

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Effective as of
FEBRUARY 2007

PARKWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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SUGAR LAND, TX 77479
281-494-5050

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Safe Sanctuary Guidelines

Statement of Purpose:

Parkway UMC is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for children and youth who participate in any Parkway UMC Ministry. Also, Parkway UMC is committed to taking the necessary precautions to protect any person working in a Parkway UMC Ministry from false accusations or suspicions.

Members of Parkway United Methodist Church recognize the need to have a formal, written policy and procedures to help (i) prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or appearance of abuse of children and youth and (ii) protect Workers from false accusations and/or suspicions. The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in Workers but instead are intended to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body.

Definitions: the following terms shall be utilized within this document:

Incident of Abuse & Neglect	as defined by the Texas Family Code – Child Abuse & Neglect
Protected Person(s)	shall mean children and/or youth, under the age of 18, participating in any Ministry.
Worker(s)	shall mean a person in a “position of trust” with Protected Persons such as any clergy, staff, small group leader, Sunday school leader or teacher, employee, scout leader, program director, youth counselor, hall or bathroom monitor and any other person in a leadership position, who is at least eighteen (18) years old, has completed mandatory Safe Sanctuary training and has undergone the requisite background check, and involved in a Ministry. No worker under the age of 18, without the supervision of an adult age 18 or older, shall be placed in a position of supervision over protected persons. Adult supervision shall be required for such workers who are under the age of 18.

1.0 BEHAVIOR

.01 The following behaviors are prohibited for Workers:

- Threatening or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury
- Committing any sexual offense or engaging in any sexual contact
- Making any kind of sexual advance or making a request for sexual favors
- Engaging in verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, e.g. back rubs, massages, kissing, or similar contact
- Physical discipline, such as spanking

.02 Touching to comfort or affirm a Protected Person in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Side-by-side hugs are suggested instead of full body contact. Appropriate touching need not be completely avoided, but is acceptable only in public. Workers shall be aware of how it looks and how the person being contacted may interpret the contact.

.03 The following are unacceptable and will not be tolerated at any ministry:

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Firearms or other weapons
- Foul or offensive language

.04 The said examples are not “all-inclusive”. Any inappropriate behavior that contravenes the Statement of Purpose shall be considered prohibited behavior.

2.0 GENERAL POLICY

2.1 Staffing

.01 A minimum of two (2) Workers shall be present in any room or “line of sight” where Protected Persons are participating.

Exceptions to the rule above include:

- Escorting Protected Persons between on-campus buildings or in hallways
- Monitoring the arrival or departure of Protected Persons
- In cases of emergency care
- In the event that two Workers are not available in an individual classroom, a Director may make the judgment call (on a case-by-case basis) of allowing a parent of one of the Protected Persons in said classroom to serve as the second Worker.

.02 If the required number of Workers cannot be obtained for the number of rooms or areas, then the group shall be combined with another group or the Ministry canceled (subject to the fourth bullet point in Section 4.1.01).

.03 While on campus, there shall always be a Director or their designee on duty while the Ministries are in session who shall make random checks.

.04 When family members work together (husband/wife/parent/child/siblings/etc.) an additional Worker shall be present. An exception will be allowed only in cases where both family members have actively served for the Church for at least one (1) year and then only after Children’s Ministry Leader Director approval.

.05 Youth Workers (those under the age of 18) shall be allowed to supervise Protected Persons (**with the presence of an adult** and subject to review by the Ministry-area supervisor on a case-by-case basis) as follows:

Senior High Youth (grades 9 – 12)	Ages 0 through 10 th grade
Junior High Youth (grades 7 – 8)	Ages 1 through 2 nd grade
Junior High Youth (grade 6)	Ages 2 through 2 nd grade

There may be no more than 2 youth workers (under age 18) per each one adult worker (over age 18). In all circumstances, there must be at least a two-year difference between the age of the Youth Worker and the Protected Persons with whom they work.

Also, **under no circumstances may a youth of any age change a child’s diaper** – only adults (18 years and older) may change a diaper when needed.

2.2 On Campus Policies

.01 Doors to rooms shall be kept open or, in the case of rooms with Dutch doors, the top half of the door shall be kept open. It is acceptable to close the door to a room if there is a window to

the hallway that allows observation of activities in the room. Under no circumstances shall a Worker be alone with a Protected Person behind a closed door with no window. Doors shall never be locked while occupied by Workers and Protected Persons, unless such doors are of the "Dutch Door" variety, and the top portion of said doors are left completely open.

.02 Classes shall remain in the assigned room location. If there is to be a change of location, a sign shall be posted on the door providing notice of any change of location.

.03 Workers shall wear their nametags while working on campus in a Ministry. The nametags will signify by a style of symbol that the Worker is approved under this policy.

2.0 ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR MINISTRIES OF CHILDREN BELOW GRADE SIX

.01 For ministries with Protected Persons grade five (5) and younger, a positive identity security system shall be used so that the person picking up the Protected Person can be positively matched.

.02 Diaper changing shall be done in the open and not behind closed doors, and only by an adult.

.04 For rooms that have attached bathrooms, a Worker may assist a Protected Person in the bathroom, while keeping the door open.

.05 Workers shall periodically check the bathrooms.

.06 The Worker may release a Protected Person to a designated Worker serving as a hall monitor in order to stay in the classroom.

3.0 ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR MINISTRIES OF YOUTH

.01 The two (2) Worker rule shall be followed, except as noted below:

- Planned one-on-one Worker/youth lunches: provided they are held in public places and shall only occur if (1) permission has been given by the parent, (2) the Director has been notified, and (3) separate transportation is used.
- Youth/Director conferences: provided (1) the conference is for a relatively brief time and is conducted with an open door, (2) the Director informs another Worker at the beginning and end of the meeting, and (3) the on-campus policies are followed.
- A Worker may "pick up" or "drop off" a youth at their home (or other agreed-upon location as permitted by the youth's parent) provided permission has been given by the parent.

5.0 ADDITIONAL POLICIES CONCERNING DRIVING, TRIPS AND OVERNIGHT STAYS

5.1 Driving Rules

.01 When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-adult rule applies. When multiple vehicles are used for an event, a single Worker may drive if all the vehicles travel together. All reasonable efforts must be made for all vehicles traveling together in this circumstance to stay within sight of one another.

.02 Occupants of vehicles shall wear seatbelts. Buses not equipped with seatbelts are exempt.

.03 Protected Persons, twelve (12) years and younger, shall not sit in the front seat of vehicles with air bags.

5.2 Overnight and Trip Rules

.01 The two-adult rule shall be followed throughout the trip. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirement of the planned activities. The ratio of adults to Protected Persons shall be approximately 1:6. Additionally, if the group of Protected Persons contains both males and females, there shall be at least one (1) female Worker and one (1) male Worker on the trip.

6.0 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS

6.1 Notification Requirements

.01 Workers shall immediately notify a Director of any incident of abuse or suspected abuse or violation of the above policies. However, in cases where the alleged wrongdoer is the person to whom notification should be given, he or she shall be considered absent for purposes of this reporting procedure, and the notification shall be made to that person's immediate supervisor.

.02 Subject to his or her obligation to report such an incident as set forth hereinafter, any person making and/or receiving such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.

6.2 Imminent Threat

.01 Where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any Worker with knowledge or information about such abuse shall immediately contact another adult and take steps to ensure the safety of the Protected Person. In connection herewith, any needed emergency healthcare shall be provided, such as (1) first aid, (2) emergency services, and/or (3) transport to a hospital emergency room. The alleged victim shall be immediately removed from contact with the suspected abuser. The Protected Person is paramount before any reporting.

.02 Where the abuse of a Protected Person is alleged to have occurred at home, and the Protected Person's safety at home is in doubt, the Worker reporting the alleged abuse shall call 911 to notify the appropriate law enforcement officials.

6.3 Reporting Procedure

.01 In cases where any Worker has cause to believe that a Protected Person may have been abused or neglected, the Worker is required by state law to make a report to the State of Texas Child Protective Service "CPS". Pertinent portions of the law relating to timing and substantive requirements of such reports to CPS are set forth on Appendix A attached hereto. Since such law may be changed from time to time, the reporting person shall follow the law covering such reporting procedures which is in effect at the time the report is made.

.02 Contact the proper civil authorities following the guidance of the church's insurance company and attorney.

.03 Allegations shall be taken seriously and no pre-judgments shall be made.

.04 Situations shall be handled confidentially with due respect for the privacy of the alleged victim and others involved in the incident.

.05 The person making a report shall provide the facts known with respect to the incident.

.06 The Director, together with the person making the notification shall complete an Accident/Incident Report form.

Age-Appropriate Discipline Methods – Children

Parkway United Methodist Church

Our goal is to ensure that every child who participates in a Ministry is offered a safe environment where God is the center of all that we do and say.

To do this, we need the children to follow these basic rules:

1. Treat everyone with kindness and respect.
2. Follow directions given by the teacher or leader of a ministry.
3. Stay in the classroom at all times unless escorted by a teacher or leader.
4. Remember, there is no fighting, name calling or rude behavior.
5. Use all equipment properly. Treat property with respect and clean-up after yourself (remember this is God's House)

As parents and teachers we realize that children are filled with energy. However, should a child's behavior become disruptive to the class or any ministry, the following actions shall be taken.

Pre-school:

(* The leader shall begin all interactions positively, showing the child grace and giving them every opportunity to succeed during their time together.)

1. The teacher/leader shall redirect the child's focus to an activity.
2. A verbal warning and separation from the source of disruption, i.e. separate children, put toy away, etc.
3. Time-out in the classroom. Use this time to explain to the child why it is important to exercise proper behavior.
4. Discuss issue with Children's Ministry Leader, or Designee. A leader is not to discuss a child's behavior issue with a parent without first consulting the Children's Ministry Leader.
5. The leader, along with the Children's Ministry Leader, will make every effort to work with the parent/guardian to find appropriate and helpful ways to insure the child is enjoying and participating in Ministry activities.

Elementary:

(* The leader shall begin all interactions positively, showing the child grace and giving them every opportunity to succeed during their time together.)

1. The teacher/leader shall redirect the child's focus to an activity. Ex: ask the child to help
2. A verbal warning and separation from the source of disruption. Ex: separate children, put toy away, etc.
3. Time-out in the classroom. Use this time to explain to the child why it is important to exercise proper behavior.
4. Discuss issue with Children's Ministry Leader, or Designee. A leader is not to discuss a child's behavior issue with a parent without first consulting the Children's Ministry Leader.
5. The leader, along with the Children's Ministry Leader, will make every effort to work with the parent/guardian to find appropriate and helpful ways to insure the child is enjoying and participating in Ministry activities.

POLICY OF PARKWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Employee/Volunteer Agreement to Policy

This is to confirm that I have received and read a copy of the **Safe Sanctuary** guidelines of Parkway United Methodist Church of Sugar Land, Texas.

Worker Name: (please print)

Worker Signature:

Date: _____

Incident Report

Date: _____

Name of injured child: _____

Incident:

Actions that were taken:

Disposition of child:

Caretakers of child who witnessed incident and took care of child:

Staff that was notified:

PARENT Signature: _____

**If there are any questions concerning the mentioned incident,
please contact Shannon Voelkel 281-494-5050 x12**