

# **WILKESBORO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PROTECTION POLICY FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH**

**The Conference, our District Superintendent, our insurance carrier, and concerned parishioners all recommend that we make child safety a priority at Wilkesboro United Methodist Church. Adults who work with our children and youth have worked together in the following proposed policy. Our Education Committee, Pastor Parish Committee, and Administrative Board are to approve the proposal.**

**They are intended to protect both our young ones and our adults who work in our church. Being accountable for the safety of both groups is an important way of showing our love.**

## **A. SELECTION**

**An adult/volunteer working with children/youth will be required to regularly attend the church for at least six months prior to supervising children/youth. Personnel and volunteers who will be working with children/youth, current and henceforth, are subject to a background check through the Sheriff's Dept. Previous employment and references will be checked for those in supervisory and paid capacities. For those employed with Creation Express and GLO (weekday ministries) background information will be on file with WUMC and accessed only by chair of PPR and designated individual from the advisory board for these programs. Reports for those involved with the children and youth programs of the church shall be filed with the NW District Office and treated as confidential material. Safe Sanctuaries Committee for the NW District shall be responsible for coordinating these background checks. Cost associated with this will be the responsibility of the local church and these should be reviewed every four years.**

## **B. TRAINING**

**There shall be a yearly training session for those involved with the children and youth on understanding the nature of abuse, how to recognize indicators of abuse, information relating to our state laws regarding abuse and reporting of incidents.**

**CPR AND FIRST AID TRAINING: At least one individual at every church function should be certified in these programs. All workers with our weekday programs are required to be certified on a regular basis.**

## **C. LIABILITY INSURANCE COVERAGE**

**Our insurance coverage regarding sexual abuse addresses coverage as a church employee but not as an individual volunteer.**

## **D. SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**If there is only one teacher in a Sunday School Class the door to the room will be left open or ajar, and the window blinds will be opened. The Sunday School Superintendent, Coordinator of Ministries, and the Pastor shall make random checks and visits in the classes for the safety of the children and adults. Parents are also welcome to visit in the classes. Two adults are to be in the room at all times and they should be unrelated. If this is impossible a video should be in place**

at all times. A rover will be appointed to move in the hallways. Pagers will also be used to contact parents in the sanctuary if there is a problem in the nursery during the Sunday services.

**VISIBILITY:** All rooms used for activities and teaching of children and youth are now equipped with a window allowing for visibility in the classrooms at all times. In addition, a rover is in place.

#### **E. OTHER CHILDREN/YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

There will be at least two adult workers supervising children/youth at all times. Additional adult workers will be sought out and added for every three children over 10. If parents want to assist they may certainly do so, but the adult workers are ultimately responsible for the children/youth. The two adult workers will be from two separate families and a couple dating or engaged will be considered as one person of the two required. Rules for working with youth have been drawn with the input of parents. These are reviewed on a timely basis.

1. If counseling is requested by a child/youth, the parent, another staff person or the Pastor-Parish Chairperson will be informed of such request 72 hours prior to the counseling if possible. If it is not possible to notify anyone about the counseling session prior to; then it is the responsibility of the leader (21 years of age or older) to inform another leader, Pastor-Parish Chairperson, or parent within 72 hours after the counseling session. The child/youth shall determine who will be contacted. The counseling will occur in close proximity to others or with the parent present in the room if appropriate for the situation and with the door open or ajar. Location for counseling should not take place at the leaders home but if this should occur notice needs to be immediately given to the above listed people. Confidentiality shall be maintained at all times. Reporting violations of conduct is required only in cases of safety.
2. For youth activities, it is preferable that the workers be one male and one female. In the case of an extended overnight trip, it is required that there be at least one male and one female adult worker (unrelated). For any group exceeding 10 there will be other workers for every 3 children/youth above 10. Prior to each trip families will be notified of the chaperons accompanying the group outing.
3. Recommendations for sleeping arrangements on youth trips:
  - a. Adult and youth, no nudity at any time for any reason. Changing clothes should be done in the bathroom with the door closed.
  - b. When youth are staying in motels, rooms should be assigned so that only middle school youth occupy a room together and only high school youth occupy a room together. Males will not occupy rooms with females. A minimum of one adult leader will be assigned to each room occupied by youth. The adult leader will not share a bed with a youth. A minimum of two youth should be assigned to a room. Parents will be informed of the assignment and will give written consent.
  - c. An adult should not be alone in a motel room with one youth.

- d. Male and female youth may visit together in the same motel room if an adult is present.
  - e. Maintain confidentiality of issues pertaining to all youth.
4. It is required that all children/youth be driven on church outings and functions by an adult with a valid driver's license. Youth with a valid driver's license may drive themselves and any passengers that have been pre-arranged by a parent of each youth. In the use of any size van, one additional adult will accompany the driver.
- a. Church-provided first aid kits will accompany each vehicle. These will be stored in the church office.
  - b. Children/youth should ride in the same vehicle for the duration of the entire trip. The adult leader will be responsible for the children/youth who ride in his/her vehicle. Vehicles should not move until all children/youth are accounted for. An adult leader may give permission for a child/youth to change vehicles and must confirm this with the adult leader of the other vehicle.
  - c. All children/youth must have signed permission slips to go on each trip/outing. A copy will be distributed to the adult leader responsible for the children/youth. Permission slips will contain detailed medical information, insurance carriers, emergency phone numbers, special considers, etc., including a medical release to authorize treatment.
  - d. If a signed permission form is not presented prior to an outing the adult leader may contact the parent by phone and obtain the information mentioned in 4c (page 4). It should be noted that this information was obtained by phone. This phone conversation should also be witnessed by another adult.
  - e. Each person in a vehicle must wear a seat belt. There will be no "over-stuffing" of vehicles.
  - f. It is recommended that prior attendance requirement of 50% of regular meetings be met for special trips, such as a youth retreat. Guests of children/youth will be informed of rules & regulations of the group.
  - g. Children/youth will be assigned to a adult leader for the duration of the trip. The adult leader will know where the child/youth is at all times. Should a child/youth wish to do an activity with another adult leader's group, the child/youth must get permission from his/her assigned adult leader who should confirm this change with the other group's adult leader. When a variety of activities are available, children/youth may choose the activity they prefer and should be in groups of 3 or more accompanied by an adult leader.

## **F. MISCONDUCT**

**Wilkesboro United Methodist Church, Inc. will not tolerate sexual harassment and/or sexual misconduct from hired employees, volunteers or church members. "As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29, states all are one in Christ, thus we support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender. Mutual respect, consideration, and courtesy are cornerstones of the Christian gospel, traditional at WUMC. Our church intends to maintain a safe and secure**

**environment for members, guests, employees and volunteers of all ages which is free from sexual harassment, intimidation, or misconduct at all times. The church recognizes that sexual harassment and sexual misconduct undermine morale and interfere with the purpose for which people are present and thus it cannot be tolerated”**

**J. REPORTING OF INCIDENTS**

**When an employee or volunteer of a Wilkesboro United Methodist Church, Inc. sponsored event suspects that abuse is taking or has taken place, he or she may report the abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Further, he or she shall report suspicious behavior to the Chairperson of the Pastor Parish Committee and/or to the Pastor. The Chairperson and/or the Pastor shall then seek guidance from the North Wilkesboro District Superintendent. The victim’s parents are to be notified immediately. Victim as well as suspected abuser is to be protected. No one should speak to news media other than our pastor or persons appointed by him.**

**K. AWARENESS**

**This “Protection Policy for Children/Youth” will be made available to all concerned, including Sunday School teachers, nursery and children/youth workers, and parents. It will be posted in discrete locations in the church.**

**Again, it is stressed that such a policy is an ongoing process intended for the safety of both our children/youth and the adults who work with them. It is our job to be accountable in loving these persons by protecting them as best we can.**