

Crievewood United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

“God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children, youth, and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.” –*The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2000, p. 180.*

Crievewood United Methodist Church takes very seriously the call of Jesus Christ to minister to all people and to seek to meet their needs. We recognize the great problem of abuse in our culture and the inherent risk of ministry. This document was developed in order to assure that reasonable safety measures are taken to safeguard the physical and emotional welfare of children, youth, and vulnerable adults that participate in the ministries of CUMC. It is our desire to respond to any situation in a Christ-like manner.

This policy applies to all paid staff and volunteers who participate in CUMC children, youth, and adult programs, including church sponsored events held in any location in which minors or vulnerable adults are present.

DEFINITIONS:

*Abuse—non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child/youth/vulnerable adult

*Adult—a person 18 years or older

*Child/Youth—any person under the age of 18

*Open Door Policy—open door to meeting space, preferably meeting in line of sight from the open doorway

*Staff person—any person employed by Crievewood United Methodist Church

*Two Person Rule—requires that staff persons and volunteers make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where an employed or volunteer worker is alone with children, youth, or vulnerable adults without a second person present. In the event the two-person rule is not feasible, an open door policy will be observed

*Volunteer—a person who assists in conducting children/youth activities under the supervision of an adult in charge of event or activity

*Vulnerable adult—any person over 18 years of age with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities

*We—the Crieveewood United Methodist Church

SELECTION AND SCREENING

Careful screening is one way to reduce the potential for abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, and ritual) of children, youth, and vulnerable adults at CUMC. Screening includes background checks, informal interviews, and completion of a Safe Sanctuary training. All screening results will remain confidential.

1. CUMC shall direct each prospective paid staff or volunteer to complete an application that relates to the interest area. By completing this application, the applicant will give CUMC permission to contact references and perform any necessary investigation, including contacting appropriate law enforcement agencies and references.
2. CUMC shall review the applications and follow through each stage with each applicant.
 - a. The Pastor will be responsible for screening all paid staff employees.
 - b. The Director of Family Ministry will be responsible for all volunteers within the Adult programming area.
 - c. The Director of Children’s Ministry will be responsible for screening all Sunday School and Children’s Programs volunteers.
 - d. The Director of Nursery/Childcare is responsible for screening nursery staff and volunteers.
 - e. The Youth Director will be responsible for all volunteers within the Youth programming area, including Sunday school.
 - f. The Director of Music Ministry will be responsible for screening volunteers working with children and/or youth choirs.
3. Leaders of outside groups are not required to have been screened by CUMC, however CUMC will review the outside group’s screening policies regarding working with children to determine their eligibility to use CUMC’s facilities. Additionally, outside groups that seek to use our property must be in line with our United Methodist Social Principles and must be approved by the Senior Pastor.
4. CUMC reserves the right to turn away any person for volunteer or paid service. Persons alleged and convicted of sexual abuse, past or present, will not be considered as volunteers or paid staff for minors.
5. Re-screening will occur every five years. If a volunteer moves away from the area for any length of time, a new background check will be issued on his/her return.

SUPERVISION OF MINORS

Volunteers:

1. The minimum supervisory standard is two adults present at all times. At least one of these adults must have training in Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures. In addition, there may be the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of rooms. If two adults present is not feasible, the open-door policy will be observed.
2. In the event that one-to-one interaction is necessary, prior consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian of the minor.
3. No person in charge of children’s activities shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the children with whom he/she is working.

Paid Staff Members:

1. Paid staff members may occasionally need to meet individually with a minor. In the event that one-on-one ministry with a minor is necessary, the meeting should take place in a well-lit public or visible area. When possible, another staff member and/or the minor’s parents should be made aware of the meeting.
2. If any paid staff member suspects that a policy has been broken, he/she must report the incident to the Senior Pastor. The incident must be documented, and the documentation must be signed by both the paid staff member and the Senior Pastor.
3. The Crieewood UMC Day Care is under the regulations of the Department of Human Services and will follow those guidelines.

SUPERVISION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

Volunteers:

1. For church activities on the CUMC campus and public spaces, the minimum supervisory standard is the presence of two adults at all times. At least one of these adults must have training in Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures. In addition, there may be the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of rooms. If having two adults present is not feasible, the open-door policy will be observed.
2. For visitation in the homes of vulnerable adults, the ideal standard is the presence of two screened adult volunteers. When the presence of two adult volunteers is not possible, every effort will be made to see volunteers visiting in the homes of vulnerable adults have a background check and training in Safe Sanctuary policies.
3. When one-to-one interaction is necessary, either on-site at CUMC or in the homes of vulnerable adults, prior consent must be obtained from that vulnerable adult and/or his or her guardian.

Paid Staff Members:

1. Paid staff members may need to meet individually with a vulnerable adult. When meeting in the vulnerable adult's private residence, another staff member and/or the vulnerable adult's guardian should be made aware of the meeting whenever possible.
2. If any paid staff member suspects that a policy has been broken, he/she must report the incident to the Senior Pastor. The incident must be documented, and the documentation must be signed by both the paid staff member and the Senior Pastor.

POLICY EXEMPTING PERSONS FROM ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE

Circumstances or conditions that may exempt a person from eligibility to serve with children, youth, or vulnerable adults include the following items:

Individuals with certain addictions

- Persons with chemical and/or substance abuse within the past three years, will be asked to provide Verification of Treatment from their provider.

Individuals convicted of a felony

- Applicants whose felony conviction is not a zero-tolerance* crime, will be considered on an individual basis pending a background check and subject to final approval by the Pastor.
- Zero Tolerance offenses will exempt a person from serving with children, youth, and vulnerable adults with no exceptions.

Zero Tolerance items include but are not limited to:

- *Individuals with mental illness that could endanger children.
- *Individuals convicted of neglecting, abusing, molesting or battering a child or an adult.
- *Individuals convicted of a violent crime.

REPORTING OF SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE OF MINORS

Crievewood United Methodist Church will take all accusations and suspicions of abuse seriously. Under Tennessee Law, any person who suspects abuse, or persons to whom a report of abuse was made, is required by law to report it to a local law enforcement agency. Upon a volunteer or staff person receiving a complaint, or suspecting abuse or neglect from within the church setting, the Director of the involved ministry shall immediately be notified. This staff person will then notify the appropriate law enforcement agency, as well as the Senior Pastor. If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, the accused person shall immediately be removed from contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults until the incident reported has been resolved. The removal of the accused person should be handled in the most caring manner for all involved.