

# Birmingham & Berkley First United Methodist Church

## Protection Policy

Birmingham and Berkley First United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for those participating in our ministry activities—children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We also seek to minimize risk of unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our organization, volunteers, and employees may experience as they serve in the ministries of Birmingham & Berkley First United Methodist Church. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, the church has adopted the following procedures to be used, without exception, when selecting ministry volunteers and new employees and while supervising children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

### DEFINITIONS

**Adult Worker**—A volunteer or employee screened and authorized to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

**Child or children**—Any minor from birth through fifth grade.

**Employee**— A paid staff member of the church.

**Ministry Leader** – The person (paid or unpaid) who is ultimately responsible for the program.

**Minor**—Any person between the ages of 0 and 18 and any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

**Premise Monitor**— A volunteer or employee screened and authorized to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults whose function is to patrol hallways and common areas to observe classrooms and activity areas through windows or open doors on a roving basis to ensure the standards put forth in this policy are being met.

**Volunteer**—A person performing services or donating time or effort without compensation who is authorized to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

**Vulnerable adult**—Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend the nature of certain actions, or susceptible to coercion or abuse. This may include individuals who are mentally or physically differently abled and the elderly.

**Youth**—Any minor from sixth through 12th grade and any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

**Youth Worker** — A volunteer or employee under the age of 18 screened and authorized to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return an initial ministry application.
2. The Ministry Leader, or designee, will review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The Ministry Leader, or designee, will provide all application materials—the application form including background check release, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.— to Human Resources (HR) to be maintained in a secure location.
3. If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, and the background check results are favorable, the Ministry Leader, or designee, will check at least **two** references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application.
4. When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
5. The same procedures required for volunteers also apply to all potential and current employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered or for which they are employed. When indicated by our screening procedures, employees and employment candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed immediately from employment or consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.

## WAITING PERIOD

Volunteer candidates should be regularly involved in our organization for six months or more before they are considered for any volunteer position involving contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. At the discretion of the Ministry Leader in consultation with a clergy person, a candidate may be approved to volunteer in ministry areas involving children, youth or vulnerable adults prior to the six-month waiting period provided that the volunteer application, references and background check are completed and that they indicate a favorable result.

## SUPERVISION

1. **TWO ADULT RULE:** At least two screened Adult Workers should be present at every function or program involving children 4 years of age and under. This includes each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area. For large groups of children 4 years of age and under, the number of Adult Workers must be increased in accordance with state/teacher ratio requirements.

**2. RULE OF THREE:** For the safety of all persons, the rule of three should apply in all ministry settings involving children 5 years of age and older, youth, and vulnerable persons. Should a child, youth, or vulnerable person need to be separated from the larger group, i.e. to use the restroom, to seek medical attention, etc., at least three individuals should be present, with at least one of those persons being a screened Adult Worker.

**3. PREMISE MONITORS:** When ministry activities are gathered in multiple spaces, i.e. Sunday School, Choir, Youth Group Small Groups, etc., a screened Adult Worker shall patrol hallways and common areas to observe classrooms and activity areas through windows or open doors on a roving basis to ensure the standards put forth in this policy are being met.

4. While Adult Workers should avoid being alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, some limited exceptions may be permitted for spiritual counsel/mentoring. In the event that a one-to-one meeting should take place, steps should be taken to inform another adult or be in a visible location or area with a camera or have obtained written approval from a parent or guardian.

5. Adult employees and volunteers should avoid traveling in a vehicle one-to-one with a minor. If it is necessary, develop a communication strategy to notify parents/guardians or supervisors when leaving for and arriving at an event. See the church's Student Ministry Driving Policy for details.

6. Ministry Leaders and volunteers should avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children on their lap or initiating affection, etc.

## **BATHROOM PROCEDURES**

1. For children in need of an escort to the restroom, at least one worker and an additional person (child, youth, vulnerable person, or another worker) should take the children to the restroom. The worker should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside of the restroom. If assistance is required, the presence of a second worker is recommended.

2. Never touch the private areas (genitalia, breasts, buttocks, or bathing suit area) of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult except when essential for appropriate and proper care, as in the case of changing a diaper or cleaning up an accident.

## **DISCIPLINE**

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an imminent threat of an individual physically harming themselves or other individuals.

2. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the Ministry Leader as soon as possible but before leaving the event.

## INJURIES

1. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called. The Ministry Leader should be notified immediately, followed by the parent or guardian of the injured person.

2. After the injured person has been cared for, an Incident Report must be completed and submitted to the Director of Finance and Operations within 48 hours of the incident.

## SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT AND MANDATORY REPORTING

1. Clergy and Ministry Leaders subject to mandatory reporting guidelines are expected to fully comply and report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or signs of neglect to local authorities.

2. Any Worker who becomes aware of or has reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected must immediately inform the Ministry Leader, unless the Ministry Leader is the suspected perpetrator, in which case a clergy person should be informed. The Worker may be required to complete a Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report form.

3. Ministry Leaders who become aware of possible abuse or sexual misconduct involving a participant must work in conjunction with a clergy person to ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or sexual misconduct has occurred. If the parent or guardian is the suspected perpetrator, the Ministry Leader will defer to local authorities on notifying the parent or guardian.

4. The Director of Finance and Operations must promptly notify the church's insurance carrier (general or professional liability insurance) upon notice of abuse or sexual misconduct. The Senior Pastor will notify the Episcopal office.

## DEALING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT, NEWS MEDIA

1. All Workers of the church will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation.

2. The church leadership will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after it receives notice of possible abuse or molestation within the church.

3. The Episcopal Office of the Michigan Area Conference of the United Methodist Church will designate a spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. The spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

## ANNUAL REVIEW

1. Each year the Senior Staff Leadership of the church will conduct a review of this policy. At that time, the procedures mandated by this policy will be reviewed and updated as deemed necessary or appropriate. Any updates will be communicated to all Employees, Ministry Leaders, and Workers following the adoption of the updates by the Trustees Committee.

2. All Workers will complete a background check permission form every three years to continue working with children, youth, or vulnerable persons. Human Resources will be responsible for ensuring that those whose background checks are expiring are given a notice for renewal.

3. Should the background check indicate that any employees or volunteers have become unsuitable for working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, they will be removed immediately from their current position. They will not be considered for positions involving work with other similar groups.