intimidating, hostile environment for the person at whom the conduct is directed, such that it substantially interferes with the target's spiritual experience.

Children and Youth Outings Away From Church Property Considerations:

- Written or electronic parental permission to participate with healthcare information.
- Provide clear guidelines for ongoing group supervision, room assignment, and behavior expectations.
- Conduct random room checks.
- Adults must be present in large group sleeping arrangements. See guidelines in Supervision of Children and Youth.
- Ministry/Youth leader must authorize and ensure that requirements for event drivers have been documented.

General Safety Considerations:

- Leave doors open or install half-doors or windows in doors.
- Assign roaming monitors to ensure safety as needed.
- Establish attendance and release procedures for parents/guardians of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- Establish guidelines for overnight accommodations.
- Establish guidelines for transporting program participants.
- Establish bathroom, locker room, and shower guidelines.
- Establish Adult/Youth Ratio – enough adults should be present at church activities to ensure adequate safety supervision of participants.

- Adults need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the special and differing needs and preferences of each individual. Physical contact should be age and developmentally appropriate.

Cyber Safety Considerations:

There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. Consider anything and everything on the internet as public information.

- Receive parental permission for photographs; posting or transmitting of photographs; use of emails, texting, or cell phones; and sharing of names or contact information of the participant.
- Never post personal information online such as full name, address, phone number.
- Limit individual communications online with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Save all confidential communications.
- Unless sending an email to a small, known group who need to respond, when sending an email to a group, blind copy or bcc: all recipients so that the recipients cannot reply to all.

Appendix and Forms:

- **Jennifer Lundsford Act for North Carolina**
- **Registered Sex Offender**
- **Youth Covenant of Participation**
- **Volunteer Covenant of Participation**
- **Criminal Records Check Consent Form**
- **Acknowledgement Form**