

Safety Policy

Children-Youth-Adult First United Methodist Church, New Braunfels, TX

Purpose

This policy is to reduce the risk of abuse to all persons at First United Methodist Church (FUMC) and to keep them otherwise safe. The policy has the additional purpose of protecting those who work with children and youth.

Nature of the Policy

This policy is to be applied uniformly. The goal of the policy is to set a minimum standard for conduct. The Rio Texas Conference Center of the United Methodist Church shall be the agency to acquire an individual's background check, once paperwork is turned in by the local church. Necessary forms and documents to implement this policy shall be uniform and obtained from the Rio Texas United Methodist Conference Center. All current staff, full or part-time, and volunteers who work with children and youth, must have a background check.

Definitions

- A. Leader – Person designated by a recognized church board / commission / committee / group / or FUMC Staff who directs a program involving minors.
- B. Approved Volunteers – Those persons with direct contact and supervision of minors. Approved Volunteers are responsible to see that volunteers behave in an appropriate and responsible manner.
- C. Volunteers – Those persons, such as parents, who will not have sustained contact with, or supervision of, minors. May function as drivers, visitors, kitchen help, etc.

Application of the Policy

This policy will be implemented January 1, 2016 and shall apply to all FUMC events. Leaders shall make every effort to meet and/or exceed the safety standards prescribed herein.

Selection and Screening

All persons 18 years or older wishing to work with minors, whether staff or volunteer, shall fill out an application that contains the following information:

- A. Permission for the Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church to obtain information including but not limited to Criminal History, Credit History, Driving Record, Employment History, Military Background, Civil Listings, Educational Background, Professional License from any Individual, Corporation, Partnership, Law Enforcement Agency, and other entities including Present and Past Employers relating to criminal history record through any agency maintaining such records, including the Volunteer Center of North Texas d.b.a. veriFYI, as well as through Internet sources. The Criminal History record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and delinquent conduct committed as a juvenile.
- B. Full name, Signature, Driver's License Number / State, Date of Birth, Race, Gender, Social Security Number, Current Address and Phone Number.

FUMC Staff or Senior Pastor (in the case of a paid worker) may accept or deny an application based on any of the above requirements. After the screening process is complete, FUMC Staff can confer the status of a leader or volunteer. Until status is conferred, the volunteer must work with approved volunteers and/or FUMC Staff. Once status is conferred, the approved volunteer may begin working with minors.

Supervision of Minors

- A. It is the requirement of this policy that any event sponsored by FUMC will provide adequate adult supervision.
- B. Leaders of events for minors must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
- C. It is suggested that youth, assisting approved volunteers, should be at least 5 years older than the oldest child with whom they have been assigned to work. This is at the discretion of FUMC Staff.
- D. The ratio of approved volunteers and /or FUMC Staff to minors must be such as to assure the safety of the minors, bearing in mind the age level and type of activity.
- E. Children, infants through 5th Grade, shall be checked in and out of events using the Lamb's List Security System, or a sign-in form.

Additional Policies Regarding Trips and Special Events

- A. Adequate adult supervision shall apply for all trips, special events and outings. Co-ed overnight events require both male and female approved volunteers.
- B. All drivers of vehicles must be 21 years of age or older, have a valid Texas driver's license and proof of current liability insurance. Drivers may not operate a vehicle while using medication that may impair their ability to operate a vehicle, under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance, or under a physician's restriction to operate a vehicle.
- C. On trips, a specific location shall be designated where all people will meet and depart. Measures will be taken to ensure that stops are prearranged and that all people are accounted for before leaving. There shall be a daily destination point.
- D. Drivers of all vehicles should exchange cell phone numbers to use in the event of an emergency.
- E. The safety rule of four is to be followed. No fewer than four persons shall go on an overnight trip. If an accident occurs, one stays with the injured and two shall go for help.
- F. Unmarried male and female approved volunteers require separate sleeping facilities. Co-ed minors will not share the same sleeping facilities.
- G. For all events not held at FUMC, written permission of the parent or guardian must be obtained.
- H. The parent or guardian shall sign a release to seek medical treatment.

Reporting Child Abuse

Requirements of the State of Texas:

- A. The state of Texas deliberately defines child abuse in a vague manner. The code states a report should reflect the reporter's belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected.
- B. The state of Texas considers anyone who suspects abuse to be a mandatory reporter. Institutions which in the normal course of events have direct contact with children are considered in the category of professionals and are obligated to report any suspected abuse within 48 hours.
- C. The report must contain the name and address of the child and the name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody or welfare of the child, and any pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.
- D. The report is to be made to any state or local law enforcement agency or Child Protective service.
- E. Failure to report is a class B misdemeanor with a fine of up to two thousand dollars and / or 180 days in jail. Failure to report also exposes the individual and the church to risk of civil liability, as well as the Senior Pastor / Leader of the local church.
- F. Those who report suspected abuse are immune from civil or criminal liability as long as that person did not knowingly or intentionally make a false report.
- G. Those who file a report are entitled to confidentiality except that their identity may be released to law enforcement officials who are investigating the allegations.