Reducing the Risk of Abuse
In the Local Church

Information and Guidelines
For Becoming Safe Sanctuaries
For Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

Indiana West District of the Indiana United Methodist Conference
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Please note:  The purpose of this packet is for education of church leaders and clergy in the West District.  It incorporates relevant information needed to provide safety and/or prevent abuse within the local church; it is not meant to be a comprehensive tool, but a training module.  Much of the information in this training packet is adapted from Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church, by Joy Thornburg Melton. Churches utilizing this should consider purchasing the book and utilizing it in their effort to prevent abuse in the local church.
Reducing the Risk of Abuse In The Local Church  
Creating Safe Sanctuaries for Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

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#1 Abuse, policies, and safety in the local church

1A) **Does child abuse really happen in the church?**

Unfortunately, **YES!** Churches:

- Often behave as relatively “trusting organizations” who rely on their leaders to conduct themselves appropriately
- Too often don’t follow appropriate screening of volunteers and employees who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- Are places where there are often many opportunities for close contact and relationships with children, youth, and vulnerable adults

Abuse can happen when we are not aware of who the abusers are

- Alleged abusers can be parents, aunts, uncles, camp counselors, Sunday School teachers, strangers, pastors
- Abusers come from all segments of society; they often look, act, and seem very much like everyone else
- Some are charismatic leaders

1B) **What do churches need to do about child abuse?**

Be prepared to work against child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse from these perspectives:

- Prevent any kind of abuse from happening in the church
- Speak out about child abuse and lead the community in being proactive against it
- Create a holistic safe sanctuaries policy that is well publicized, understood, and utilized
  - Help parents know their children are safe in the church
  - Help abusers understand they are not allowed to work with children in the church
- Help all persons be aware of the signs of abuse and report any suspicions to legal authorities

To prevent abuse in our churches, we have to recognize the signs of abuse, but we must also understand that the abusers are often familiar, trusted persons. In more than ¾ of the reported incidents of child abuse, the victim is related to or acquainted with the abuser.

The same policies and requirements must be applied to each staff member and volunteer involved in children’s or youth ministries, or any ministries related to vulnerable adults (such as the handicapped, elders, etc), including paid and volunteer, clergy, and lay, in order to assure safety in our congregations.

1C) **Why churches must have a policy and training**

Having a policy in our churches, and training those who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults helps us in a number of ways:

- Protects children and youth from being in situations that put them at risk for abuse in our church
- Protects those who work with children and youth from situations that put us at risk and from false allegations
- Allows those who work in the church to be aware of, and make reports for, persons who may suffer from abuse outside of the church setting
- Provides for appropriate action and response in case of allegations or abuse
Why do we have a policy and training?

- Our churches must be places where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, and service, with the assurance that they are safe in the community of faith.
- The New Testament makes clear that, as Christians, we are in a covenant relationship with God and the whole community of faith. Children are included (Luke 18: 15-17). The church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love and care they need.
- Abuse is all around us. Physical and sexual abuse of children and youth is a reality in our communities and in our churches. We can reduce the risk of abuse by following a thorough and practical policy of prevention and intervention.
- When allegations of child abuse in the church are made, whether they are eventually proven true or false, everyone in the church suffers.
  - The child victim and his/her family
  - The congregation suffers the trauma
  - The family of the perpetrator
  - Often litigation results
  - There may be criminal charges
  - The costs of litigation, regardless of the outcome, are astronomical—financially, emotionally and spiritually
  - It may take years for the feeling of wholeness to be restored
- Even when allegations of child abuse are proven false, the grief and trauma experienced within the church can take an enormous toll. A policy helps decrease the chance of incidents and helps churches cope regardless of when allegations or incidents occur.
#2 Creating/implementing your church policy

2A) OUR RESPONSIBILITY AND OUR CALLING TO CREATE A POLICY

Our Responsibility to the Safety of All Persons

“As Christians, we are called to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our Christian heritage derives from that of the Hebrews. We accept the tradition and experience set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures as our own. In the history of the ancient Hebrews, we find a deeply rooted legacy of justice and mercy. (See Micah 6:8, Isaiah 1:17; Amos 5:24; Isaiah 56:1; Deuteronomy 24:17; Leviticus 19:15.) We also find a strong tradition of hospitality and generosity. (See Isaiah 58:10-12 and Leviticus 19:10.)

“Justice and hospitality were essential elements of the covenant between the people and God. Worship was the lifeblood of the covenant…. No matter what the place of worship…the people treasured it as a holy place, a sanctuary, where they were able to worship in safety and harmony. (See Psalm 10:1-2 and Psalm 27: 4-5.)

Today, we must remember that our churches are holy places of sanctuary for the children of God. Our churches must continue to be places where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, and service, with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith (p. 5)."

From “Our Mandate,” Safe Sanctuaries; Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church by Joy Thornburg Melton

Our Calling to Protect the Safety of All

Jesus taught that “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,” (Mark 9:37 NRSV) and “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones… it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6 NRSV)

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that “…children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.” 2008, The Book of Discipline paragraph 162 C.

At each child’s baptism, we affirm our responsibility to their safety by our congregational response, pledging: “With God’s help, we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (From The Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge II)

As Disciples, we affirm Christ’s commandment to love our neighbors. We also serve as witnesses of Christ’s power to transform lives. Building on these foundations, we recognize that our faith calls us to offer hospitality and protection to all persons.

Because of these things, this congregation is committed to the well being of every person entrusted to its care. Our calling is to provide safe sanctuary for all of God’s people including our children, youth and vulnerable adults. The West District of the Indiana United Methodist Church affirms that all children, youth and vulnerable adults have the right to expect safe sanctuary.


**2B) UNDERSTANDING ABUSE**

**Types and Indicators of Abuse**

Each congregation must become familiar with the definitions and signs of abuse, in order to prevent it from happening within the church, and to be proactive in noting and responding to it if children, youth, or vulnerable adults show signs of abuse in their lives outside of the church.

- A child, youth, or vulnerable adult should never be blamed for the abuse
- A child, youth, or vulnerable adult is not capable of consenting to abusive behavior…not legally, morally, or ethically
- Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse is always wrong, and is the “sole responsibility of the abuser” (p. 14, Safe Sanctuaries)

**DEFINITIONS**

1. **Neglect.** A child or vulnerable person's physical or mental condition is seriously impaired or endangered as a result of the inability, refusal, or neglect of a parent, guardian, or custodian to supply the person with necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or supervision.

   **Examples of neglect:**
   - Withholding food, clothing, medical care, education
   - Withholding affection & affirmation of the child's self-worth
   - Not giving appropriate attention to child's needs

   **Possible Signs of neglect:**
   - Failure to thrive
   - Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate
   - Begs or steals food; chronic hunger
   - Poor hygiene, depression, untreated medical conditions

2. **Abuse.** A child or vulnerable person's physical or mental health is seriously endangered due to injury by the act or omission of a parent, guardian, or custodian.

   **Examples of physical abuse**
   - Violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, etc.)
   - Burning, shaking, kicking, choking
   - Fracturing bones
   - Some non-accidental injuries to a child

   **Possible signs of physical abuse:**
   - Hostile / aggressive behavior toward others
   - Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
   - Destructive behavior toward self, others, property
   - Inexplicable fractures or bruises
   - Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises

   **Examples of emotional abuse**
   - Locking a child in a closet
   - Depriving a child of any sign of parental affection
   - Constantly telling a child he/she is bad or stupid

   **Possible signs of emotional abuse:**
   - Exhibits severe depression, withdrawal, lack of self-esteem
   - Failure to thrive
   - Threatens or attempts suicide
   - Speech and/or eating disorders
   - Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns

3. **Sexual Abuse.** A child or vulnerable person is the victim of a sex offense (rape, criminal deviate conduct, child molestation, exploitation, seduction, sexual misconduct with a minor, public indecency, prostitution or incest). For purposes of this policy, sex abuse is also defined to include possession or viewing of obscene, explicit, or pornographic material in the proximity of a child or vulnerable person.

   **Possible signs of sexual abuse:**
   - Unusually advanced sexual knowledge/behavior for age
   - Promiscuous behavior
   - Runs away from home and refuses to return
   - Difficulty walking or sitting
   - Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas
   - Exhibits frequent headaches, stomachaches, fatigue
   - Sexually transmitted diseases

   **Children who have been sexually abused at church may show:**
   - Unusual nervousness about being left in nursery or class
   - Reluctance toward activities that were previously enjoyed
   - Comments such as "I don't want to be alone with ______."
   - Nightmares with church person as a frightening character
   - Unexplained hostility toward a church person
4. **Ritual Abuse.** Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child’s welfare.

**Possible Signs of Ritual Abuse:**
- Disruptions of memory or consciousness
- Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
- Flashbacks
- Eating disorders
- Fear of the dark, especially at sundown / full moon
- Agitation or despair that seems to occur in cycles
- Fear of ministers, priests, others wearing robes / uniforms
- Nightmares or sleep disorders
- Any of the symptoms of sexual abuse

5. **Staff.** Includes any clergy person, any paid employee of the church, and any paid employee of any group, committee, team or agency of the church if responsible for the care or supervision of a participant at a church event.

6. **Volunteer.** Any non-clergy worker who is responsible for the care or supervision of children, youth or vulnerable adult participants at a church event. This may include paid staff members of a local church who are acting as volunteers for purpose of the church event.

7. **Participants.** Children, youth, or vulnerable adults who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by the church.

8. **Church Ministry or Event.** Includes ministries or events planned and supervised by the appointed staff and/or volunteers of the church.

9. **Protected Persons.** Include children, youth and vulnerable adults.

10. **Vulnerable Adults.** Are persons over 18 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities.

11. **Children.** Are persons 0-11 years of age.

12. **Youth.** Are persons 12-18 years of age.

**Who are the abusers?**

Alleged abusers range from parents, to aunts and uncles, to camp counselors, to Sunday School teachers, to strangers, to pastors.

To prevent child abuse in our churches, we must not only recognize the signs of abuse, but we must recognize that the abusers of our children are more often than not familiar adults trusted by the children. In more than 3/4 of the reported incidents of child abuse, the victim was related to or acquainted with the abuser.

Abusers come from all segments of society - every racial, ethnic, economic, and social group.

Some are charismatic leaders
- Some are very sociable
- Some are very sympathetic
- Some are married - some not
- Some are young; some are elderly

Within our churches, who are the abusers? They may be teachers, choir helpers, nursery workers, camp counselors, clergy, other youth…anyone.
How Does Abuse Happen?
Child sexual abuse happens when a person exerts his or her power over a child in ways that harm and/or exploit the child. The abuser is powerful; the child, youth, or adult is vulnerable. Power may be derived from size, position, knowledge, age, friendliness.

When a child's or youth's vulnerability and an abuser's misuse of power combine with the opportunity to exploit the child without being discovered, then child abuse may and often does occur.

We don't want to think that anyone in our church would harm a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. And we don't want to think that false allegations of abuse could be made by anyone in our church. Both do happen.

The same policies and requirements must be applied to each worker involved in children, youth, and other ministries, including paid and volunteer, clergy and laity.

Consequences of Abuse in the Congregation
When one person is abused there are many victims – the person, the family, the congregation, and the abuser's family. Sometimes, the community becomes a victim as well.

The victim must be cared for
- Innocence and/or trust have been stolen
- Emotional harm has occurred
- Physical harm may have occurred
- The person’s faith in God and the church may be harmed
- The person may no longer feel safe, even in safe places such as his/her own home

The congregation must be cared for
- Members are stunned, humiliated, confused, and angry
- Abuse may divide a congregation, especially if the abuser is a trusted member, clergyperson
- Civil and/or criminal litigation may occur, causing difficult feelings and legal obligations in the congregation
- Healing must take place, for all involved; sometimes this also involves the innocent family of the perpetrator of the abuse
- Financial consequences can be significant, and can devastate a congregation
- Medical and counseling support, as well as legal advice, are needed for all those involved, and for the congregation as a whole

No congregation can afford—financially, ethically, or morally—to fail to implement strategies for the reduction and prevention of abuse.

We are called to engage in ministries to children and youth with great rejoicing and with the knowledge that we are making every effort to provide ministry to our children and youth in ways that assure their safety while they grow in faith. Therefore, it is also our responsibility to put into place a policy that will protect those we serve in this way.

One very important note: Creating a policy, for the sake of having a policy, but neglecting to follow procedures outlined in the policy, puts everyone involved at risk and can create more problems than not having a policy at all. The legal consequences of having, but not following, a policy could completely devastate a congregation financially and emotionally, even more than not having a policy. However, not having a policy is not a choice; guidelines, standards, and plans are needed to protect the congregation and its members. It is important to both have, and follow, a strong policy.
2C) REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKERS

CERTIFICATION FOR STAFF / VOLUNTEERS

1. **Age Requirement.** Adults and some youth are able to serve as volunteers. All volunteers must be at least 16 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must work with and under the supervision of an adult volunteer. In all cases, volunteers and staff must be at least five years older than the oldest children or youth that they are responsible for supervising.

2. **Volunteer Certification.** All event leaders, staff, and volunteers must submit a written application/screening form and references annually. A background screening, including the National Sex Offender Registry and Multi-State Felony Background check, is required annually for all event staff and volunteers over the age of 18 and must be completed prior to working with children or youth. For those under 18, a local police check is required. Staff/volunteers from outside of the United States of America or without a social security number for whom a background screening cannot be completed must be verified by reference checks and required to work under the supervision of a properly certified adult.

3. No applicant with a criminal conviction for any crime against a person, including but not limited to crimes against or including children, sexual misconduct or use or abuse of alcohol or drugs may serve as a volunteer in any capacity that involves direct contact with or supervision of children, youth or vulnerable adults.

4. Prior to serving at an event, volunteers must have been active participants in a local church or ministry for a minimum of one year, or must serve under the supervision of a certified adult volunteer.

5. Staff and volunteers must complete the approved training program prior to serving as a volunteer. Training must be renewed annually.

Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect

Under Indiana law any individual who has a reason to believe a child is a victim of abuse or neglect has the duty to make a report; therefore, each citizen of Indiana is considered a “mandated reporter.”

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<tr>
<th>Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline</th>
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<tr>
<td>1-800-800-5556</td>
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<td>If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call Indiana's Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline today. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You do not have to be afraid anyone will find out who made the report because you can report abuse and neglect anonymously.</td>
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If you call to make a report, an Intake Specialist will ask you for information about the circumstances creating a risk of harm to the child including who was involved, what occurred, when and where it occurred, the extent of any injuries sustained, and any other relevant information.

When you contact the Hotline, Intake Specialists will ask you for information about the parties involved (victim, parent(s)/guardian(s), perpetrator) and the specific allegations giving rise to the call. Information you will be asked to provide may include:

1. **Child Information:** name, age, address, current location, person caring for child, and need/receiving medical treatment
2. **Parent/Guardian Information:** name, address, phone number as well as any domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal history, mental health issues, or past CPS (Child Protective Services) history
3. **Alleged Perpetrator Information**: name, address, phone number, relation to the child, behavioral issues, and other children who may be at risk

4. **Physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect allegations**: what happened, when, where, timeframe, and specific conditions

Even if you are unable to provide all of the information above, please contact the Hotline to make a report if you suspect a child is a victim of abuse or neglect. An Intake Specialist will review the information you are able to provide to determine whether it meets the statutory requirements for DCS to initiate an assessment. Please do not wait for someone else to make the call – your call may be the critical first step in protecting a child.

For additional information on the Indiana statutory definitions of child abuse and child neglect please see IC 31-33 and IC 31-34. For additional information on DCS Child Welfare Intake Policies please see the DCS Child Welfare Policy Manual, Chapter 3 – Intake. For additional information on the matrices DCS Hotline that staff utilize to guide decision-making with regard to educational neglect, fatalities, incest, substance abuse, suicidal youth please see the Hotline Decision Matrices

2D) **RECRUITING, SCREENING AND TRAINING WORKERS**

**Recruiting Paid and Volunteer Workers**

An application for full-time, part-time, paid, volunteer, clergy or lay use needs to include.

- Identification, such as a state issued ID
- Address, phone, etc.
- Employment history for past five years
- Volunteer work for past five years
- Experiences and skills related to the position he/she will be filling
- Prior church membership
- Personal references (three) with addresses
- Consent to verify all information provided and to contact references
- Waiver of any right to confidentiality and of any right to pursue damages against the church caused by the reference’s response
- Certification that the information provided is true and correct
- Applicant’s signature and date

Applicants that are 'seriously considered' should be interviewed.

- Gain clarification of any information in question
- Evaluate the applicant potential and ability
- The person interviewing should have training in how to interview

It is helpful to have some of the following to use in selecting regular workers:

- Position descriptions
- Position application forms
- Personal reference forms
- Consent to criminal background check forms
- Personal interview summary forms
Screening and Hiring Workers and Volunteers

Proper screening reduces legal liability. It demonstrates the church has taken reasonable action and may reduce the risk of false allegations.

Appropriate forms should be completed by workers already working in positions in the church. New applicants should complete the entire process (interview, etc).

- This should apply to any member of the church or non-member (paid, volunteer, clergy, lay) who will be involved with working with children or youth.
- This screening is important as a model and in case of or to help prevent false allegations.
- Once the background checks are on file, the church can prove that it made reasonable efforts to screen staff members (including clergy) and that no reason was discovered that would preclude the person’s involvement with children and youth.

Use of Criminal Background Checks

Including criminal background checks is often the most misunderstood and objected-to part of the process of hiring persons or accepting volunteers. However, it is a solid method of reducing the probability that a worker has a history of child abuse. Insurance agents and local attorneys can help with this process.

A strict plan must be developed to insure that information will be kept confidential and only shared with those who must know. Locked files are important.

If information shows that an applicant was convicted of child abuse, child molestation, incest, or some other crime against a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, that applicant should be rejected as a worker with such persons.

- Provisions may need to be made to keep that person out of contact (according to his/her requirements per the law) with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, as well
- Such procedures will reduce the risk of child abuse in the church

Use of criminal background checks involves an education process and re-education processes so the entire congregation understands the importance. It is meant to protect not only children, youth, and vulnerable adults, but also the workers, themselves.

Such background checks allow young families to have the added security of knowing every possible step has been taken to assure the safety as well as Christian education of their children in the church.

Training Workers and Volunteers

Training workers and volunteers to understand and be aware of any abuse, to avoid behaviors that could put them or others at risk, and to assure safety for all persons is mandatory. Doing so prior to their volunteering or working on the staff of the local congregation is a best practice.

For comprehensive training of workers and volunteers, answers to these questions should be included in the training:

An understanding of abuse:

- Does abuse really does happen in the church?
- Why does your church have a policy and training?
- What types and indicators of abuse are important to be aware of?
- Who are the abusers and how does abuse happen?
- In what ways are you making your church safe for ministry to children, youth, and vulnerable adults?
- How can persons working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults avoid situations when abuse might take place or conduct which could be perceived as abusive?
Congregational guidelines to reduce risk within the local church:
- Who are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect in Indiana?
- What are your church’s procedures for screening and hiring workers and volunteers, including the use of criminal background checks?
- Who are the Safe Sanctuaries Advocates and what is their role in the congregation?

How to respond to allegations and abuse:
- What are the policies and steps for incident reporting?
- What are the reporting requirements of the State of Indiana related to abuse?
- To whom do I report a suspected allegation of abuse?
- What forms will be used if there is an incident?
- What documentation is needed if there are any allegations or incidents of abuse?
- What happens in response to an incident in the congregation? Who speaks to the public? What is confidential?

An introduction or review of your congregation’s Safe Sanctuary Policy:
- Where can it be found?
- Who updates it yearly?
- How will workers and volunteers be made aware of changes?
- What are each person’s responsibilities according to your policy?

2e) PROCEDURES TO HELP REDUCE THE RISK OF ABUSE

Some Suggestions for Making Your Church Safe for Ministry to Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

1. Always have at least two adults in every situation involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults. (This protects everyone: the children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse, the volunteers and staff from false accusations or opportunities for abuse).
   - adults = 18 years of age or older, 21 years for infants and toddlers
   - it is best if the volunteers/staff are unrelated
   - use "roamers" if necessary
   - youth should be at least 4 - 6 years older than children/youth they work with

2. Have internal ways to account for every child or youth at every moment, especially when there are secluded spaces in which abuse can take place.

3. Screen workers before they begin working with children and youth (or, in the case of those already working in this capacity, screen them when you begin the screening process).
   - keep on file screening information for each new volunteer or paid staff person before he/she begins working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults
   - Screen not only those who volunteer regularly, but also those who fill in from time to time
   - Ideally, screening should include references, interview notes, and a release for a background check, which should be kept in a locked file

4. Educate workers (and reeducate them yearly) regarding the church’s policies and procedures regarding abuse as well as regarding state laws for reporting suspected child abuse.
   - Provide an initial training session prior to the person’s working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults
   - Provide yearly training for those who continue to work in this capacity
5. Be sure your congregation has adequate insurance for the needs of your ministries.
   - It is best to have an insurance agent who is very informed about your ministries and knows your policy well
   - Having a child abuse prevention plan on file will go a long way to address insurance coverage that is appropriate
   - Check often to be sure you are well covered for the ministry that you are doing, especially when you begin new ministries with children, youth, or vulnerable adults

6. Always keep parents informed about the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” of any ministry event to children and youth.
   - Parents should always give written permission for their child to participate in any non-routine activity (e.g. mission trip, lock-in, etc)
   - Always have a medical release for each child participating in any church related event—especially when the event is out of town
   - risk management officers advise clients to notify parents of any event in which a worker will be alone with a child (e.g. mentoring, transporting, etc)

7. Do not allow any person (child, youth, or volunteer) to be in or put him- or her- self into a situation that might be questionable.
   - Have persons on call for when the second volunteer is not available to help
   - Put windows on every door, especially classroom doors, so that there is no place for secrecy and isolation
   - Encourage teachers and leaders to leave doors open when they are in a room with children or youth, or for smaller children, use half-doors so that they cannot get out but persons can easily see in

8. Keep your whole congregation informed of your policies for preventing and dealing with abuse of any kind.
   - Be sure the policy is posted for anyone to read and that all persons have access to it at any time
   - Review the policy with workers each year
   - Review the policy each year to see that it still fits the congregation’s needs

9. Develop a participation covenant for participants and leaders.
   - The covenant should include issues such as:
     - Agreeing to take part in the ministry
     - Giving their best efforts to the ministry
     - Respecting other participants
     - Treating others as well as they would wish to be treated
   - Covenants are useful (especially for retreats or trips) for establishing from the outset the behavior standards expected of everyone
   - Covenants are also important reminders for leaders that abusive behavior toward the children/youth will not be tolerated

10. Strongly consider appropriate settings, equipment, and supervision
    - The likelihood of child abuse varies in different settings and circumstances (e.g. inadequate supervision of a youth group at a hotel retreat increases the odds of an abuse incident)
    - If equipment is needed, workers should be aware of how to safely operate it (e.g. how to properly use playground equipment)
    - Appropriate supervision is important. (Children cannot be left unattended on the playground during church dinners: CPR skills are needed for service projects, etc.)

For more information about preparing your church building and workers, see Safe Sanctuaries; Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church, by Joy Thornburg Melton.
Some Suggestions for Creating a Safe Sanctuary Policy Statement

When you create the policy, churches might want to:

• organize a group of 3-4 persons to draft a policy and present it to the SPRT. This might include the two Safe Sanctuaries Advocates.
• purchase and review thoroughly the Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church book (and DVD). Use the book as a guideline for creating your policy, training, and implementation.
• utilize local, district, state, and conference resources to help you do this. For example, you should check with your local and/or state DCS/CPS regarding reporting procedures, with the district and conference for any new or updated guidelines for policies as well as reporting procedures should an incident occur, and with the local police regarding deadlines to report illegal activity, such as sexual abuse, in the church.
• ask your congregation's lawyer and insurance agent to look over the policy after it is complete, and make any legal/insurance changes needed.

It may be wise to include these requirements for volunteers and paid staff working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in all paperwork:

• must complete and submit confidential documents including an application form and a request for background check criminal records authorization
• must be screened by the pastor or Sunday school superintendent, Safe Sanctuaries Advocates, or another appropriate committee
• must participate in a Safe Sanctuaries training periodically
• must not have been convicted of child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor
• those who serve as principal teachers/workers must be a member of your church for 6 months before being eligible to work with children
• every class or activity for children or youth must have a minimum of two adults present
• written permission must be received from the parent or guardian for situations where children are with adults who are driving a church van, counseling them, or working with them individually, etc.
• two members of the same immediate family should not be the only two adults regularly leading a children's or youth class or activity

Other important pointers for developing a Safe Sanctuaries policy include:

• both a proactive component and a reactive one
  o proactive (e.g. provisions for screening procedures, training, distribution or posting of the policy)
  o reactive (e.g. steps to be taken when misconduct is alleged, steps to insure safety, a statement of intended confidentiality/needed disclosure for victim, family, perpetrator and his/her family)
• a statement and plan of action for support for those involved
  o for the victim
  o for the victim's family
  o for the alleged perpetrator
  o for the alleged perpetrator's family
• steps to be taken to report an allegation
  o whom to report to
  o when and how to report (by form, in person, etc.)
  o the requirements for legal reporting to authorities
• a method of responding
  o a description of a spokesperson and kind of statement to be made
  o a plan for response to questions asked
  o a plan for statement to church/community/media
• It is important to delineate investigative procedures by the church
  o who will be involved in the investigation
  o how the investigation will be accomplished (procedures)
  o a time-line for the investigation
  o a plan for cooperation with legal authorities
• It is also appropriate to include a "non-retaliation clause," stating that the church will not retaliate against a complainant, regardless of the results of the allegations
• One final component of such a policy is a plan for healing within the congregation during and after the investigation and conclusion. Even those who are not directly affected will need to have support as they deal with the experience of such a difficult situation in the congregation

A policy should most appropriately do the following:
• include a theological statement or a statement about an environment of hospitality for all
• include information from the Book of Discipline that applies to the issue, to further explain the purpose of such a policy (e.g. ¶161 11, The Nurturing Community, especially sub-sections G, H, and I)
• define abuse fully
• require background checks for all persons employed or accepted as a volunteer
• require that no person will work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults who has an indicated report by DCS or a criminal conviction of misconduct of an abusive or sexual nature
• require yearly review and updating of the policy and include who will do this review and how training and information sharing about the update will be done
• provide for two Safe Sanctuary Advocates who will promote, review, assure compliance with, and be available to talk about the policy
• provide ways to keep the policy available to those needing to know it. This may include posting the policy, including it in the newsletter yearly, sending it out to all members or to those who work in the church ministries, etc.
• describe the ways allegations are handled. Be specific, especially about who to contact, what to document, and any deadlines that need to be followed
• describe how complaints are investigated; be specific
• include all needed reporting forms (e.g. incident report, documentation guidelines)
• describe reporting procedures, for example:
  o if the child, youth or adult is in danger, get them to safety before you do anything else
  o immediately notify the staff person related to the ministry area where the potential abuse occurred
  o immediately notify the directing pastor(s) unless the abuse involved a pastor
  o fill out the official form for reporting allegations
  o report the issue to the district superintendent immediately, and follow his/her guidelines regarding how to inform the conference and receive help from the district and conference
  o if the report involves a minor, DCS and the local police must be contacted. Be aware of deadlines and requirements of these reports
  o refer all inquiries for information from parents, the media, attorneys, and any other party that is not a civil authority to the pastor or the official spokesperson
  o follow up, such as reports to the insurance company, conference, attorney. It is important to work with the pastor/SPRT in all of these

Additional Suggestions
• People will not take time to read a lengthy policy; keeping the policy as succinct as possible is helpful, but it should include enough details to be clear
• You may want to delineate that this policy includes groups that use the church facility; check with your lawyer to be sure what is right for your church
Implementation Strategies

For a Child Abuse Prevention Policy to be successful, the entire congregation must whole-heartedly support its adoption and implementation. Universal support will not happen without a thorough and comprehensive plan for educating the congregation and for including a wide spectrum of members in the development of the policy and procedures.

The formation of a committee or task force to prepare the policy should be a result of careful consideration and should include two Safe Sanctuaries Advocates, if possible. If not, the task force should recruit these Advocates as soon as possible.

The Safe Sanctuaries task force should:

- Research issues related to child abuse so that all persons on the task force understand the implications of creating and utilizing the policy
- Study the Safe Sanctuaries; Reducing the Risk of Child abuse in the Church book, by Joy Thornburg Melton
- Evaluate the current practices in your congregation related to the care and supervision of children, youth, and any vulnerable adults
- Develop a Safe Sanctuaries policy for use in the congregation
- Develop and implement specific procedures for the care and supervision of children, youth and vulnerable adults
- Develop a plan for responding to allegations and to known incidents of abuse in the church
- Present new policies and procedures to the administrative council or other approving body
- Plan for educating the congregation about abuse and the new prevention policies
- Plan training and refresher courses about the new policies for all church workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- Support the Safe Sanctuaries Advocates in their role of overseeing training, implementation of the policy, and follow up

2F) REPORTING INCIDENTS OF KNOWN OR SUSPECTED ABUSE

Creating a Step-by-Step Plan for Incident Reporting

It will be important for each congregation to have a step-by-step plan when incidents occur. The following may inform the creation of such a plan:

What should the teacher or child care worker who discovers alleged or actual abuse do?

- Secure safety of all involved
- Notify the event coordinator, pastor, and/or Safe Sanctuaries Advocates immediately
- Avoid prejudging the situation, but take allegations or suspicions seriously
- Show care and support to those involved
- Get help from another person (pastor, Safe Sanctuary Advocates) so as not to have to carry the burden alone
- Document what happened, using appropriate forms
- Do not speak to anyone, except the authorities you are required to speak with, about what happened
What should the event leader/pastor/SPRT do after being notified of an allegation?

- Do not confront the accused until the safety of the victim is secured
- Notify parents/guardians of a child or youth immediately, in person if possible
- Contact the proper civil authorities (follow the guidance of your insurance company and attorney as to how to proceed with this). Contact the Department of Child Services through the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-800-5556. The person who discovered the incident will likely need to make the report to the Department
- Do not try to do an in-depth investigation; this is best left to the authorities
- Treat the accused with dignity and support
- If the accused is a church worker or volunteer, that person should be relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to maintain his/her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated
- Document, in writing, and have anyone involved document, all efforts to handle the incident, and all subsequent activities pertaining to the people involved, including conversations, phone calls, dates, places, persons involved, and substance of activities. These should be written independently of one another. All reports should be maintained confidentially in a locked file
- Make and/or verify that a report has been made on the incident to the church insurance company, attorney, and denominational officials. Do not try to handle any incidents without professional outside assistance

Note: If it is alleged that a clergy person was the perpetrator of abuse, contact the current SPRT chairperson and District Superintendent immediately. The Book of Discipline prescribes procedures for such, and will be utilized.

Developing a Response to Allegations

Responding to allegations can be very challenging. A response to suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse should be in place long before it is needed.

Two key components for a plan:
- Know and utilize the state’s law for requirements in reporting suspected or known child abuse to child protective services and/or to the local police. It may be helpful to have these on hand and easily accessible in an incident, so that they are followed exactly
- Utilize a plan for complying with the legal reporting requirements of the state. A general plan should be developed before it is needed; more specific details, as they apply to a current situation, should be arranged immediately, for each individual case

All workers with children and youth must be trained in the state’s definitions of child abuse and child sexual abuse as well as state and county requirements (including deadlines) for how to report abuse to law enforcement authorities and child protective services.
- Consult the church’s attorney to know which requirements apply to workers in your congregation
- It is best to have a step-by-step plan for workers to report any incident of actual or suspected abuse. (Child Protective Services operates a 24-hour, 7-day a week hotline: 1-800-800-5556. In some cases, you may call your local county DCS/CPS office)

Consider this, from Safe Sanctuaries: “Our obligations to respond to allegations go beyond the requirements of state law. As Christians, we must also be prepared to respond to others regarding allegations of abuse. We must be prepared to respond to the victim and his or her family, to the news
media, to our church's insurance agent, to the annual conference, and possibly to the abuser” (p. 39). This may include:

- Faithful response to the victim, including taking the allegations seriously and respecting the victim’s privacy
- Notifying the annual conference authorities as soon as allegations of abuse are received. The conference will speak to the media, provide support for the congregation, and assist church personnel with addressing other issues as needed.
- Acknowledging that the accused abuser is a person of sacred worth, but also acknowledging that the accused must stop the abusive behavior and get help. Removing the accused from his or her position as a worker with children and youth until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved is also necessary

When allegations of child abuse are made against a worker or staff member, be prepared to:

- Notify the parents/guardian/caretaker of the victim after the child's/person's safety has been assured
- Treat the accused with dignity rather than anger or hostility, but remove him or her from involvement with children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- Notify the proper law enforcement agency, child protective agency, the annual conference, the church's insurance agent, and the church's attorney as soon as possible, or within the designated guidelines/requirements for each
- Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response
- Do not speak with news media; the conference will help the church arrange for this
- Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary information, placing blame, or violating confidentiality. Do this in consultation with the conference
- Be prepared to fully cooperate with the investigation

2G) Examples for Reporting Incidents of Known or Suspected Abuse

Reporting a Suspected Abuse Case
If any staff or volunteer has reason to believe a protected person is the victim of any form of abuse or neglect, either from information provided by the protected person or others or from visual observation, the staff or volunteer has a moral and legal obligation to report the information to the event coordinator. He or she should be prepared to share the following information:

- Name, address, and phone number of the protected person
- Details about the information he or she received or his/her visual observations
- The staff or volunteer’s name, address and phone number

The following steps should be assured:

- The staff or volunteer who discovered the alleged abuse or neglect, and the Event Coordinator, must immediately work together to assure the alleged victim is not in immediate danger
- Treat the accused with dignity rather than anger or hostility, but remove him or her from involvement with children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- The Event Coordinator will notify the appropriate persons, including parents/guardian/caretaker of the child or youth, the home church pastor(s), and/or other district or conference officials
- The staff or volunteer, with the support of the Event Coordinator, will immediately make a report to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, and/or law enforcement
- Once the staff/volunteer has made his/her report and notified the Event Coordinator, this person must
cooperate with local authorities if it is found that a person is indeed in danger. This could include interviews, sworn statements, or court appearances.

- Anyone involved in this process should use the “Suspected Abuse documentation” to document the occurrence.
- If anyone directly involved in the incident believes a report has not been made to the appropriate authorities after you notified the Event Coordinator, that person must report the alleged abuse or neglect of a child or youth by calling the Indiana Child Abuse Hotline 800-800-5556 or the alleged abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult by calling the Adult Protective Services State Hotline 800-992-6978.

**Reporting An Allegation**

Any allegation about church staff or volunteers must be taken seriously. An allegation can come before, during, or after the event from anyone. These steps are to be followed:

- If any staff or volunteer receives an allegation about the behavior of church staff or a volunteer, he or she should follow the reporting procedures above, listed in *Reporting a Suspected Abuse Case*.
- If an allegation is made during an event, the accused staff/volunteer must be removed from service until the situation can be investigated and resolved.
- The person reporting the incident should accompany the person in going to the Event Coordinator. If that person declines, the one who received the report must take the concern/allegation to the Event Coordinator, who will facilitate filling out a “report of incident” form.
- As above, the person making the allegation should report the allegation to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or local law enforcement immediately. If the person making the allegation does not do this, then the person who received the allegation or the Event Coordinator must make the report.
- In all cases, regardless of the identity of the accused, the Event Coordinator must make a written report to the District Superintendent after he or she has made a report to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or law enforcement. The District Superintendent will then follow Conference Guidelines in further reporting the incident.

Whenever an allegation is made, no communication with public media should be made. The Conference Director of Communications shall provide the district and local church with guidelines for communications with media, and all media communications should be coordinated through him or her.

**2H) RESOURCES FOR THOSE WHO HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE POLICY**

Consider these ways to help persons who have questions better understand the policy, its need, and its implementation:

- A statement could be included in the church newsletter yearly summarizing the Abuse Protection Policy.
- The Abuse Protection Policy should be posted in the church office, in the youth and children’s wings, and be available in the brochure rack so that anyone wishing to have a copy may obtain one.
- All persons employed by the church as full or part time pastors or staff should receive a copy of the Abuse Protection Policy at the time of their employment and should sign a statement that they have received it, read it, and will comply by it. Each year, persons employed by the church should receive updated policies as they are created, possibly as part of a staff meeting.
• An educational session should be held annually to renew and update the knowledge of employees and volunteers who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults about the Abuse Protection Policy.

• Groups that are associated with the church and use the church facility regularly (such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, Day Care, etc) should be given a copy of the Abuse Protection Policy by the SPRT each year and held accountable under its direction.
  • The group should be responsible to send every member who works with children, youth, or vulnerable adults to the yearly training offered by the church.
  • The group should be responsible for certifying (through, at a minimum, background checks as designated in this policy) of all members of the group who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any capacity.

Additional information about church responsibilities for the safety of children, youth, and vulnerable adults can be obtained on the General Board Of Discipleship Safe Sanctuaries Page http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.5598111/k.A248/Safe_Sanctuaries.htm

2I) PROVIDING SAFETY, PROTECTION, AND ONGOING SUPPORT TO VICTIMS

Support of those involved should be a priority for the church.

• The church must faithfully respond to the victim, including taking the allegations seriously and respecting the victim’s and the victim’s family’s privacy.

• Every effort should be made to provide emotional and spiritual support for the victim and his/her family, for those reporting the incident, and for the alleged perpetrator and his/her family.

• Immediate steps must always be taken to assure the safety of the individual, especially if a child or youth is involved and there is an indication that he or she might be in danger. Immediate support, though the pastor, deacon, lay pastoral-caregivers, or other supportive resources within the church should be activated immediately.

• However, the church should not try to carry the burden of healing alone, but should seek guidance from the district and conference offices about other resources available, such as pastoral care resources and other interventions to support and help those involved to heal.
  • If appropriate, conflict mediation, information-giving sessions, or healing services may be offered or encouraged by the district or conference staff involved in the situation.
  • Such support may be begun during the investigation and continued even after the conclusion of the investigation and any issues that may follow.

• When pastors or staff are found to be involved in the abuse, counseling or professional services for the victim should most like be recommended, provided, or paid for by the church, district, and/or conference.

• This church should never retaliate against a person making a complaint made in good faith, regardless of the result of the allegations. However, false allegations made against another in a demeaning way will be turned over to legal authorities for action.
2J) REVIEWING AND UPDATING THE POLICY AND LIABILITY COVERAGE

Though others may be assigned specific tasks and carrying out the policy, it will likely be the SPRT and Administrative Board who are ultimately responsible to assure that the policy is:

- reviewed and updated yearly
- posted in the church building
- included in the newsletter
- spoken about in the gathered congregation regularly
- included in staff and volunteer training
- distributed to all members or to those who work in the church ministries

Even if others hold the immediate responsibility for assuring the church’s liability coverage is up to date, it will likely be the SPRT/Ad Board who are ultimately responsible to assure that this policy meets the requirements of the insurance company, as well.

In addition, it should also likely be the ultimate responsibility of the SPRT to assure that the policy is reviewed yearly for its appropriate legal implications to the functioning of the church.
#3 The role of leaders in this ministry

## 3A) Designating and Using Safe Sanctuaries Advocates in the Local Church

Two Safe Sanctuaries Advocates might serve as the “overseers” of the safety of all, and of the process of creating, training for, and utilizing the policy. Neither of these persons should be the pastor. The Advocates should be elected by the nominations committee (or equivalent) and confirmed by the charge conference yearly. One of the two advocates should always have at least one year’s experience serving as an advocate, if possible; rarely should both advocates be replaced with new advocates at the same time. The advocates could relate to the SPRT and work closely with them in their efforts.

Potential Responsibility of the Safe Sanctuaries Advocates could include:
- to help the congregation to be aware of abuse, its signs, and its prevention
- to speak out against child and elder abuse and lead the community in being proactive against it
- to review and/or help create the church’s policy and practices and assure that they are followed faithfully and updated yearly if needed
- to serve as a resource person regarding the policy
- to work with SPRT to keep the policy in front of the congregation
- to lead, or direct the leadership, of the Safe Sanctuaries training for those working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in the congregation
- to support those involved when allegations are made
- to assure appropriate measures are carried out if allegations are made
- to contact the authorities when incident reports are made
- to guard the confidentiality of all involved

## 3B) The Role of the SPRT and Administrative Board

SPRT and Administrative Board are ultimately responsible for the safety of the church and for the policy. They must:
- review and assure that the policy is updated yearly
- oversee and direct the Safe Sanctuaries Advocates and their responsibilities including to:
  - assure that the policy is posted in the church building and spoken about in the gathered congregation regularly (at minimum, once a year)
  - assure staff and volunteer training and policy distribution to all those who work in the church ministries
  - assure adherence to the policy in the case of allegations or charges
  - assure appropriate follow up in the case of allegations or charges

The Trustees are responsible for liability coverage for the church, but it is the SPRT/Ad council who are ultimately responsible to assure that the policy meets legal and insurance requirements.
Resources for those creating the policy and training the congregation and workers

The West District Safe Sanctuaries Team

Rev. Diane Menke Pence, Bloomington
diane@dmpencecounseling.net; 812-333-3440 (office)

Teddy Shuck, Greencastle
tickup_tkp@yahoo.com; 765-848-1680 (daytime); 765-653-8628 (night)

Rev. Andy Charnstrom; Brazil
andrewcharnstrom@yahoo.com;

Rev. Mike Baker, West Terre Haute
mikebaker1977@msn.com; 812-870-2953 (cell)

Online resources

GBOD Safe Sanctuaries Page:
http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.5598111/k.A248/Safe_Sanctuaries.htm

GCFA Legal Manual
http://www.gcfa.org/gcfa-legal-manual

Safe Sanctuary DVD Study Guide

Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect, Indiana
http://www.in.gov/dcs/2971.htm


The District and Conference offices

West District office
765-276-4797 (office); 877-781-6716 (office); 765-276-4789 (fax)

Indiana Conference office
317-924-1321 (office); 317-735-4228 (fax)
5A) A CHECKLIST OF SUGGESTIONS
FOR CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING AN ABUSE PROTECTION POLICY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Preparation
- Create a team of 2-4 persons who will assess current practices related to your church’s policy.
  - Review the West District and Conference Abuse Protection Policies to assist you in understanding what is necessary to create an appropriate policy for your congregation.
  - Obtain any previous Abuse Protection Policy your church may have utilized.
  - Assess, through Safe Sanctuaries; A Self-Evaluation for Churches, your church’s policy needs in accordance with any practices you already have in place.
  - Create a report for the SPRT regarding your findings.

- The church’s SPRT can then name a new team (or keep the same team) to create a new policy abuse protection policy for the church. Ideally, 2 of these persons should be named as Safe Sanctuary Advocates (or another appropriate name), nominated by the nominating committee, and affirmed at the charge conference, to serve to assist the church in creating, administering, and assuring the policy is followed.

Creation
- The team should utilize the West District and Conference Guidelines for Local Church Abuse Protection Policies to create your church’s policy. These guidelines include:
  - A description of the role of staff & lay members who work with children and vulnerable adults;
  - Procedures to be used in recruitment and selection of all employees and volunteers who will work with or have regular access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
  - A plan for training all employees and volunteers about all aspects of the protection policy, including provisions for routine re-training;
  - Procedures designed to reduce the risk of instances of abuse of any type and assure that instances of real or suspected abuse are promptly detected and reported to the appropriate internal and external authorities;
  - A procedure for reporting incidents of known and suspected abuse of children, youth or vulnerable adults to appropriate church leaders, including district leadership, and to appropriate civil authorities in accordance with the laws of Indiana and a procedure for reporting known or suspected incidents of abuse to family members, the congregation and the public, as appropriate, while protecting those involved;
  - Information about resources and strategies for adults who have questions about the policy or who confront situations that make them uncomfortable;
  - A plan to provide for the safety, protection, and ongoing emotional support of those who may have been victimized;
  - A plan for dealing with allegations against a church worker, employee, or volunteer;
  - Annual review of the protection policy and procedures and of the church's liability coverage for employees and volunteers.

- Ideally, this team should attend a West District Training for those who will be creating policies and training volunteers at the local church.

- Once a policy is created, the team should present the policy to the SPRT for approval
  - After approval, the SPRT should send the policy to the church insurance agent for review, and any needed revisions should be made.
  - After this review and revision, the SPRT should send the policy to the church attorney for review, and any needed revisions should be made.

- Once all revisions have been made, the SPRT should approve the policy after which it should be presented to the Administrative Council for approval.
Screening procedures should be determined, announced, and begun for all volunteers and staff who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. A safe, locked location should be secured for all materials and information related to background checks, etc.

A plan for training volunteers should be created, arranged, and announced well in advance of the training then carried out. Documentation of annual trainings must be maintained on all staff and volunteers. The training should include, at minimum, those elements listed in the district and conference policies:

- familiarization with the church’s abuse protection policy
- recognizing the signs of abuse
- avoiding situations when abuse might happen / conduct which could be perceived as abusive
- reporting requirements of the State of Indiana related to abuse
- the policy for responding to an allegation
- communication procedures

Information

- Once approved, the policy should be posted in the church office and at other places around the building, such as in the children’s wing, in the gathering hall, and any other spaces which are normally utilized for church functions. At a minimum, the policy should be posted on each floor or separated space of the building(s).

- A general statement to the congregation regarding the use of the policy and its purpose should be made during worship. This should include information about where the policy is posted, who can answer questions about the policy, and why it is important to the entire congregation.

- Additionally, the church newsletter or other mailings should yearly, at minimum, include information about the policy, with the above information included.

- Information about upcoming training for all volunteers who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, in any capacity, should be distributed well in advance of these trainings.

Implementation

- Volunteer training should be offered at least once yearly, in order to certify those working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

- Screenings should take place, initially, for those presently working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. As persons volunteer or are elected to work with or around children, youth, or vulnerable adults, screenings and training should take place prior to their beginning such work.

- Safe Sanctuaries Advocates (or others named to such a position) should keep the policy in front of the congregation, supervise its implementation, and report regularly to the SPRT and/or Administrative Council about any changes needed or, generally, any procedures that have been activated.
  - The Advocates should also work with the SPRT to assure that the policy is updated yearly and that trainings take place yearly, as well.
  - To assist in this process, the Advocates must attend yearly trainings in the district or conference levels and review any new literature related to abuse protection to keep informed, and to inform the church, of new information related to the issue.

Follow up

- Safe Sanctuaries Advocates/SPRT should send a copy of your policy to the District Office to keep on file and for their use should any problems arise. Any time the policy is updated, a copy of the new policy should be sent. Be sure to date the policy.

- Follow the policy exactly to minimize the chance for any incidents to occur.

- If allegations or incidents occur, do not try to handle it at the local church level without any help from the district or conference. Again, follow the policy as to contacting the district office/superintendent and ask for any help needed to address issues that arise from the allegations or incidents.
5B) **SAFE SANCTUARIES: A SELF-EVALUATION FOR CHURCHES**

The following checklist may help your congregation assess its policy needs for the prevention of abuse in your church’s ministry with children, youth, and all persons. You'll see at a glance the areas needing attention.

- We screen and check references for all paid employees, including clergy, who have any contact with children and/or youth and vulnerable adults.

- We screen all volunteer workers for any position involving work with children and youth and vulnerable adults.

- We train, at least annually, all volunteer and/or paid workers with children and youth and vulnerable adults to understand the nature of abuse and to recognize indicators of abuse.

- We train, at least annually, all volunteer and/or paid workers with children/youth and vulnerable adults in how to carry out our policies to prevent abuse.

- Our workers and volunteers are informed of state law requirements regarding abuse and their responsibility for reporting incidents.

- We have a clear reporting procedure for a suspected incident of abuse that follows the requirements of our state law.

- We have insurance coverage available in case a complaint of abuse occurs.

- We have a clearly defined building usage policy as a component of our abuse prevention plan.

- We have a clearly defined response plan to be implemented in case an allegation of abuse is made against someone in our church.

- We offer, at least annually, educational opportunities to parents of children and youth about how to recognize and reduce risks of abuse.

- We take our policies to prevent abuse seriously, and we are committed to their enforcement for the safety and security of all our children, youth and the adults who work with them.

(Adapted from: "Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in The Church." To utilize this form in the local church, you must purchase the book Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church, Joy Thornburg Melton.)
SAMPLE DOCUMENTATION

Suspected Abuse Documentation
Our Church, West District, Indiana United Methodist Church

Name of person filing complaint: ___________________________________

Filing date of complaint: _________________________________________

Name, address, and phone number of the protected person
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Name, address, and phone number of the suspected person (if known)
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Reasons I believe a protected person is the victim of any form of abuse or neglect
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

☐ I have reported this suspicion to the Event Coordinator, whom I understand has the responsibility to notify the appropriate persons, including family members of the child or youth, the home church pastor(s), and/or other district or conference officials.

☐ With the help of the Event Coordinator, I have assured the safety of the alleged victim

☐ With the support of the Event Coordinator, I have contacted the appropriate person(s) below:
  ☐ Child Protective Services, 800-800-5556
  ☐ Adult Protective Services, 800-992-6978
  ☐ Local Law Enforcement

☐ I understand I may be required to cooperate with local authorities if it is found that a person is indeed in danger

Signature of person filling out form ____________________________

Printed name of person filling out form __________________________

Address of person filling out form ________________________________

Home phone number of person filling out form ______________________

Cell phone number of person filling out form ________________________

Work phone number of person filling out form ________________________

Email address of the person filling out form ________________________
Event Coordinator’s Documentation of a Report of Suspected Abuse
Our Church, West District, Indiana United Methodist Church

Name of event coordinator documenting report: ________________________________

Event during which suspected abuse was reported: ________________________________

Date suspected abuse was reported: ________________________________

Name, address, and phone number of the Protected Person
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Name, address, and phone number of the suspected person (if known)
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

☐ I have supported the person making the report in his/her contacting of
  ☐ Child Protective Services, 800-800-5556
  ☐ Adult Protective Services, 800-992-6978
  ☐ Local Law Enforcement

☐ I have assured the safety of the alleged victim

☐ If the report is in reference to a district staff or a volunteer, I have removed that person from service until
  the situation can be investigated and resolved.

☐ I have contacted parents or guardian of the child or youth, if appropriate

☐ I have contacted the
  ☐ Leader of the group accompanying the child or youth or vulnerable adult to the event
  ☐ The home church pastor(s)
  ☐ The District Superintendent
  ☐ The appropriate conference officials

☐ I understand I may be required to cooperate with local authorities if it is found that a person is indeed in danger

Instructions I was given and other results of following these procedures:____________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Signature of person filling out form ________________________________ date ______________________

Printed name of person filling out form ____________________________________________________________

Address of person filling out form _________________________________________________________________

Home phone number of person filling out form ________________________________
cell phone number of person filling out form ________________________________
work phone number of person filling out form ________________________________

Email address of the person filling out form __________________________________________________________
5D) RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR AN ABUSE PROTECTION POLICY

These guidelines have been created to help West District Churches create policies within their individual churches that meet their specific church’s needs, but also include those elements that are important to a policy in the West District and Conference. Therefore, these guidelines utilize the present guidelines of the Conference while directing attention to specific helps from the West District handbook, in order to allow churches to create a useful, active, and appropriate policy. Please keep in mind that policies should be reviewed and revised (if necessary) each year, in order to keep current with appropriate legal, ethical, insurance, and spiritual practices. Some suggestions to help you do this can be found on pages 14-16 of the West District Handbook.

Recommended elements of an Abuse Protection Policy:

1) A theological statement that addresses the purpose of the policy: to assure the safety of all persons
   a. Examples: p. 5, Our Responsibility and Our Calling to Create a Policy, West District Handbook
   b. Other helps: p. 3, Does Child Abuse Really Happen in the Church, West District Handbook
   c. Other helps: p. 4, Why Churches must have a Policy and Training, West District Handbook

2) Definitions of the terms used in the policy
   a. Examples: p. 6-7, Understanding Abuse, West District Handbook
   b. Other helps: GBOD Safe Sanctuaries Page

3) Requirements for/description of the role staff and lay members who work with children and vulnerable adults
   a. Examples: p. 9, Requirements for Workers, West District Handbook
   b. Other helps: p. 22, The Role of Leaders in the Ministry, West District Handbook

4) Procedures to be used in recruitment and selection of all employees and volunteers who will work with or have regular access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults
   a. Examples: pp. 10-11, Recruiting Paid and Volunteer Workers, Screening and Hiring Workers, and The Use of Criminal Background Checks, West District Handbook

5) A plan for training all employees and volunteers about all aspects of the protection policy, including provisions for routine re-training
   a. Example: pp. 11-12, Training Workers and Volunteers, West District Handbook
   b. Other helps: pp 12-13, Procedures to Help Reduce the Risk of Abuse, West District Handbook
   c. Other helps: pp. 7-8, Who are the Abusers, How Does Abuse Happen, and Consequences of Abuse in the Congregation, West District Handbook
   d. Other helps: Safe Sanctuary DVD Study Guide

6) Procedures designed to reduce the risk of instance of abuse of any type and assure that instances of real or suspected abuse are promptly detected and reported to the appropriate internal and external authorities
   b. Other helps: GBOD Safe Sanctuaries Page

7) A procedure for reporting incidents of known and suspected abuse of children, youth or vulnerable adults to appropriate church leaders, including district leadership, and to appropriate civil authorities in accordance with the laws of Indiana
   a. Examples: p. 20, Reporting a Suspected Abuse Case, West District Handbook
   b. Other Helps: pp. 16-18, Reporting Incidents of Known or Suspected Abuse, West District Handbook
8) A plan for dealing with allegations against a church worker, church employee, or church volunteer
   a. Examples: p. 20, Reporting an Allegation, West District Handbook
   b. Other helps: pp. 16-18, Reporting Incidents of Known or Suspected Abuse, West District Handbook

9) Information about resources and strategies for adults who have questions about the policy or who confront situations that make them uncomfortable
   a. Examples: pp. 18-19, Resources for Those who have Questions about the Policy, West District Handbook
   b. Other helps: pp. 7-8, Who are the Abusers, How Does Abuse Happen, and Consequences of Abuse in the Congregation, West District Handbook

10) A plan to provide for the safety, protection, and ongoing emotional support of those who may have been victimized
   b. Other helps: DCS, local police, counselors

11) Annual review of the protection policy and procedures and of the church’s liability coverage for employees and volunteers
   a. Examples: p. 21, Reviewing and Updating the Policy and Liability Coverage, West District Handbook
   b. Other helps: church legal advisor, church insurance agent