

MINISTRYSAFE POLICY
ST. ANDREW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Updated October 24, 2016

Introduction to MinistrySafe Policy

OUR CALLING AND OUR MANDATE IS TO ENSURE A SAFE HAVEN FOR ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE. Throughout the gospels, Jesus provides teachings on providing a peaceable kingdom for all of God's people, including our most precious gifts, our children and youth (Matthew 5:9, Luke 18:15-17). The peaceable kingdom begins with sanctuary. Scriptures provide examples of how sanctuary is to be a community of protective nurture and harmony (Psalms 20:1-2, 27:4-5).

As Christians, we are called to create a protective environment in our churches. They must be holy, safe and protective communities for all of God's children, regardless of age or ability. The purpose of this policy is to address the communal responsibility of our children, youth, and vulnerable persons at all St. Andrew sponsored events. St. Andrew recognizes the need to have a formal, written policy with procedures in place to:

1. Help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or the appearance of abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable persons.
2. Help provide safeguards for workers from false accusations and/or suspicions.
3. Hold accountable all those who minister in the name of Jesus Christ.

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, vulnerable persons, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in the case of an incident.

Scope of MinistrySafe Policy

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons including all paid and unpaid persons, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with children, youth and vulnerable persons who participate in any activities or events sponsored by St. Andrew United Methodist Church.

The MinistrySafe policy of St. Andrew UMC expands the North Texas Conference policy, but may not alter the minimum standards established by the Conference. To address the changing needs of effective ministry, the Trustees of St. Andrew United Methodist Church are given the authority to make revisions to this policy without bringing it to a Charge/Church Conference for approval.

Supervision

An adult is defined as anyone 18 years of age or older.

To achieve compliance with the MinistrySafe policy it may be necessary to combine groups; recruit, train, and reference additional volunteers; or cancel an event. Observation of activities in rooms is essential, whether it is done by windows, open doors, glass doors, electronic technology, etc.

For all persons seeking to work with children and/or youth, they shall have at least 6 months membership in a local church or provide a written recommendation from the senior pastor and/or designee at the church most previously attended.

For the sake of outreach, evangelism, and family involvement in our ministries, parents, grandparents, and legal guardians who have not met these criteria may volunteer as guest, so long as 2 or more properly MinistrySafe trained staff or volunteers are on site and in charge. Any such individuals who intend to be a guest on an ongoing basis shall be subject to all MinistrySafe guidelines and screening.

Supervision for Nursery/Childcare of St. Andrew:

- There shall be a minimum of two (2) adults per room or within line of sight.
- The State of Texas Childcare Minimum Standards must be followed, particularly in relation to the number of adults to child ratio.
- Bathroom activities for nursery to Kindergarten-aged children who may need assistance will require 2 qualified adult leaders either present or within line of sight or verbal communication with the child.

Supervision of children, youth and vulnerable persons:

- All St. Andrew events shall observe the —2 Adult Rule“(2 adults per classroom and/or within line of sight.)
- Any one-to-one mentoring or consulting shall be conducted in sight of other persons.
- Understanding that there is safety in numbers, one adult can be in contact with multiple children, youth or vulnerable persons (so long as they are in line of sight of other adults.)

Overnight Accommodations

At events that require overnight accommodations:

- No adult should ever be alone behind closed doors with a child or youth unless the adult is the parent or legal guardian of that child or youth.
- Further, when possible in hotel rooms when adults are not present, children and youth should be accommodated in groups of three or more and should be with others of like age.

Facility Use for Outside Groups

The requirements imposed on outside groups are found in the Building Use Policy of the church. This policy is reviewed and approved by the Trustees of St. Andrew.

Definitions of Abuse

- **Verbal Abuse** - Any verbal act that humiliates degrades or threatens any child, youth or vulnerable person.
- **Physical Abuse** - Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. In the case of child, youth or vulnerable person physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Child, youth or vulnerable person sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4) romantic involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in sponsored activities of this church, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content.
Examples are not limited to: displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse.
- **Emotional Abuse** - Exposing a vulnerable person, youth or younger child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the vulnerable person, youth or child that she or he is worthless, bad, unloved, and undeserving of love and care. Emotional abuse may include being locked in closets or other confining spaces, being incessantly told they are bad, or being forced to abuse alcohol or illegal drugs.
- **Neglect** - Endangering a child, teen or vulnerable person's health, welfare, and/or safety through negligence. It may include withholding food, medical care, affection to destroy the child, teen or vulnerable person's sense of self-esteem and self-worth.
- **Ritual Abuse** - Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violence is inflicted on a child, youth or vulnerable person, intentionally and in a stylized way, by someone (or multiple people) with responsibility for the victim's welfare. Typically the perpetrator appeals to some higher authority or power to justify his or her abuse. Examples of ritual abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repetitious threats of sexual or physical violence to the child, youth or vulnerable person or to people related to the victim.

Application Process and Training

6 month rule - Volunteers with children and youth must be members or consistent visitors with an interest in membership for at least 6 months prior to active contact with

children or youth; or provide a written recommendation from the senior pastor or designee. Interested persons are encouraged to serve in a supportive role prior to their 6 month anniversary.

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children, youth and vulnerable persons. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment. All screening shall be done in accordance with guidelines to be established by the North Texas Conference MinistrySafe Awareness and Training Task Force.

Screening Process

Volunteers and staff members are to perform and document the screening following process:

- Complete a Volunteer Application Form
- Complete a face-to-face interview
- Complete a reference check
- Complete a background check
- Complete the MinistrySafe online training Compliance Renewal requires MinistrySafe online training every two years and background checks every two to three years, unless licensure or legislative requirements are more frequent and/or stringent.

Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children and youth:

- Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful
- Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.
- Persons having a Criminal History of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
- Persons having a Criminal History of a drug related conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to participate in the event.

Children's Weekday Program

- Paid Staff do not have to complete the training component of MinistrySafe as they complete training for State licensing requirements that is equivalent to this training.
- Volunteers must meet and complete the requirements as set forth in this policy.

Reporting of Incidents

1. When an adult leader of an event or activity suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the Texas Penal Code is taking or has taken place, he or she shall call 911 when needed and report the abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency and/or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (800-252-5400). The adult

leader shall contact the administrator or event leader immediately, and cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

2. Address any needs the child, youth or vulnerable person may have, medical or otherwise. Report to the parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s).
3. The person suspected of abuse (respondent) shall, for the safety and well-being of the children, youth, or vulnerable persons be removed with dignity from further contact with the children, youth and vulnerable persons until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential. If the adult event leader is the respondent, then the report should be made to that person's supervisor.
4. Following the report of an incident, the adult event leader, or supervisor in charge shall document the report, and then speak with the alleged victim, being careful to use open-ended questions.
5. All such conversations shall be documented. Careful and confidential documentation is essential. The documentation should include the following:
 - a. The name of the adult leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time and place and any action taken by this person.
 - b. The alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth.
 - c. Any statement made by the alleged victim.
 - d. Name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent.
 - e. Any action taken, i.e. suspension of the respondent.
 - f. Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of worker spoken to, content of that conversation and case number assigned.
 - g. Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation.
 - h. Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.
6. Notify the Senior and/or Executive Pastors.
7. Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.
8. It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current Book of Discipline, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.
9. Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential file for future screening purposes.

Media Response

The Senior Pastor and/or Executive Pastor shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall only come from the Office of the Senior/Executive Pastor.