



# WELLSPRING

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## United Methodist Church

*"To Care ....  
as Jesus Cares"*



## Child Protection Policy

June 2011

## Purpose and Biblical Foundation

As part of the baptismal covenant, Wellspring United Methodist Church accepts the responsibility to nurture the children in their Christian life. To fulfill this promise, we are committed to provide a safe environment for the children and youth of the church community. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and youth.

The purpose of this document is to educate those working with children about the church's requirements and procedures of staff and volunteers when dealing with children and youth. Also, it serves as a tool to provide information on child abuse, and to advise them of the procedure to be followed if abuse is disclosed to them. The guidance provided by this policy will help assure children and youth participating in programs and activities at Wellspring United Methodist Church are treated in ways that encourage their healthy growth and development.

The rules and regulations in this policy apply to church staff and volunteers of Wellspring United Methodist Church programs.

*And they were bringing children to Him, that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for such belongs to the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.*

Mark 10:13-16, New Revised Version

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## **Section 100 – Screening Procedures**

### **100.1 Definitions**

- Child Protection Policy – List of standards to lower the risk of injury, abuse or illness to children and youth.
- Background Screening – Background checks are conducted on all paid staff hired to work directly with children and all volunteers who take a leadership role directly with children. Checks will be conducted through Screen Now© (criminal and sex offender registry) and the Virginia State Police Sex Offender and Crimes against Minors registry.
- Child Protection Policy Agreement – Form on which applicants sign their agreement that they have read the Child Protection Policy, have not been charged or convicted of any child abuse or maltreatment crime, had such a charge removed from their record, and that they give WUMC permission to conduct background screening checks.

### **100.2 Screening Process**

Staff or volunteers wishing to provide direct leadership role with children are required to complete a Child Protection Policy Agreement. Once it is submitted, the Director of Christian Education will initiate the background screening check process and determine applicant's involvement with children. WUMC reserves the right to request additional background reports at the church's expense with the applicant's permission. If there are any concerns relating to the applicant's involvement with children, the report will be reviewed by the Safe Sanctuary Committee (without identification).

### **100.3 Frequency**

Completing the Child Protection Policy Agreement, reading the Child Protection Policy, and completing Background Screenings will be required every three years.

### **100.4 Payment**

Background screening costs will be borne by the applicant to offset the cost to WUMC. If applicant is unable to cover the costs, WUMC will provide the payment.

### **100.5 Confidentiality/Preservation of Records**

WUMC is committed to strict confidentiality. All Background Screening reports will only be reviewed by the Director of Christian Education or the Pastor and will be securely filed for seven years. Reports will remain property of WUMC and no copies will be available to the applicant.

### **100.6 Recommendations**

Involvement with children will be determined by the results of the Background Screening report. WUMC reserves the right to prohibit participation in any activities involving children at any time.

## **Section 200 – Staff and Volunteers**

### **200.1 – Definitions**

- Paid staff – full-time or part-time employee of the church
- Screened volunteer – non-paid leader who has successfully passed screening process

- Non-screened volunteer – non-paid leader who has not been screened. This person may only work with children in the presence and under the leadership of a screened volunteer or staff.

## **200.2 – Eligibility**

- Age requirements
  - Screened volunteers must be at least 18 years of age or older. Screened volunteers working with youth in grades 6-12 must be at least 23 or older.
  - Non-screened volunteers and minors may assist in programs by working under the direct supervision of a screened adult volunteer.
- Background Screening process (See Section 100.)

## **200.3 – Ratios** (See individual sections for adult:child ratios)

### **Section 300 – Sunday school / Vacation Bible school**

#### **300.1 – Paid Staff and Volunteers**

- Staff and screened volunteers must be over 18 to be considered part of the adult:child ratio.
- Minors may assist in Sunday school only if they are at least five years older than the oldest child in the class and under the direct, constant supervision of a screened adult.
- Staff and screened volunteers must read and follow the Child Protection Policy and complete and successfully pass the screening procedures. (See Section 100.)

#### **300.2 – Participants**

- Sunday school programs are for children in Pre-K through grade 8, or as scheduled by the Director of Christian Education.
- Classes are generally separated into grade groups (PreK-K; Grade 1-2; Grade 3-5; Grade 6-8)

#### **300.3 – Adult to Children Ratios**

- PreK – K (ages 3-5) 1:8
- Grades 1-2 1:10
- Grades 3-5 1:10
- Grades 6-8 1:15
- Grades 9-12 1:15

#### **300.4 Rule of Three**

No one-on-one interactions should occur in private between children, youth and adults. There must be at least three people present in a private setting when involving children and youth with adults. If personal discussions are needed, the discussions should be conducted in an area that is in view of other adults and youth.

#### **300.5 – Restroom Policy**

Children in Sunday school are encouraged to use the restroom on their own without assistance of an adult. The attending staff or volunteer assistant may assist them in the hallway with buttons and zippers but no more. Children must be able to pull down/up their own pants/dresses, use the restroom by themselves and clean themselves. If assistance is

required inside the restroom, the attending staff or volunteer assistant may enter the restroom, but only if the door is propped open at all times.

### **300.6 – Transfer/Pickup**

- Children are escorted to their classroom by the attending staff or volunteer assistant.
- Parents/Guardians must pick up the children at their child's classroom immediately after the end of the Sunday Worship service.
- Prior approval before class must be made by the staff or volunteer assistant in order for an older sibling to pick up their younger siblings.

### **300.7 – Illness / Medical**

- For the protection of each child in the ministry, we cannot allow a child to participate with symptoms of illness. This includes any child with a fresh cold (3 days or fewer), fever, rash, persistent cough, head lice, nasal discharge, diarrhea, open sores, or any other signs of illness.
- If a child is diagnosed with an illness during the week after attending the church program, the parents are responsible for notifying the church so we can prepare the facilities for the next activity and, if needed, contact the parents of other children who may have come in contact with the ill one.
- Parents are responsible for informing the church of any medical concerns that may require staff and volunteers to take special action (epilepsy, diabetes, food allergies.)
- Parents are asked to inform the staff or volunteers of special medications and medical devices (epipen) their child needs. Staff and volunteers are not trained or expected to administer medications. If a medical emergency occurs, the staff/volunteer will immediately call 911 and attempt to contact the parent.

### **300.8– Behavior**

- A high standard of classroom behavior and overall respect is an expectation. Children are expected to follow the classroom rules.
- Staff and volunteer assistants are provided with techniques to help redirect poor behavior. After all behavior modification techniques have been tried unsuccessfully, the child will be escorted to his/her parents.
- Bullying behavior will not be tolerated. Bullying is repeated harassment by an individual or group. It includes physical and verbal attacks, intimidation, extortion or theft and exclusion from peers. Harassment focuses on race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.
- Parents should inform the church of any behavioral concerns that may disrupt the flow of the program or that may require staff and volunteers to take special action, along with positive steps to diminish any negative behavior.

### **300.9– Inclusion**

- Inclusion assumes that every person is entitled to respect, dignity, equal rights under the law, and opportunities for fulfilling life within the church.
- Through assessment of the needs of each child, Wellspring will work through collaboration with parents and volunteers to make every attempt to meet those individual needs.

## **Section 400 – Nursery/Child Care**

### **400.1 – Paid Staff and Volunteers**

- Staff and screened volunteers must be over 18 to be considered part of the adult:child ratio.
- Minors and non-screened volunteers may assist in the nursery only if they are over the age of 10, or with child care only if they are over 15, and under the direct, constant supervision of a screened adult or staff.
- Staff and screened volunteers must read and follow the Child Protection Policy and complete and successfully pass the screening procedures. (See Section 100.)

### **400.2 – Participants**

- Nursery services are for children ages 0–36 months.
- Child care services for special events are for children ages 4 (must be potty trained) through age 10 (or Grade 5).

### **400.3 – Adult to Children Ratios**

- Nursery 1:5
- PreK – K (ages 3-5) 1:8
- Grades 1-2 1:10
- Grades 3-5 1:10

### **400.4 – Restroom Policy**

- Children in nursery will be assisted in the restroom by the attending worker.
- Children in child care must be able to use the restroom on their own with supervision by the attending worker who stays outside the main restroom door. The attending worker may assist them in the hallway with buttons and zippers, but no more. Children must be able to pull down/up their own pants/dresses, use the restroom by themselves and clean themselves. If assistance is required inside the restroom, the attending staff or volunteer assistant may enter the restroom, but only if the door is propped open at all times.

### **400.5 – Drop-off / Pickup**

- Parent/Guardian must check child in at nursery door (or established area for special events)
- For children attending for the first time, each parent/guardian will be asked to fill out an information card.
- Only approved parents/guardians will be allowed to check out their child(ren). Friends, siblings, or other persons may not check out a child without prior consent from the parent/guardian .

### **400.6 – Illness / Medical**

- For the protection of each child in the ministry, children are not to participate with symptoms of illness. This includes a fresh cold (3 days or fewer), fever, rash, persistent cough, head lice, nasal discharge, diarrhea, open sores, or any other signs of illness.
- If a child is diagnosed with an illness during the week after attending the church program, the parents are responsible for notifying the church so we can prepare the facilities for the next activity and, if needed, contact the parents of other children who may have come in contact with the ill one.
- Parents are responsible for informing the church of any medical concerns that may require staff and volunteers to take special action (epilepsy, diabetes, food allergies.)

- Parents are asked to inform the staff or volunteers of special medications and medical devices (epipen) their child needs. Staff and volunteers are not trained or expected to administer medications. If a medical emergency occurs, the staff/volunteer will immediately call 911 and attempt to contact the parent.

#### **400.7 – Behavior**

- Nursery-aged children are encouraged to share and respect their friends. Any disputes will quickly be broken up and both children redirected in their play.
- Child care-aged children are expected to follow the classroom rules.
- Parents should inform the church of any behavioral concerns that may disrupt the flow of the program or that may require staff and volunteers to take special action, along with positive steps to diminish any negative behavior.
- Biting – If a child bites another child, an incident/accident form will be completed, signed by the parents of the child who was bitten, and it will be kept on file in the nursery. The parents of the alleged biter will receive a different form to let them know their child allegedly bit another child. The form will be signed and kept in the nursery. All names will be kept confidential.
- Bullying behavior will not be tolerated. Bullying is repeated harassment by an individual or group. It includes physical and verbal attacks, intimidation, extortion or theft and exclusion from peers. Harassment focuses on race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

#### **400.8– Inclusion**

- Inclusion assumes that every person is entitled to respect, dignity, equal rights under the law, and opportunities for fulfilling life within the church.
- Through assessment of the needs of each child, Wellspring will work through collaboration with parents and volunteers to make every attempt to meet those individual needs.

### **Section 500 – UMYF / Youth Activity**

#### **500.1 – Paid Staff and Volunteers**

- Paid staff and screened volunteers must be over 23 to be considered part of the adult:child ratio.
- Adults ages 18-23 and other non-screened adults may assist with youth activities only under the direct and constant supervision of a screened adult.
- Staff and screened youth volunteers must read and follow the Child Protection Policy and complete and successfully pass the screening procedures. (See Section 100.)

#### **500.2 – Participants**

- UMYF is open to youth currently in grades 6-12. Youth are not eligible to participate once they graduate from high school or turn 18.
- Young adults who are older than 18 or have graduated from high school who wish to attend a UMYF meeting must obtain permission from the Director of Christian Education prior to the start of the program.

#### **500.3 – Adult to Youth Ratios**

- Grades 6-12 1:15

#### **500.4 Rule of Three**

No one-on-one interactions should occur in private between children, youth and adults.

There must be at least three people present in a private setting when involving children and youth with adults. If personal discussions are needed, the discussions should be conducted in an area that is in view of other adults and youth.

#### **500.5 – Restroom Policy**

- Youth must be able to use the restroom without supervision.
- Paid staff or volunteer assistant must follow the Rule of Three in closed-door situations.

#### **500.6 – Drop-off and Pickup**

- Parent/Guardian must ensure that the staff or volunteer assistant in charge is present before dropping off their youth.
- Parents/Guardians must communicate with the Director of Christian Education when someone other than the parent/guardian or another youth's parent is picking up their youth.
- It is expected that parents/guardians pick up their youth promptly at the end of the program. Staff or volunteer assistants must remain with the youth until they are picked up.

#### **500.7 – Illness / Medical**

- For the protection of each youth in the ministry, youth must not participate with symptoms of illness. This includes a fresh cold (3 days or fewer), fever, rash, persistent cough, head lice, nasal discharge, diarrhea, open sores, or any other signs of illness.
- If a youth is diagnosed with an illness during the week after attending the church program, the parents are responsible for notifying the church so we can prepare the facilities for the next activity and, if needed, contact the parents of other youth who may have come in contact with the ill one.
- Parents are responsible for informing the church of any medical concerns that may require staff and volunteers to take special action (epilepsy, diabetes, food allergies.)
- Parents are asked to inform the staff or volunteers of special medications and medical devices (epipen) their youth needs. Staff and volunteers are not trained or expected to administer medications. If a medical emergency occurs, the staff/volunteer will immediately call 911 and attempt to contact the parent.

#### **500.8 – Behavior**

- A high standard of behavior and overall respect is an expectation. Youth are expected to follow the UMYF rules.
- Staff and volunteer assistants are provided with techniques to help redirect poor behavior. After all behavior modification techniques have been tried unsuccessfully, the child may have to be picked up by their parents and suspended from the program, as directed by the Director of Christian Education.
- Bullying behavior will not be tolerated. Bullying is repeated harassment by an individual or group. It includes physical and verbal attacks, intimidation, extortion or theft and exclusion from peers. Harassment focuses on race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.
- Parents should inform the church of any behavioral concerns that may disrupt the flow of the program or that may require staff and volunteers to take special action, along with positive steps to diminish any negative behavior.

## **500.9– Inclusion**

- Inclusion assumes that every person is entitled to respect, dignity, equal rights under the law, and opportunities for fulfilling life within the church.
- Through assessment of the needs of each child, Wellspring will work through collaboration with parents and volunteers to make every attempt to meet those individual needs.

## **Section 600 – Overnight Activities Away from Church**

### **600.1 Definitions**

Any Wellspring United Methodist Church-sanctioned program that takes place overnight off church property.

### **600.2 Paid Staff and Volunteers**

- Staff, screened volunteers and non-screened volunteers must be over 18 to be considered part of the adult:child ratio.
- Staff and screened volunteers must read and follow the Child Protection Policy and successfully pass the screening procedures. (See Section 100.)
- Volunteers who are non-screened must be over 18 and under the supervision of a staff or screened volunteer.

### **600.3 Eligibility**

- It is recommended that all minors participating in an overnight program submit a Consent and Liability Release Form and Health History report. Other forms that may be required include Code of Conduct and other forms required by contractual agencies.

### **600.4 Participants**

- Participant eligibility will be determined for each individual program or activity.
- Chaperones, staff and screened volunteers must get prior approval to bring their own children to the program. They are responsible for their own children as well as for maintaining their responsibilities to the entire group.

### **600.5 Adult to Children Ratio**

- Follow ratio policies established in individual sections of the Child Protection Policy, determined by age group.

### **600.6 Restroom Policy**

- Follow restroom policies established in individual sections of the Child Protection Policy, determined by age group.

### **600.7 Lodging**

- Overnight accommodations must include separate sleeping areas and restroom facilities for males and females. Males may not enter the female quarters and females may not enter the male quarters.

### **600.8 Vehicle Use**

- Driver must be over 23 to transport children and/or youth in personal vehicle unless prior approval is granted by the parent(s).

- Driver must hold a current and valid driver's license.
- Drivers must have current insurance coverage.
- Driver is responsible for any traffic or parking violations and must remit payment to proper authorities.
- Driver is to report any accidents to proper authorities and complete a church Incident/Accident report.
- Passengers travel at their own risk.
- Travel reimbursement is permitted for mileage beyond 10 miles from church. Reimbursements must be approved prior to submission.
- There must be a seatbelt for every occupant. All occupants of the vehicle must wear a seatbelt while vehicle is in motion.

#### **600.9 Illness / Medical**

- For the protection of each youth in the ministry, youth must not participate with symptoms of illness. This includes a fresh cold (3 days or fewer), fever, rash, persistent cough, head lice, nasal discharge, diarrhea, open sores, or any other signs of illness.
- If a youth is diagnosed with an illness during the week after attending the church program, the parents are responsible for notifying the church so we can prepare the facilities for the next activity and, if needed, contact the parents of other youth who may have come in contact with the ill one.
- Parents are responsible for informing the church of any medical concerns that may require staff and volunteers to take special action (epilepsy, diabetes, food allergies.)
- Parents are asked to inform the staff or volunteers of special medications and medical devices (epipen) their youth needs. Staff and volunteers are not trained or expected to administer medications. If a medical emergency occurs, the staff/volunteer will immediately call 911 and attempt to contact the parent.
- A first aid kit should be in at least one car when going off-site.
- Participant Health History and Liability Release forms are required for each participant for overnight activities.

#### **600.10 Emergency/Accident**

- Call 911.
- Provide needed first aid.
- Contact the Director of Christian Education or the Pastor.
- Attempt to contact parent or listed emergency contacts.
- Complete an incident/accident report located in the first aid kit.

#### **600.11 Behavior**

- A high standard of behavior and overall respect is an expectation. Participants are expected to follow the UMYF Code of Conduct.
- Staff and volunteers are provided with techniques to help redirect poor behavior. After all behavior modification techniques have been tried unsuccessfully, parents may be asked to pick up their youth (at the parent's expense). The youth will be suspended from the program, as directed by the Director of Christian Education.
- Bullying behavior will not be tolerated. Bullying is repeated harassment by an individual or group. It includes physical and verbal attacks, intimidation, extortion or theft and exclusion from peers. Harassment focuses on race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

- Parents are responsible for informing the church of behavioral concerns that may disrupt the flow of the program or that may require staff and volunteers to take special action, along with positive steps to diminish any negative behavior.

## **Section 700 – Child Abuse**

### **700.1 – Commonwealth of Virginia Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Under Section 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia, an abused child is defined as one who is less than 18 years of age:

- Whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care creates, threatens to create, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means.
- Whose parents or other person responsible for his/her care neglects or refuses to provide care necessary for his/her health (adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care.)
- Whose parents or other person responsible for his/her care abandons such child.
- Whose parents or other person responsible for his/her care commits or allows to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law (incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.)
- Who is without parental care or guardianship caused by the unreasonable absence or the mental or physical incapacity of the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person standing in loco parentis; or
- Whose parents or other person responsible for his/her care creates a substantial risk of physical or mental injury by knowingly leaving the child alone in the same dwelling, including an apartment as defined in section 55-79.2, with a person to whom the child is not related by blood or marriage and who the parent or other responsible for his/her care knows has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender pursuant to section 9.1-902.
- Infants who have a medical finding of exposure to non-prescription drugs or alcohol during pregnancy are also considered to be at risk of harm. Attending physicians are required to report these children to local social services departments.

WUMC includes in the sexual abuse provision any acts that will make a child feel uncomfortable or violated in regard to his/her sexuality. These shall include abuse of power and/or authority in regard to sexuality, the use of sexual innuendo, especially long and obviously uncomfortable hugs and inappropriate kissing. While these acts may not constitute a violation of Virginia law, such behavior will not be tolerated at WUMC. WUMC will never knowingly permit domestic violence or child-abuse offenders to work with children.

### **700.2 – Types of Child Abuse**

The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

**a. Definition**

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.

**b. Types of Abuse**

**1. Physical Abuse**

A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation, bone fracture, brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma, burns, scalding, cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, internal injuries, poisoning, sprains, dislocations, gunshot, stabbing wounds.

**2. Physical Neglect**

The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition.

**3. Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the Code of Virginia, which is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by his/her parent or other persons responsible for the child's care. Examples of such abuse are sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy and other sexual abuse.

**4. Medical Neglect**

Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental or dental care for a condition, which if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays.

**5. Failure to Thrive**

A syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

**6. Mental Abuse/Neglect**

A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker which results in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

**7. Educational Neglect**

The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

**8. Bizarre Discipline**

Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.

**700.3 – Reporting and Documentation of Child Abuse**

Should there be an allegation of child abuse at WUMC or any church-related functions, the following shall be followed unless the allegation involves the Pastor. If the allegations involve the Pastor, the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall be notified immediately and

he/she shall immediately notify the District Superintendent, who shall direct the next steps taken by the church in responding to the allegations.

**a. Reporting Policy**

- Any allegations must be immediately communicated to the Pastor
- Documentation of all procedures that occur in handling the allegation must start immediately and remain confidentially secured.
- The Pastor shall notify the District Superintendent.
- The Pastor shall notify the victim's parents, if it is not known that they have previous knowledge, and inform them of the steps the church has taken.
- The Pastor shall notify James City County Child Protective Services to report the situation.
- The Pastor shall notify the church's insurance company.
- The Pastor shall, as soon as practical and as deemed necessary, meet with the Church Council Chairperson and District Superintendent to discuss the incident.

**b. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality for the alleged victim and the accused shall be strictly observed until Safe Sanctuary Committee advises otherwise.

**c. Investigation**

The accused is not to be confronted with the allegation. The accused shall be immediately relieved of all duties and contact with children until the investigation is completed

**d. Ministerial care**

The Pastor should extend whatever care and resources are necessary to those impacted by the allegation, but under no circumstances should the Pastor or any church leader or member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the alleged victim and the accused and their families, the Pastor or church leader should not be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation that could contaminate the investigation. No one shall assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.

**e. Liaison with the community**

Only the church pastor will make statements to the press.

**SECTION 800 - Appendices**

Forms are available through the office of the Director of Christian Education and the main office.

**800.1 Child Protection Policy Agreement**

**800.2 Incident/Accident form**