

Harrison United Methodist Church (updated 8/28/07) (approved 8/19/07)
Children, Youth and Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy

The members and staff of Harrison United Methodist Church (HUMC) are committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child and young person involved in its ministry. Our goals are to protect children and youth from sexual or physical abuse or neglect, to educate workers and care givers concerning abuse issues and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the Church as a whole, from potential allegations of abuse and neglect.

A. Selection of Paid Workers and Volunteers.

1. All scheduled workers with children or youth, full or part time, compensated or volunteer, including without limitation clergy, custodial, Sunday School teachers, youth group workers, nursery workers, Vacation Bible School, and choir leaders will complete a Primary Screening Form for working with Children or Youth. (Attachment A) A criminal background check will be performed at the time of employment or engagement in a position of caring for youth and children.
2. Occasionally unscheduled volunteers for programs sponsored by HUMC where children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults will complete the Secondary Screening Form for working with Children or Youth Workers. Other churches or religious organizations who participate in programs on HUMC premises will complete Attachment B unless their church or religious organization has a similar policy in place and has furnished a copy to HUMC.
3. Personal interviews will be conducted with all applicants for employment and may be conducted with volunteers who have regular contact with children and youth.
4. Reference checks will be made on all compensated workers and volunteer workers. Authorized personnel will make the reference checks.
5. All information, provided in the application forms, as well as any info collected through reference checks or other investigation or inquires will be kept confidential and reviewed only by authorized personnel.
6. Persons who have been convicted of, or pled guilty to, physical and/or sexual abuse of children, neglect of children, or other serious crimes against persons (rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.), or against whom such charges are pending, will not be allowed to work with children or youth.
7. Church membership or regular church attendance at HUMC is normally a prerequisite for working with children or youth. Exceptions to this provision of the policy may be granted by the Pastor in the case of combined programs with other churches, intern programs and other similar circumstances.

B. Guidelines for Workers with Children or Youth

At least two adults should be present at all times during any activity involving children or youth, under age 18 and younger., even if only one child or youth is present. An adult needs to be close by when dealing with bathroom or counseling situations

- a. All workers must know the state requirements in reporting abuse to law enforcement authorities and child protective services. In NC you are mandated, if there is reasonable cause, to report suspected cases of child abuse.
2. Questionable or inappropriate behavior should be reported immediately to the proper ministry leader as such conduct can precede abuse, even though the observed act itself does not constitute abuse.
3. If a person desires to plan an activity off campus, he/she must:

- a. Request permission from the appropriate ministry leader.
 - b. Always have the proper child/adult male/female ratio.
Ratios: 1:6 with children
1:15 with youth
1:8 for overnight trips
 - c. Have a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian.
 - d. Travel must be done according to North Carolina laws in respect to car seat safety, etc.
4. Doors to classrooms used by children or youth should include windows, which should be uncovered at all times. Alternatively, doors without windows should be kept open.
 5. Other organizations which use Church premises for youth oriented activities (for example, Boy or Girl Scouts) will be provided a copy of this policy and required to adopt this policy unless the organization has a similar policy in place and has furnished a copy to HUMC.

C. Procedures for Reporting Incidents of Abuse of a Child or Youth

1. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children or youth will be reported as soon as possible to the ministry leader.
2. The ministry leader will report the alleged incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the Department of Social Services of Mecklenburg County.
3. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances and will also make a report that documents all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.
4. All adult members of HUMC staff, and other adults participating in programs on the property of HUMC are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children or youth. They will be encouraged not to hesitate to caution others that activities they observe are, or may appear to be, inappropriate. The Church will be supportive of individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse.
5. Any organization that uses HUMC facilities will also notify the Pastor and/or Chairperson of SPRC as soon as possible about any incident or suspected incident of abuse involving any person affiliated with such organization while using HUMC facilities.
6. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded

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D. Responding to Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Youth

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to the alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegation can be substantiated or cleared.
2. All procedures listed in the previous section on Reporting will be strictly followed.
3. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.
4. All efforts in handling the situation will be carefully documented.
5. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim will be notified as soon as feasibly possible.

6. As appropriate the liability insurer for the Church will be notified about the incident by the administrator of SPRC.
7. The safety and security of the child must be safe-guarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
8. The Pastor will be the sole spokesperson for the Church insofar as media inquiries are concerned.
9. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities, as circumstances dictate, until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

E. Training and Education

1. All compensated workers and volunteers will be trained regarding protection of children and youth from sexual abuse and protection of adults from false accusations of abuse. This initial training will include the following:
 - a. The need for the Children and Youth Protection Policy.
 - b. Church policies governing working with children and youth.
 - c. Procedures for reporting observed or suspected misconduct.

REPORTING PROCEDURES OF CHURCH WORKERS

Any person involved in the Children’s/Youth Ministry should report any suspicious behavior or comments that would lead an individual to believe that Physical Abuse and/or Sexual Abuse has occurred in connection with Church functions or Church property. The following are indications of possible abuse:

- PHYSICAL SIGNS – lacerations and bruises, nightmares, irritation, pain or injury to genital area, difficulty with urinating, discomfort when sitting, torn or bleeding underclothing, venereal disease
- BEHAVIORAL SIGNS – anxiety when approaching church or nursery area, nervous or hostile behavior toward adults, sexual self-consciousness, “acting out” sexual behavior, withdrawal from church activities
- VERBAL SIGNS - I don’t like (particular church worker), (a church worker) does things to me when we’re alone, I don’t like to be alone with (a church worker), (a church worker) fooled around with me.

If any of these things should take place, persons must report what they have seen or heard to the person directly over their department. The department head will then relay that information to the senior pastor. If, in the judgment of the senior pastor, there is any truth to the allegations, he will report these findings to the Department of Social Services. within 24 hours.

APPLICANT’S STATEMENT

I HAVE READ, UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO COMPLY WITH THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION POLICY FOR THESE REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR HARRISON UMC.

Signature (Required)

Date _____