

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

- I. Purpose
- II. General Policies and Procedures
- III. Attachments

I. PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Based on Action of the 2000 Iowa Annual Conference Journal, page 167:

Our conference's purpose for establishing this Child and Youth Protection Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of the children and youth involved in conference and district ministry settings.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as an annual conference in The United Methodist Church, we pledge to:

- Conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth;
- Follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers;
- Implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events;
- Provide educational opportunities to all our employees and volunteers who work with children and youth regarding relevant conference policies and procedures;
- Have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse; and
- Be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, the Iowa Conference 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).

II. GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO IMPLEMENT THE CONFERENCE CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY FOR CONFERENCE AND DISTRICT EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Key points of these policies and procedures

- Adults who have been identified as having committed sexual or physical abuse or having a criminal record involving violent crime to another person will not knowingly be employed by the Conference for service or accepted as a volunteer with programs or activities for children or youth.
- Applicants and volunteers must provide positive personal (non-relative) references.

- To the extent it is reasonably possible, at least two adults including staff, volunteers with extended contact, and other regular volunteers identified by the staff, will be present in all settings involving children or youth.
- Youth employees and youth volunteers (under the age of 18) must present a signed Parental Permission form (sample attached) before they can be authorized to work with children.
- All employees and volunteers will be offered training regarding relevant conference policies and procedures.

A. Behavioral Policies

All Conference employees and volunteers are specifically prohibited from committing any act of child/youth mistreatment, neglect, or abuse. Prohibited behaviors for all employees and volunteers include, but are not limited to:

- Using verbally or emotionally abusive or derogatory language
- Using sexually implicit or explicit language or behavior
- Physically striking, hitting, or spanking
- Fondling, kissing or unwelcome physical contact
- Touching or tickling in an inappropriate or sexual manner
- Inappropriate or intimidating actions or body language

B. Employee and Volunteer Selection Policies

The following screening process for employee and volunteer applicants shall be followed:

1. Applicant completes an application form.
2. Applicant Signs a Release and Consent form permitting the Conference to conduct reference checks, talk with former employers, and conduct criminal background checks.
3. An in-person interview is conducted.
4. References are checked and documented. Note: Volunteers must be known by the supervising person or recommended by someone whose judgment is trusted by the supervising person.
5. The following background records shall be checked and documented: criminal records, sex offender registry and child abuse registry.
6. Upon hiring/selection of a new employee/volunteer, the employee/volunteer shall:
 - a. Sign an acceptance of the Child and Youth Protection Policy and agree to abide by its terms;
 - b. Submit all other necessary forms, e.g., Parental Permission form; and
 - c. Complete the Child and Youth Protection Training Program as required by supervisors.

7. Both supervisor and employee/volunteer are responsible for maintaining documentation required above.

C. Supervision of Children and Youth

The following process should be followed in the supervision of children and youth for all conference and district sponsored events.

1. Programs for children and youth
 - a. Local churches and other church affiliated agencies that host conference or district sponsored events should have a child and youth protection policy in place consistent with the Iowa Annual Conference Child & Youth Protection Policy.
 - b. To the extent it is reasonably possible, two or more adult employees or volunteers will be present at all times during the event.
 - c. To the extent it is reasonably possible, one of the adults should be at least twenty-one years old or five years older than the maximum age of the participants.
 - d. To the extent it is reasonably possible, adult leadership should be gender balanced in approximately the same proportion as the youth participant group.
 - e. To the extent it is reasonably possible, the adult to child/youth ratio should be approximately one adult to every 3-5 younger children, one adult to every 5-8 older children, or one adult to every 8-10 youth.
2. Nursery
 - a. Nursery coordinator should provide each infant/child with a nametag.
 - b. Parent(s) or a responsible adult designated by parent must sign-in the infant/child(ren) and note where they can be reached in case of emergency. Sign-in registry should include both a place to note adults who have permission to pick up the infant/child(ren) and a place to note if there are persons who **should not** pick up the infant/child(ren), e.g non-custodial parent.
 - c. Nursery coordinator should provide the parent(s) with a numbered token and should note the number on the nametag of the infant/child(ren).
 - d. At time of pick-up, the nursery coordinator will verify that the parent's token number matches the number of each infant/child.
3. Classroom or indoor group settings
 - a. Children participating in indoor activities in classrooms should be visually accessible from outside the classroom.
 - b. If a door does not have a window, the door should be left open or be gated.
4. Medical Release Information Form

A Medical Release Information Form (sample attached) should be used for all Conference and district sponsored events involving children and/or youth.

D. Driver Policy

All Conference and district related activities requiring transportation for children and/or youth as a part of the event must adhere to the following policy:

1. Drivers must have a valid Iowa driver's license and proof of a good driving record, and must adhere to applicable laws.
2. Without exception, all drivers must be at least 18 years of age.
3. To the extent reasonably possible, in vehicles carrying more than four children or youth, there should be an adult in addition to the driver in the vehicle.
4. Passengers are required to wear seatbelts and use child safety seats as required by Iowa law.
5. Owner of the vehicle must have evidence of insurance to at least minimum state of ownership requirements.
6. No smoking while in the vehicle or consumption of alcohol at any time by a driver or adult passenger while traveling to, from, or during a Conference sponsored child or youth activity.
7. Driver of the vehicle should refrain from cell phone usage while driving.

Transportation to and/or from a Conference or district sponsored event, when the transportation is not part of the event itself, should fall under the local church's child and youth protection policy.

E. Administration of Policies and Procedures

Administration of Policies and Procedures will be handled through the Child and Youth Protection Committee.

Membership of the Child and Youth Protection Committee includes:

- Director of Connectional Ministries
- Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- Director for Camp, Conference, and Retreat Ministries
- Three at-large members to be appointed by the Bishop to include one District Superintendent, one pastor of a church with membership under 300, and one pastor of a church with membership over 300.
- Committee may appoint other members as needed, e.g. camp site directors, person with expertise in child protection.

F. Response to Allegations

All allegations of improper conduct involving children and youth will be dealt with in a timely manner and according to state law. Opportunities for spiritual and emotional support will be offered to all parties involved.

All reporting of allegations of misconduct during a conference or district sponsored event will be handled as confidentially as circumstances reasonably permit. When appropriate

and/or required, allegations will be reported to parental, legal and social welfare authorities, and the Conference's insurance and legal counsel.

If an allegation of misconduct occurs, all necessary information will be gathered in an appropriate and non-threatening manner. It is important that event staff adhere to all the procedures listed below. However, the seriousness of the alleged incident, time of day it occurs, number of people involved, alleged perpetrator, and other factors may impact the order in which the procedures are followed. In all these procedures event staff should maintain confidentiality of the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator.

- ❑ If needed, emergency medical care should be provided.
- ❑ Staff or volunteer will take the child or youth to another staff or volunteer, preferably a person in a leadership role in the event, for corroboration.
- ❑ One of the staff or volunteers that is present at the corroboration conversation shall complete an Incident Report Form (sample attached) immediately following the conversation and the other staff or volunteers that were present shall review and sign the report to confirm its accuracy.
- ❑ Event leadership notifies any one member of the conference Crisis Management Team.
- ❑ Event leadership contacts parents of child or youth unless suspected or alleged abuse involves parents or siblings. Parents will be informed and included, as appropriate, in decisions regarding the care of the child including non-emergency medical care.
- ❑ Event leadership, Crisis Management Team and parents make decision concerning contacting the Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) who will give guidance about contacting law enforcement. If warranted, the attached IDHS Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form will be completed.
- ❑ Mandatory reporters will report the incident as required by law.
- ❑ Event Staff or volunteers will ensure that appropriate care is given to others who may have knowledge of or be affected by the incident.
- ❑ Alleged perpetrator should be immediately removed from the event.
- ❑ If alleged perpetrator is a minor, care needs to be given to his/her safety. Parents need to be notified and a staff person needs to stay with the alleged perpetrator until parents arrive.

Event and/or conference leadership should contact the victim and his/her family, to inform them of the steps that the conference has taken to address the situation, and to ensure the family is receiving the care and support they need. Conference staff should also offer event leadership involved in the incident care and support.

III. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Iowa Conference Crisis Management Team Contact Information**
- B. Child and Youth Protection Policy Acceptance Form**
- C. Consent and Release Form for background checks for Employees and Volunteers**

Some of the forms attached are provided as samples. They may need to be modified to meet the needs of specific events. Other samples of helpful forms are provided in “Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church” and “Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries” by Joy Thornburg Melton. Published by Discipleship Resources.

Iowa Conference Crisis Management Team

	Office	Additional Phone
Arthur McClanahan, Communications Director	515.974.8906	515.720.5234
Karen Dungan, Assistant to the Bishop for Connectional Ministries	515.974.8915	712.310.1493
Bob Burkhart, Assistant to the Bishop for Administration	515.974.8903	515.238.6729
Chuck Smith, Director of Administrative Services	515.974.8919	515.460.2001

Emergency Contacts

Department of Human Services	
Protective Investigation Unit	800.362.2178

Many of the persons listed above may often be reached during the day by calling the Iowa United Methodist Conference Center at 515.974.8900.

**THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

ACCEPTANCE OF POLICY FORM

By signing this document, I am stating that I have read and understand the Child and Youth Protection Policy of the Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. I further agree that I accept it and will abide by it.

Signature of Staff or Volunteer

Signature of Witness

Printed Name of Staff or Volunteer

Printed Name of Witness

Date

Date

**CONSENT AND RELEASE
FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

As a part of my application for employment/volunteering with the Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, I hereby consent to and authorize the Conference to discuss with my personal references, academic references, former and current employers, residential management agents, religious bodies, criminal justice agencies, courts, and other relevant resources information regarding my work, academic, residential, achievement, performance, attendance, criminal and disciplinary histories, as well as my general moral character and fitness for employment/volunteering with the Conference. I further authorize the Conference to conduct a criminal and driver's record check. In exchange for the Conference considering my application for employment/volunteering, which I acknowledge as a good and valuable consideration, I release the Conference and its employees or volunteers and all resources providing information, from any and all liability with respect to the Conference obtaining such information. I further release the Conference, its employees or volunteers from any and all liability associated with conducting any criminal and driver's record check. I understand that the Conference may confer with the resources referred to above and may conduct criminal and driver's record checks. I agree and affirm that I have no objections to these investigations and checks, and confirm that I release and hold harmless the Conference and its employees or volunteers and any such resources from any and all liability and/or claims associated with obtaining information by such investigations and checks.

Social Security Number

and Driver's License number if different

Signature of Employee/Volunteer

Signature of Witness

Printed Name of Employee/Volunteer

Printed Name of Witness

Date

Date

Please list all names that you have been known by. Use a separate sheet if necessary.