

**GUIDELINES FOR THE PROTECTION OF
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS
ST. ANDREW BY-THE-SEA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BLUFFTON & HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC
(Revised November 2017)**

Purpose

St. Andrew By-The-Sea United Methodist Church is concerned about protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Furthermore, we strongly feel that we live into these guidelines through our baptismal covenant. Our first concern is that we do all we can to ensure the welfare of minors and vulnerable adults whom we seek to nurture in the Christian faith.

Therefore, we have established the following guidelines to help protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse in the church and to protect the volunteers from false allegations of abuse. Throughout these guidelines, we refer to children as those under the age of 12 and youth as those between the ages of 13 and 18.

Three Areas of Policy Considerations

- I. Screening**
- II. Church Guidelines**
- III. Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

I. Screening

A. Considerations

All volunteers that have significant contact with minors must undergo a criminal background check and complete a background check form. All paid employees are required to complete an employment application and submit to a background check.

Any volunteer having significant contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall be required to consent to a background check:

- Volunteer youth volunteers/mentors/teachers
- Children's Ministry Volunteers
- Upward sports adult volunteers
- Summer camp adult volunteers
- Volunteers working with vulnerable adults
- All adults attending any overnight event involving children or youth

NOTE: Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

B. Six Month Minimum

Volunteers permitted to be present with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall be active at St. Andrew By-The-Sea for at least 6 months. At the discretion of the responsible staff person, limited exceptions to this 6-month minimum requirement will be permitted. When the 6-month minimum requirement is waived, an experienced volunteer or staff person who is in compliance with all church Safe

Sanctuary criteria will be present with new volunteer while children or youth are present. A Volunteer Application Form must be completed in full (in addition to a background check).

C. Care of Documents

All information will be treated in a confidential manner. All completed forms and/or background checks will be reviewed by the Director of Family and Christian Education or other designated staff person. Except in the case of a response to suspicious information, only the Director of Family and Christian Education or other designated staff person shall have access to the information on these documents. These documents shall be kept in a secure location. If questionable information is disclosed, the Senior Pastor and Chairperson of SPPRC will be consulted.

II. Church Guidelines

A. Two-Adult Rule

Every attempt will be made to have two adults present in each room, including separate buildings, when children/youth or vulnerable adults are present. However, when this is not possible, the door to the room shall remain partially open or shall have a window insert in the door, thus allowing for a roving monitor to intermittently check on the group in a non-intrusive manner. However, a volunteer is not permitted to be alone with a youth or child in a separate building.

B. Minimum Age Requirement

For an adult to be permitted to work with youth, she/he shall be five years older than youth in that ministry group. Youth are permitted to work with children so long as an adult volunteer or staff person who is in compliance with all church Safe Sanctuary criteria will be with the youth volunteer.

C. Windows in Doors

When practical, rooms where children/youth or vulnerable adults meet shall have window inserts in the doors. Where the doors are solid wood, they shall remain partially open unless two non-related and/or non-cohabitating adults are present in the room.

D. Parental Permission/Waiver Forms

Youth attending a church-sponsored overnight activity (on-site or at another location) and children being taken from the church premises for a church-sponsored activity must have a completed parental permission/waiver form in order to participate in the activity.

E. Social Media

Text messages sent from the adult(s) in a leadership capacity should only be sent in a group/mass text manner. Should an adult in leadership receive a private text from a child, youth, or vulnerable adult that seems to be questionable, he/she should immediately end the conversation in the virtual realm and offer opportunities to have the conversation in person and in compliance with this policy (i.e. with another person present, in an office with windows, etc.) Adults in leadership should communicate with parents before (or instead of) texting/calling children or youth. In order for adults in leadership to post photos on social network sites, prior written permission must be granted by a

parent/guardian. When posted, PHOTOS MUST NOT BE TAGGED with names or location indicators.

III. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

- A. Any questionable or inappropriate behavior affecting children, youth or vulnerable adults shall be reported as soon as possible to the Senior Pastor and/or the Chairperson of the SPPRC whose responsibility it will be to report the allegations, if deemed necessary, to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- B. All allegations will be taken seriously and investigated fully.
- C. All action taken to respond to the incident in question will be documented.
- D. After advising the Senior Pastor and/or the Chairperson of SPPRC, the parents of the alleged victim will be notified.
- E. Confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded unless the incident is reported to a law enforcement agency.

