

A photograph of the Damascus United Methodist Church, a large brick building with a prominent steeple, set against a blue sky with light clouds. The church is surrounded by green grass and trees.

Training on the Damascus United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures

Purpose of this Training

1. To **inform you** of the DUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures
2. To **better prepare you** to help keep our children safe
3. To better **protect yourself** against possible false allegations
4. To **raise awareness** of child abuse
5. To **comply** with the United Methodist General Conference's requirements



Safe Sanctuary Summary

- **Be Aware!**
 - Child abuse exists
 - **Avoid situations of being alone with a child to protect yourself from allegations and to protect the child**
 - Report any suspicions of abuse or neglect
- **Follow our Safe Sanctuary Procedures:**
 - Control Access
 - We screen all persons who will work with our children or youth
 - Monitor our programs
 - Communicate Concerns
- **Transparency is the Key!**

The Realities of Child Abuse

- Sadly, child abuse is a reality in our society
- In the USA, about **1 out of 5 girls** and **1 out of 10 boys** are sexually abused before the age of 18
- The child victim is **NEVER RESPONSIBLE** for causing the abuse
- Abusers are **usually familiar adults trusted** by children and their parents.
- Abusers “groom” the child, parents, and community into thinking he/she is genuinely interested in nurturing the family or child

DUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy

The DUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy includes:

1. The **screening of all persons** who work with children or youth
2. Maintaining appropriate **liability insurance** for the church
3. Evaluating and maintaining our **physical facilities** to keep them as safe as possible
4. **Instructing all persons** who work with children or youth, parents, and our congregation on our policy and procedures

Safe Sanctuary Procedures for Adults

For both **paid staff and volunteers**, adults working with children or youth, **each year, must:**

1. Sign an **annual Questionnaire** form and provide **references** to the Pastor Parish Relations
2. Sign the **Covenant Statement** agreeing to abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures
3. Attend **annual orientation** on the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures *(today's session!)*



Safe Sanctuary Procedures for Adults

A **Supervising worker** is an adult that

- Has signed the annual Questionnaire and provided associated references,
- Signed the Covenant Statement,
- Has been a member of DUMC for 6 months (or is known to the church community as a caring and nurturing person), and
- Attended Safe Sanctuary orientation

At all church group activities involving children or youth, at least one (and preferably two) qualified adults should be designated as Supervising Workers (or the event must be canceled).

Safe Sanctuary Procedures for Adults (cont.)

- **Occasional workers** are parent volunteers or staff who only occasionally work with children or youth.
- Best efforts will be made to have occasional workers complete and sign the Questionnaire and the Covenant Statement
- We intend to have a pool of volunteers who have completed the required paperwork to use for substitutes or helpers on an as-needed basis
- **At least one Supervising Worker must be present** when an occasional worker is present with children or youth.

Safe Sanctuary

Procedures for Adults (cont.)

Each Church Group (that involves children or youth) will:

- **Give written advance notice** to all parents with respect to any event in which children or youth are participating.
- **Require parents or guardians to complete registration forms or permission slips** prior to child or youth to participate in that Church Group's activities
- **Establish procedures for dismissal and pickup** for children and youth. A child in 3rd grade or younger may only be dismissed to a person who has been authorized in writing to pick up that child.
- **Take attendance with names of children and adults** present at the event.





Procedures for Youth Working with Children

Youth (ages 10 to 17) working with children at DUMC must sign the Covenant Statement; parent signatures are also required.

Youth will occasionally serve as aides where an adult Supervising Worker will oversee the activity.



Youth aides will attend orientations to understand DUMC's Safe Sanctuary Policy and to be instructed on appropriate interactions with children

Appropriate Interactions with Children



Children want and need affection.

They hug people they like, cuddle if they are afraid, or even burrow in if they are crying.

It is important for children to receive appropriate physical affection from grown-ups.

Follow these guidelines:

Public – others can witness the interaction

Appropriate – side hugs, high fives, back pats
and **Non-sexual** in nature.

Discipline Policy for Children

Discipline is a process of:

- **Learning to have self-control**
- **Learning to respect others**
- **Learning responsibility**

To help children with this process, the following guidelines are to be in place in our Sunday School classes and other church activities with children:

- **We need to have clear and concise rules and limits;**
- **Adults should anticipate and redirect inappropriate behaviors;**
- **Adults should remind children of expectations, rules and limits;**
- Adults should help children use words to express anger, resolve conflicts and express needs and desires;
- Adults will assist children in the conflict resolution process;
- **Adults need to stay aware** of children's interactions with others to notice if teasing or bullying is occurring.

Discipline Policy (continued)

- Children are spoken to in a friendly (never angry) but firm voice when necessary; **(Yelling at a child NEVER helps.)**
- Adults may remove a child from an activity if inappropriate behaviors persist and help the child to find an appropriate activity to engage in;
- **Adults may remove a child from an activity if inappropriate behaviors persist by placing the child in “Time Out” for a short period of time;**
- **If a child physically hurts another child, he/she will be removed from the activity, the hurt child will be comforted, the children will then be assisted with the conflict resolution process, and the parents will be informed at the end of the session;**
- A conference should be held with parents if serious inappropriate behaviors continue.
- **At VBS, the director can help if a difficult situation arises. Ask for help!**

Conflict Resolution Process

These steps describe the conflict resolution process to be used by adults working with children or youth at Damascus United Methodist Church.

- Adult calmly approaches the children/youth in conflict and stops any hurtful actions in progress;
- Acknowledge children/youths' feelings;
- Gather information;
- Restate the problem;
- Ask for children/youths' ideas for solutions and choose one together;
- Give follow-up support.



“2-Adult Goal”

At least two unrelated adult Workers should be present during any child or youth activity.



- **The 2-adult goal is mandatory for any activities with child/youth participation held away from the church facility.**
- An adult Worker should be at least three years older than the oldest child or youth participating in the activity (the "three-years-older rule").
- Youth aides (ages 10 to 17) should not be used to meet the two-adult goal.
- In addition, a Worker who is under 21 and working with high school youth should not be considered an adult Worker for purposes of the two-adult goal.

Bathroom / Diaper Changing Policy



- Any Worker changing a child's diaper will ensure that there is at least one other adult present.
- **During VBS,**
 - Youth helpers will escort children to the restroom. The youth helpers will stand in the outer doorway of the restroom to avoid being isolated with a child.
 - The single person restrooms will be available for adults, youth, and Handicapped persons.

Emergency or Fire Drills

- Be sure to familiarize yourself with the evacuation plan and the specific route applicable to your location
- In the event of an evacuation, you should take the attendance sheet with you, and re-take attendance once outside and safely away from all hazards.



Reporting Suspicions of Abuse or Neglect



If you become aware of an allegation of child abuse, or reasonably suspect neglect, you should report the allegation or suspicion immediately to your Supervising Worker, the VBS Director, or a pastor.

There are specific procedures in the DUMC Safe Sanctuary document that the pastors will follow to report the suspicion to the proper authorities.

Conclusion

- **Keeping our children safe is a commitment we have always had at DUMC**
- **Our Safe Sanctuary Procedures have been in place since 2009 and require an annual training for all volunteers and staff who work with children or youth.**
- **Awareness that child abuse exists, following our procedures, and monitoring our programs will help to keep our children safe**
- **Transparency, awareness, and working together are critical.**