

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

**Sigourney United Methodist Church
Sigourney, Iowa**

*And the child grew and became strong;
he was filled with wisdom, and the
grace of God was upon him.
Luke 2:40 NIV*

OUR PURPOSE

To minister to the children and youth of our church, and assure a safe and wholesome environment at all times.

Our policies define our responsibilities to:

1. Protect all children in our church programs from physical or sexual abuse, while in our care and supervision.
2. Assure our teachers, workers, and volunteers have protection from false accusations or wrongful behavior toward any child.
3. Take reasonable action that would protect our church against lawsuits.

These policies are designed for the safety and protection of all children and workers in our children and youth programs, and should be understood and followed.

STAFFING AND SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

I. VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

Anyone working with the children or youth shall be reviewed for approval by the Christian Education Chairperson and the Designated Program Coordinator (Sunday School Superintendent, Friendship Company Director, Youth Group Leader, Vacation Bible School Director.)

Screening and Approval Process

- 1) Participation in church ministries for a minimum of six months
- 2) Interview and Reference Check
- 3) Criminal Records/Background Check may be completed with signed release. All results will be destroyed once final action is completed.
- 4) Completed Safe Sanctuary Training (to be renewed every 5 years)
- 5) Signed Safe Sanctuary Covenant

Exceptions may be made for workers under the direct supervision of approved workers and/or in large groups where there is little chance for isolated contact.

II. SUPERVISION

All church workers should be cautious about being alone in an isolated situation with a child.

- 1) Two-deep leadership is ideal. At least two non-related workers should be in the room at all times. When this is not possible, an assigned and approved adult will check the room periodically.
- 2) The Program Coordinator will make regular visits to the classrooms to insure that classrooms are properly supervised.
- 3) Windows in doors shall not be covered.

III. SPECIAL EVENTS/OVERNIGHT POLICIES

Off campus activities must be pre-approved by the Christian Education Chairperson.

- 1) The Supervisor of the activity shall complete the Special Events Checklist and submit to the Christian Education Chairperson.
- 2) Written parental consent and medical release forms are required for each participant.
- 3) When an activity involves transportation, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. All participants must be secured in appropriate restraints.

- 4) All off campus activities require a minimum of two approved adult leaders. The leaders will be responsible for an assigned group for the duration of the event. Staffing ratios (children/youth per leader) as listed shall be followed:

Preschool	4-5 children/youth
Elementary	6-8 children/youth
Junior/Senior High	8-10 children/youth

PROCEDURES FOR MAINTAINING THE PHYSICAL SAFETY OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

- I. **DROP OFF AND PICK UP POLICY (birth to fourth grade)**
Children shall not be dropped off in a classroom without a teacher present. Teachers are expected to arrive 10 minutes before class begins and stay until all students have been picked up. Parents or guardians should plan the arrival and departure of their children accordingly. Parents or guardians are responsible for informing the teacher if someone other than themselves is authorized to pick up their child. Siblings may not pick up a child unless the sibling is at least 10 years old.
- II. **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**
This policy affects those parents or guardians who will not be in the church during the time their children are participating in a church sponsored program. Such parents or guardians shall supply the teacher with a phone number where they can be contacted in the event of an emergency involving their child.
- III. **GENERAL SUPERVISION**
Parents or guardians are responsible for supervising their children at all times they are in church or on church premises, unless the child is participating in a group activity guided by a teacher. Parents or guardians need to assure the physical safety of their own child(ren), and also to assure that their child(ren) are not endangering the physical safety of others.

BATHROOM POLICY

I. DIAPER CHANGING

We strongly suggest and encourage parents to change the child's diaper prior to bringing them in the nursery. Diaper changing shall take place in such a way that another nursery worker, if available, can easily see the child that is being changed as well as the other children in the room.

II. GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW

We strongly encourage parents to take their children to the bathroom prior to each class.

- 1) Avoid being alone with a child in a bathroom: go as a group if possible.
- 2) Never go into a bathroom stall with the child and shut the door.

III. PRESCHOOLERS/SPECIAL NEEDS

It is recommended that a volunteer escort children in a group, or if only 1 child has to use the bathroom and needs assistance, then prop the bathroom door open.

MEDICATION POLICY

The Sigourney United Methodist Church will not be responsible for storing or dispensing any medications (prescription or over the counter) to children in our care.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

All interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child's dignity and self-esteem. Gentleness, respect and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through verbal instruction, training and correction. Physical punishment will not be used.

It is important that we provide an atmosphere that encourages good behavior. The information which follows is suggested to provide help in preventing discipline problems:

I. Preventative Measures:

- 1) Be well prepared and organized by planning a variety of activities which keep students interested.
- 2) Review the rules frequently with the children.
- 3) Be consistent in enforcing the rules.
- 4) Recognize and encourage good behavior in each child.
- 5) Present a caring attitude, while making certain the child knows who is in charge.

II. Suggested Solutions:

If discipline problem does occur, the teacher could potentially use on of the several suggested solutions:

- 1) Make eye contact or use appropriate touch (hand on shoulder, hand on head, etc.)
- 2) Use a "time out" chair which is away from all activity, but close enough for the child to mentally participate. It is recommended that the child sit 1 minute for each year of their age. During this time the child is encouraged to think about how they will change their behavior.
- 3) Parents will be notified either by note or phone if a child has deliberately destroyed church property. If a note is used, it should be signed and returned by the parent.
- 4) Discuss with the child why their behavior is inappropriate and why they are being disciplined.

III. Additional Discipline Assistance Procedure:

There may be situations where the suggestions have been tried and there is still a discipline problem which needs to be resolved.

- 1) Discuss the problem with the Program Coordinator or the Pastor.
- 2) The Program Coordinator could observe and give feedback.
- 3) Parents may be contacted by the teacher and/or the Program Coordinator and given the opportunity to observe.
- 4) A conference, which could include the child, parents, teacher and Program Coordinator for dialogue and decision making

may be planned. This conference could result in the child being removed from the activity for a specific period of time.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following special considerations shall be carefully considered by all teachers, workers and volunteers.

- 1) Driving- Whenever possible, anyone driving children/youth home should be accompanied by another adult,
- 2) Meals- One-on one meals with children/youth should be avoided without parental consent.
- 3) Dating- At no time should anyone working with youth pursue a dating relationship with the youth.
- 4) Open Door Policy- At no time should there be a one-on one meeting behind closed doors, or in an isolated area. Keep doors partially open if a conference is necessary. Windows in doors shall not be covered.

PROPER DISPLAY OF AFFECTION

Physical contact with children/youth shall be age and developmentally appropriate. While touch is an essential part of nurturing, staff should be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural and family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. The following guidelines are suggested to promote pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

- 1) Hugs- Child/youth initiated hugs are acceptable. One arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs or kisses.
- 2) Lap Sitting- Sitting on laps is appropriate for children age five and younger. Lap sitting should be discouraged with school age children. These children may be encouraged to sit next to the worker.
- 3) Casual Touch- Gentle contact during activities may be to a child's head, shoulder, arm or hand.
- 4) Physical discipline shall never be used.

POLICY FOR HANDLING SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE: BEING ON THE ALERT FOR SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Teachers, workers and volunteers are not “mandatory reporters” under Iowa’s child abuse laws. Nevertheless, we have a moral obligation to ensure that God’s children are safe from abuse or neglect. Please be on the alert for the signs of possible abuse or neglect and consider the following factors:

- Does the child/youth have an unexplained injury; a patch of hair missing, a burn, a limp, or multiple scratches or bruises?
- Does the child/youth have an inordinate number of “explained” injuries, multiple bruises on arms or legs over a prolonged period of time?
- Does the child/youth appear unusually thin, unkempt, malnourished, or sickly, without adequate explanation?
- Has the child/youth relayed information to you directly which makes you suspect abuse?
- Does the child/youth make drawings or allude to suspicious incidents in writing or through prayer requests?
- Is the child/youth inadequately dressed for inclement weather?
- Does the child/youth wear long-sleeved tops during the summer to cover bruises on arms?
- Does the child/youth refer to having a “secret” which is shameful, or engage in overly sexualized behavior?
- Does the child refer to “unwanted touches” or being victimized by others?

Do not investigate signs of abuse. Fill out the incident report and refer all suspicions of abuse to the Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair.

MEDIA SPOKESPERSON: If there is an incident that leads to an investigation, the Church Council will appoint a Media Spokesperson. All communication will be directed to this individual.

CONFIDENTIALITY: At all times keep information about child abuse confidential. If the Pastor or the Christian Education Chairperson is unavailable, and you consider the situation a possible emergency, you can contact the Iowa Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-362-2178.

RESPONDING TO THE CHILD/YOUTH: When the child/youth first comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen. Give emotional support, reminding the child/youth that he or she is not at fault and that he or she was right to tell you about the problem. Do not promise the child/youth that you will not tell anyone.

Appendices

- I. Form for Reference Check
- II. Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check
- III. Safe Sanctuary Covenant Statement
- IV. Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse
- V. Accident Report Form
- VI. Special Events Checklist
- VII. Special Events Parental Consent and Medical Release Form

2016 Child Protection Policy Work Group: Pastor Shannon Pascual, Jaci James (Christian Education Chairperson), Jeff Hinnah (Sunday School), Kelly Mousel (Youth Group), Ken Bucklin (Trustees Chairperson)

(Adopted by the Sigourney UMC Church Council on October 19, 2016)

