

Safe Sanctuary Policy



September 2016

*Ebensburg United Methodist
Church*



Ebensburg United Methodist Church
100 E. Highland Avenue, Ebensburg PA.
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Safe Sanctuary Policy Ebensburg United Methodist Church

- I. Introduction
- II. Our Theological Rationale and Commitment
- III. Definitions
- IV. Policy Guidelines
 - A. Ministry Options
 - B. Adult Survivors of Child Abuse
 - C. Clearances
 - D. Training
 - E. Reporting Abuse Situations
- V. Outside Groups
- VI. Uncertified Volunteers
- VII. The Safe Sanctuary Committee
- VIII. Records

Appendix

- A. Act 33 Child Abuse Clearances
- B. Act 34 Criminal Clearances
- C. Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check
- D. Volunteer's Statement
- E. Report of Suspected Incidents of Child Abuse
- F. Pennsylvania Code on Reporting Child Abuse
- G. Form for Reporting Suspected Incidents of Child Abuse
- H. Accident Report Form
- I. Sign-in / Sign-out Sheet



I. Introduction

The 1996 General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing child and youth sexual abuse in the United Methodist Church. The 1999 Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference unanimously approved a resolution “Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse.” Both of these resolutions at different levels of the church call upon every local congregation of the United Methodist Church to develop written policies and procedures on preventing child, youth and vulnerable adult sexual abuse.

The Church Council has endorsed these policies and procedures. Our policy includes providing for Safe Sanctuary statements in prevention, procedures for screening all workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults, procedures for reporting suspected incidents of abuse, and a response plan to be implemented if there is an allegation of abuse. The policy requires a safety evaluation of the building to ensure it is free from potentially dangerous situations. We require that outside organizations follow our guidelines and procedures. Staff will be trained and become continually sensitive to learning how to implement the procedures and policies. The Ebensburg United Methodist Church will model and be supportive of Safe Sanctuary behavior.

II. Our Theological Rational and Commitment

The New Testament makes it clear that we as Christians live in covenant relationship with God and the whole community of faith. We are asked to live just and generous lives following the commandments set forth by Jesus Christ. Jesus plainly and simply taught that children were to be included and provided for in the kingdom of God. (Luke 18:15-17 and Matthew 18:5-6.) Throughout the history of the Christian Church, children have been included in worship and in the ministry life of the community. With every infant baptism, each United Methodist congregation takes baptismal responsibility for the care, nurture, and spiritual growth of each and every one of our baptized children. In some children’s lives, the church may be the only place where they may find the unconditional love and care they need in order to grow, thrive, and become faithful people.

Our churches take this baptismal responsibility for children and youth seriously. We seek to attend to their spiritual needs and care. Every local congregation will fail in their responsibility of caring for children, youth and vulnerable adults if we neglect to take adequate precautions against physical, emotional, sexual, neglect and ritualistic abuse. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent abuse in every circumstance. Yet, it is possible and necessary to take steps to reduce the risk of abuse in any form by following a thorough and practical policy of prevention.

Children, youth and vulnerable adult abuse is a tragic reality in our culture and in our community. Although we would prefer to deny this reality in the life of our churches and its families, abuse in churches and communities of faith is an inescapable fact. United Methodist Churches have historically worked to assure that children and vulnerable adults are cared for



with clothing, food, and shelter. In our history, our churches have placed great emphasis on children and youth ministry. Although we have not had to deal with abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults there is now a necessity to address the issue with intentionality and forthrightness.

Whenever allegations of abuse are made in the church, whether they are proven true or false, everyone in the church suffers. The victim and his/her family suffer. The congregation suffers knowing that its life-giving covenant has been broken. The perpetrator and his/her family experience great pain. When abuse occurs litigation is often the result. There may also be criminal or civil charges brought against the church and its pastoral and lay leadership. The financial costs can be devastating. This does not include the emotional and spiritual costs of those involved. In each case of child, youth or vulnerable adult sexual abuse a life is dramatically altered. It may take years for the church and community to heal.

When accusations are proven to be false there is another set of costs and pains. The grief and trauma in the life of a congregation take an enormous toll. The person falsely accused and their family is terribly wronged and humiliated. The congregation is guilt ridden about how such abuse could happen here. The victim making false charges is in need of love and care of the community.

The Ebensburg United Methodist Church seeks to become safe sanctuary for the children, youth and vulnerable adults whom God has placed in our care. We promise this every time we baptize an infant and every time a parent trusts our leaders, teachers, and staff to care for their children and youth in any one of our programs. Providing a safe sanctuary is simply fulfilling what God desires in every congregation that identifies itself as a body of Christ.



III. Definitions

The following definitions shall apply to the policy:

ABUSE: Intentional harm of a person in the form physical, emotional, neglectful, or sexual actions.

ACCIDENT REPORTING: anytime there is an accident in the church or at a church function the accident report form should be filled out and given to the Pastor as soon as possible. (Appendix H)

ADULT: person 18 years of age and older

ADVISE ANOTHER ADULT YOU ARE IN THE AREA; PLEASE CHECK ON US AT ANY TIME. Should a situation occur whereby a volunteer is unable to comply with the “Rule of Three” or the “Two-Adult Rule” the volunteer shall notify another adult of their location and request the other adult to check on them at any time.

CERTIFICATION: The process of volunteer training and instruction on the requirements of the Safe Sanctuary Policy. In addition, the completion of the Pennsylvania Act 33 and Act 34 child clearances, employees of the church must also obtain FBI clearances. Additionally, if a volunteer has not been a PA resident for at least 10 years, they are required to obtain their FBI clearance to be in accordance with state law.

CERTIFIED ADULT: A paid employee of the church who has met the requirements for certification.

CERTIFIED ADULT VOLUNTEER: An adult volunteer who has fulfilled the requirements of certification.

CHILDREN OR YOUTH: persons up to 18 years of age and younger. These terms, children and youth, may be used interchangeably for the purpose of this program.

HOSPITALITY RULE: Individuals may not volunteer with children or youth until they have attended this church for at least six months.

OPEN DOOR OR WINDOW POLICY: Church rooms in which adult volunteers work with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall have either windows, doors with windows or open doors through which the activity within the room may be freely observed.

PCO CHECK-INS: A computerized system to sign-in and sign-out children, youth, and volunteers. The system enhances security in the church by providing name tags and security tags for children or youth pick up.

RESTROOM POLICY: Changing a diaper or assisting a young child (whom needs assistance, let them ask) with the bathroom as needed should take place where the worker and the child



are in sight with the child's privacy protected. When a child is taken to a restroom outside of the classroom or activity site, a volunteer must first check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.

RULE OF THREE: No volunteer is to be alone with just one child or youth. A lone volunteer should work with two or more young people or request a second adult to be present. If someone must be alone with a child or youth, parents, staff or another volunteer must be notified.

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY: a program that is intended to reduce the risk of abuse from occurring in our church or at off-site-church-sponsored events.

UNCERTIFIED ADULT VOLUNTEER: An adult volunteer who has not fulfilled the requirements of certification. They may be used to assist and work under the direction of a certified adult. They must be with a certified adult or certified adult volunteer at all times when children, youth or vulnerable adults are present.

RULE OF FIVE: any person who is placed solely in charge of a group of youth or children must be at least 5 years older than the oldest person in the group to which they are directing.

THE TWO ADULT RULE: no fewer than 2 adults should be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. These 2 adults should not be a married couple or cohabitating.

SIGN-IN / SIGN-OUT RULE: anytime children or youth are being dropped off or picked up at an event or the church including Sunday School but not including worship services, a sign in & sign out sheet or PCO Check-ins should be used. This ensures parents that their children cannot be picked up by an unauthorized person. If PCO Check-ins cannot be used for the function, a sign in & sign out sheet should be used. (Appendix I)

TRANSPORTATION RULE: anytime a child or youth is being transported by vehicle to an event a permission slip should be signed by the parent or guardian of the child granting permission for him/her to ride with the person who is driving. An adult should never be alone with a child in a vehicle (unless the adult is the child's parent or legal guardian).

VULNERABLE ADULT: any person, 18 years and older, who because of physical or mental infirmity or emotional disability, or other physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction may be vulnerable to maltreatment. Additionally, any adults who are under the assumption that the church will protect them, i.e. Sunday School teachers.



IV. POLICY GUIDELINES

A. Ministry Options at the Ebensburg United Methodist Church

Our churches have hundreds of opportunities to serve; everyone is encouraged to do at least one thing.

Children's and youth ministry are some of the many places gifts can be used. If an adult has been convicted of child abuse they will be directed to one of the many other ministry opportunities that does not involve children, youth or vulnerable adults.

As our vision stretches us to become a broad-based community of faith we will expect to have individuals who have situations that will not permit them to work in our children, youth or vulnerable adults.

We believe that new life is given abundantly to those who believe in Christ. We will do all we can to encourage everyone to participate in the many ministries of the Ebensburg United Methodist Church.

B. Adult Survivors of Abuse Support

Recognizing that wounds of abuse are often reopened when certain circumstance occur when working with children, adult survivors of child abuse will be given special support from our clergy team. Pastors will listen and assess the level of involvement that would be appropriate for the survivor.

C. Clearances

Clearances will be required of everyone (volunteer and paid staff) 18 years or older who works with children, youth and vulnerable adults. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to obtain these clearances. If there is a financial hardship incurred in the obtaining of clearances, please consult with the Pastor. These clearances include the following forms:

1. Act 33 Child Abuse Clearances (Sample in Appendix A)
2. Act 34 Criminal Clearances (Sample in Appendix B)

If a person has clearances that are less than 24 months old from an outside source and they have been present in our congregation for that time period, she/he may give us copies of the forms for our files. The Pastor will review persons with clearances predating 24 months individually.

The two Pennsylvania clearances (33/34) will be completed and submitted for everyone. Church staff are required to obtain their FBI Clearance; the church will reimburse the cost to obtain the FBI Clearance. Additionally, if one has not been a PA resident for at least 10 years, one is required to obtain their FBI clearance to be in accordance with state law.



Clearances will be valid for our purposes for no more than 5 years. Updated clearance must be processed and on file with Ebensburg United Methodist Church prior to the 5-year expiration.

When the original copies are given to us we will copy them for our files and return the originals to the person. All papers will be treated as confidential and filed in a locked cabinet. Only the pastor and the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator will have access to the information.

D. Training

A large group training session and/or an online training session will be given annually. All volunteers in children, youth and vulnerable adult ministries must attend. The rules, building adaptations and other related issues will be presented. At all times it will be emphasized that an adult is never to be alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult.

For those individuals who are unable to attend the training workshop, you must consult with the Pastor or the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator (dsm.eucm@gmail.com) on potential make-up times.

Following instruction, training on the Safe Sanctuary Policy, and obtaining the necessary clearances, a volunteer shall sign and date the Volunteer Statement (Appendix D). This form shall become part of the permanent record.

E. Reporting Abuse Situations

An individual – paid or unpaid – on the basis of the individual’s role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity, or service, accepts responsibility for a child e.g. Sunday School teacher, VBS leader, youth worker, etc. Because of this, the individual becomes a mandated reporter for the capacities in which they lead e.g. 1st and 2nd grade Sunday School teacher is a mandated reporter for incidents happening in 1st and 2nd grade. Furthermore, clergy of the church are mandated reporters.

REPORTS MUST BE MADE TO CHILDLINE AT 1-800-932-0313

After the initial mandated reporting, Ebensburg United Methodist Church will additionally follow the outline of procedures for allegations concerning child abuse created by the Western PA United Methodist Conference co-chancellors and resident Bishop (see appendix E). These procedures note the various steps that should be completed in order to protect the victim as well as the accused person. The procedure also includes the process for contacting all the various officials involved in the notification process. These procedures will be followed step-by-step when accusations or reports are filed.

A specific form, Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse, is located in appendix G. This form requires the director of the program who receives the report to complete information that will be used to inform other officials about the incident.



V. OUTSIDE GROUPS

When outside groups request a room, our Safe Sanctuary policy will be briefly stated and explained. Many of our outside groups are for adults. Boy and Girl Scouts have their own abuse prevention policies that parallel ours.

When outside groups have children, youth or vulnerable adults doing separate activities, the supervising adults must meet our Safe Sanctuary requirements. If a safe adult is needed to assist an outside group, they should contact the Pastor or the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator (dsm.eumc@gmail.com) to assist in filling this need.

VI. UNCERTIFIED VOLUNTEERS

The Pastor will interview volunteers. Volunteers will be given up to three months to receive their certifications and training. Until they are certified, volunteers will be assigned to work with others who are certified. At no time should an uncertified volunteer work alone with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

VII. THE SAFE SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee will serve as the Safe Sanctuaries Committee. They will address safe sanctuaries issues as they arise in a respectful and confidential manner.

- A. The purpose of the Committee is to monitor, review and recommend changes to the Safe Sanctuary Policy. As the new policy is implemented the Committee will listen for areas that may need to be modified. The committee will be responsible for making recommendations for changes to the policy.
- B. The Committee will be responsible for communications to the congregation as well as the local community. Written articles, letters and other means of communicating the Safe Sanctuary policy will be created as needed.
- C. Meetings for the Safe Sanctuary Committee will be at least annually. Additional meetings can be called as needed.

VIII. RECORDS

A permanent policy shall be maintained. The file shall contain a complete copy of the policy updated with the latest revisions. All previous page revisions shall also be maintained.

When revisions are made to the policy they shall first be approved by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. Following Staff-Parish Relations Committee approval, the revisions will then be reviewed by the Church Council for final approval. A report shall be prepared that indicates the page revised and the words of the revision. The report shall become part of the permanent file.



Appendix

APPENDIX A - PA CHILD ABUSE CLEARANCE FORM

See attached form or visit ebensburgumc.org/safesanctuary

APPENDIX B - CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD

See attached form or visit ebensburgumc.org/safesanctuary

APPENDIX C - AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

APPENDIX D- VOLUNTEER'S STATEMENT

APPENDIX E - REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE

APPENDIX F - PENNSYLVANIA CODE ON REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

APPENDIX G - FORM FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE

APPENDIX H - ACCIDENT REPORT FORM

APPENDIX I - SIGN IN / SIGN OUT SHEET



APPENDIX C - Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check

I, _____, hereby authorize Ebensburg United Methodist Church to request the Pennsylvania State Police to release information regarding any record of charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law. I do release said agency from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Print applicant's full name: _____

Print all other names that have been used by applicant (if any):

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____ - _____ - _____ Your Gender M/F

Current Address: _____

Name of parent, spouse, or sibling: _____

Their Age: _____ and Gender M / F



APPENDIX D- Volunteer's Statement

As an adult who will be working with children, youth or vulnerable adults we require that you read the following statements and then sign the form as your acceptance of the terms of this covenant.

1. I have not been convicted of abuse (sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) and am willing to volunteer to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults in any church-sponsored activity.
2. Adult survivors of abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our church's pastors or program directors before accepting an assignment.
3. I want to volunteer and be involved with children, youth or vulnerable adults of our church. I have applied for or have clearances before beginning a volunteer assignment. These clearances are as follows: Act 33, Act 34
4. I will observe **ALL** of the rules and guidelines of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy of the Ebensburg United Methodist Church. I will make every attempt to never to be alone with a child or vulnerable adult.
5. I will attend the training and educational events that are provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
6. I will immediately report to my supervisor and the pastor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Signature of Volunteer

Date



**APPENDIX E – Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse
IF ANY ALLEGATIONS ARE MADE CONCERNING CHILD ABUSE
THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED**

1. Treat any allegations of abuse seriously. Do not ignore the allegations in the hope that they will go away.
2. Mandated reporters must call ChildLine (**1-800-932-0313**) and report allegations of abuse immediately
3. If the allegations in any way concern a member of the clergy, report the alleged incident (s) immediately to the District Superintendent. The District Superintendent and the informant should immediately fill out the Form for Reporting Suspected Incidents of Child Abuse form. (Appendix G)
4. If the allegations do not concern a member of the clergy, immediately notify the Pastor. The Pastor should notify the District Superintendent and, if the accused is a staff member, the Pastor should also notify the Chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. The Pastor and the informant should immediately fill out the Form for Reporting Suspected Incidents of Child Abuse form. (Appendix G)
5. The District Superintendent should notify the Ministry Team on Clergy and Congregational Care consistent with R.S. 1006 adopted by the Annual Conference in 1997 and also notify the Chancellors.
6. The District Superintendent or the Pastor should notify the parents if it appears that they have no previous knowledge of the matter.
7. Report the allegations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities as is required by state law. (See reporting information.)
8. Either the District Superintendent or the Pastor should immediately notify the church's insurance company. (This notification should also be confirmed in writing.)
9. No one should confront the accused with the allegations unless advised to do so by the Ministry Team on Clergy and Congregational Care representatives. No one should be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegations. No one should assess blame.
10. Everyone involved should observe confidentiality for both the victim and the accused.
11. The accused should be immediately suspended from his or her duties. (Issues of compensation should be dealt with on a case by case basis.)
12. All media inquiries should be referred to the Resident Bishop and, if the Resident Bishop is unavailable, to the Assistant to the Bishop.
13. Always show care and comfort for the alleged victims, the accused and their families. Communicate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being.
14. The accused should be advised to seek legal or other counsel.



APPENDIX F – Pennsylvania Code on Reporting Abuse

§ 42.42. Suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements.

(a) *General rule.* Under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311 (relating to persons required to report suspected child abuse), licensees who, in the course of the employment, occupation or practice of their profession, come into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made to the Department of Public Welfare when they have reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their professional or other training or experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse.

(b) *Staff members of public or private agencies, institutions and facilities.* Licensees who are staff members of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility or agency, and who, in the course of their employment, occupation or practice of their profession, come into contact with children shall immediately notify the person in charge of the institution, school facility or agency or the designated agent of the person in charge when they have reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their professional or other training or experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse. Upon notification by the licensee, the person in charge or the designated agent shall assume the responsibility and have the legal obligation to report or cause a report to be made in accordance with subsections (a), (c) and (d).

(c) *Reporting procedure.* Reports of suspected child abuse shall be made by telephone and by written report.

(1) *Oral reports.* Oral reports of suspected child abuse shall be made immediately by telephone to ChildLine, (800) 932-0313.

(2) *Written reports.* Written reports shall be made within 48 hours after the oral report is made by telephone. Written reports shall be made on forms available from a county children and youth social service agency.

(d) *Written reports.* Written reports shall be made in the manner and on forms prescribed by the Department of Public Welfare. The following information shall be included in the written reports, if available:

(1) The names and addresses of the child and the parents or other person responsible for the care of the child, if known.

(2) Where the suspected abuse occurred.

(3) The age and sex of the subjects of the report.

(4) The nature and extent of the suspected child abuse including any evidence of prior abuse to the child or siblings of the child.



- (5) The name and relationship of the persons responsible for causing the suspected abuse, if known, and any evidence of prior abuse by those persons.
- (6) Family composition.
- (7) The source of the report.
- (8) The person making the report and where that person can be reached.
- (9) The actions taken by the reporting source, including the taking of photographs and X-rays, removal or keeping of the child or notifying the medical examiner or coroner.
- (10) Other information which the Department of Public Welfare may require by regulation.

Authority

The provisions of this § 42.42 issued under the Child Protective Services Law, 23 Pa.C.S. § 6383(b)(2); and section 5 of the Occupational Therapists Practice Act (63 P. S. § 1505); amended under sections 5(b) and 6(a)(2) of the Occupational Therapy Practice Act (63 P. S. § § 1505(b) and 1506(a)(2)).

Source

The provisions of this § 42.42 adopted November 8, 1996, effective November 9, 1996, 26 Pa.B. 5425; amended December 7, 2001, effective December 8, 2001, 31 Pa.B. 6663. Immediately preceding text appears at serial pages (223111) to (223113).

Cross References

This section cited in 49 Pa. Code § 42.41 (relating to definitions relating to child abuse reporting requirements); 49 Pa. Code § 42.46 (relating to confidentiality—waived); and 49 Pa. Code § 42.47 (relating to noncompliance).



APPENDIX G

**REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD,
YOUTH, OR VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE**

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing disclosure of abuse:

2. Victim’s Name: _____ Age/date of birth: _____

3. Date/place of initial conversation with report from victim: _____

4. Victim’s Statement (give your detailed summary here): _____

5. Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member,
other): _____

6. Reported to Pastor (Date/time): _____

Summary: _____

7. Call to victim’s parent/guardian (date/time): _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

8. Call to local children, family, or area on aging agency (date/time): _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

9. Call to local law enforcement agency (date/time): _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

10. Other Contacts (Name): _____

Date/time: _____

Summary: _____

X _____

Signature of Incident Reporter

Date



APPENDIX H

ACCIDENT REPORT FORM

(Please Print All Information)

Date of Accident: _____ Time of Accident: _____

Name of person injured _____ Age: _____

Address of person: _____

Location of accident: _____

Parent or guardian (if child/ youth): _____

Name of person(s) who witnessed the accident:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Describe accident:

X _____

Signature of Accident Reporter

Date



APPENDIX I – Sign-in / Sign-out Sheet

	EVENT:		DATE:
	CHILD'S NAME	DROPPED OFF	PICKED UP
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			

