

# ***Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church Child/Youth Protection Policy***

Revised and adopted November, 2011

## **Introduction**

A church is a sanctuary in several respects. It is sometimes a place of refuge from the turmoil of the secular world; it is a nurturing community of faith; and it is a source of empowerment for leading lives of faith and witness. Even so, the church is never fully removed from contemporary society, and the church is required to be mindful of the reality of evil in the world.

Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church faces unique challenges in its ministry to children and youth. Because both the Glenn Sanctuary and Church School Building are owned by Emory University, they are required to be kept fully open for Emory classes and programs. Glenn thus lacks the ability of most similar sized churches to lock or cordon off any part of these facilities from the public. The Youth and Activities Building (YAAB), being owned by Glenn, is under Glenn's control.

Both secular law and Christian teaching remind us that we are to exercise special care in attending to the safety and well being of children and youth. It is never possible to guarantee safety, as there are many hazards and dangers that cannot be predicted, as well as persons who intend to do evil in spite of all precautions. But we can and must take reasonable measures to try to minimize those risks which can be anticipated.

*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*(2004) ("*Discipline*") provides in the *Social Principles* (para. 162): "[C]hildren must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse."

Throughout this document, the term child is inclusive to mean all children/youth considered minors under the law – typically 17 years of age and under.

This Child/Youth Protection Policy applies to all ministries of the church, with the understanding that the affiliate ministries will have additional policies that can add to, but not detract from, our guidelines.

**In an emergency situation where health and/or safety are at risk, a call should immediately be placed to 911 Emergency services.**

## **A. Child/Youth Physical and Emotional Abuse**

1. No corporal punishment of any child associated with any church program is allowed. "Corporal punishment" means any conduct which would cause any degree of physical pain or discomfort to a child.
2. No threatening, menacing, or verbally degrading actions or words are allowed – this includes tone, words, and actions used in such a way as to cause a reasonable apprehension of physical pain, discomfort, or mental/emotional anguish on the part of the child.
3. No conduct is permitted which would knowingly expose a child to physical or emotional pain, discomfort or endangerment. The only exception to this policy is a program such as a hike or other outing in which normal and non-harmful physical exertion is involved.

4. If a child is behaving in such a way as to present a threat to his/her own physical safety or the safety of others, the child should be safely restrained and the adult(s) responsible for the child is to be notified as soon as practicable and the child removed from the program as soon as practicable until such time as the child no longer poses a threat to safety. Any costs, such as transportation or special custodial costs, incurred as a result of removing a child from a program are the responsibility of the child's parent(s) or responsible adult(s).

**B. Child Sexual Abuse**

1. No sexual abuse of any child is to be permitted or tolerated.
2. "Child sexual abuse" is any act which involves any kind of physical contact with or visible exposure of the genitals, genital area, or breasts of a child or an adult interacting with a child, or any depiction of same. This provision does not apply to reasonable and necessary changing of diapers or toilet training of a young child. "Child sexual abuse" also includes any conduct intended to cause sexual arousal in or in the presence of a child.

Child physical, emotional, and sexual abuse also includes any definitions of such misconduct contained in current state statutes and regulations.

**C. Reporting Procedures Regarding Actual or Suspected Child Physical or Sexual Abuse**

1. If an incident of child physical or sexual abuse occurs or is suspected of having occurred, both the church staff member/volunteer in charge of the program and the church pastor or pastor-on-call are to be notified immediately.
2. If it is impracticable to notify the staff member/volunteer and pastor, and imminent danger of the child is suspected, then the state Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) should be notified as soon as practicable and not later than within 24 hours through their statewide toll-free hotline then in effect. The State of Georgia child protection reporting number in effect at the time of adoption of this policy is 877.210.KIDS. Alternately, if an event occurs in DeKalb County, the number of the DeKalb County child protection unit is 404.370.5066 as of the time of adoption of this policy.
3. The pastor or the pastor's designee(s) will immediately investigate any report of actual or suspected child physical or sexual abuse, and if there are reasonable grounds to believe that an act of abuse may have occurred, the pastor or the pastor's designee will notify DFCS or the county child protection unit, and in no case more than 24 hours after receiving the report. A written report of any such internal inquiry will be prepared as soon as practicable.
4. If no imminent danger to the child is perceived and the investigation does not require DFCS involvement – under the direction of the United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries guidelines, the pastor or the pastor's designee(s) will follow up with the involved parties with referrals for counseling and professional support, while acknowledging the documentation of the incident(s) or suspected incidence.
5. All incidents and suspected abuse will be documented and confidentially kept on file in the church office, with the accident, incident, and suspected abuse forms readily available on the church website.

#### **D. Ministerial Confidentiality**

1. Ministers are ordinarily required to keep inviolate all confidences, including confessional confidences. The Discipline (para. 341.5) provides, however, for a partial exception to confidentiality in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect “where mandatory reporting is required by civil law”.
2. Additionally, ministers bear a four-fold responsibility to the congregation: Word; Sacrament; Order; and Service. Under “Order” ministers are designated as “the administrative officer of the local church”. (Discipline, para. 340.3(a)). Matters which involve local church administration are not confidential communications and must be acted upon as a matter of administrative necessity. Thus, a report of misconduct by a member of the church staff or a church volunteer, while acting in their capacity as a staff member or volunteer, involves an administrative matter which cannot be treated as confidential. All ministers will, in handling such matters, act as discreetly as administrative necessity may permit.

#### **E. Prevention Guidelines**

All programs of children or youth shall be governed by these guidelines:

1. Two adults, or more, shall be present at all times for any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and/or youth. If two adults cannot attend, the event must be canceled. For example, this includes informal use of the playground during events such as Wednesday Night Supper. The requirement of a second adult can be satisfied by the presence of a supervising minister, staff member, or lay volunteer who has overall responsibility for a program and is available to check in frequently with each classroom or setting where another adult is present.
2. Confidential counseling between a staff person or volunteer and a child or youth will not occur behind a closed door. During such counseling sessions another adult will be present, in the room or in an adjacent room, who is aware that a counseling session is in progress and who could hear and respond in the event of an outcry. If another adult is not continuously present as described above, the counseling session must occur in a public place, such as a table at a local coffee shop or restaurant, where sufficient confidentiality can be maintained while keeping the session in constant public view.
3. Confidential counseling will not occur in private settings where the two-person rule above cannot be maintained. In the event that a child or youth approaches a staff person or volunteer under circumstances contrary to those outlined above, the adult will be responsible for immediately moving the counseling session to a setting where the two-person rule can be observed, for example, by suggesting a walk down the sidewalk of a well-traveled street or moving the conversation to a public establishment such as a local coffee shop or restaurant.
4. Counseling between a professionally certified pastoral counselor (or licensed clinician) and a child or youth shall not be bound by the above restrictions. Rather, licensed counselors or therapists shall adhere to the accepted standards of professional conduct as established by their licensing organization, which govern such counseling situations.
5. When transporting children or youth, staff and volunteers will make reasonable efforts to maintain the two-person rule, as described above, or to have more than one child or youth in the vehicle. When it is impracticable to have two adults present the adult should seek parental permission to transport the child or youth. Such permission may be given in advance, and may be ongoing, such as permission to transport a youth to school after Thursday morning youth breakfast each week.
6. Classroom doors will have windows; or doors will be left ajar when children and/or youth are present in the room. Rooms 100, 101, 200, and 206 currently satisfy the requirement of having windows in exterior doors, but not for doors which open into the building. Upon adoption of this policy, investigation will be undertaken into the feasibility of installing new interior doors with windows in these rooms.
7. There shall be access to a telephone in the buildings.

8. Written parental permission shall be obtained when groups of children or youth leave church property or enroll in a long-term recurring activity such as SPARK. Such permissions shall include space for the parent(s) or other responsible adult(s) to furnish information concerning allergies or other special needs. If, in the judgment of the adult supervisor of an event, a special need cannot be accommodated, the child may be obligated to participate in an alternate activity or program. It is the obligation of the parent(s) or child's other responsible adult(s) to furnish Glenn with complete and accurate information concerning the child's allergies, medical conditions, or special needs, so as to afford the church a full opportunity to determine in advance of an event whether it would be appropriate for the child to participate in the event. It is imperative also that the parent(s) or other responsible adult(s) furnish the church with accurate, up-to-date emergency contact information. Reasonable steps will be taken to give advance notice about activities and any unusual circumstances. For example, Mountain TOP policy specifies that only one adult will be on each van with youth and children during the project. As this is a variation from the Glenn policy (see above), reasonable steps should be taken to disclose this circumstance to parents when registering their youth for the Mountain TOP mission trip for youth.
9. Unauthorized persons will not be allowed to remain with a children's or youth group. Unauthorized persons include, but are not limited to: persons with no affiliation with the program, event or ministry in progress; and children and youth attending an activity for which parental permission is required who do not have consent to attend.
10. No child or youth shall leave a designated meeting area without permission or supervision. For overnight events and events occurring away from the church site, children or youth must have written parental permission to leave an event early except in emergency situations. In instances where a third party is to pick up a child or youth from an event, the parent or custodial adult must give prior written authorization or telephone permission to a staff member and/or Glenn volunteer in charge.
11. Children age 10 and under must be signed in and out of Sunday School. The sign in/out sheet will include the name and telephone number(s) of the adult responsible for the child, as well as notification of any allergies or special conditions. Sign in/sign out procedures particular to the ministry programs such as Friday Night Skate, SPARK, Youth Group, etc. will be coordinated with the input and guidance of Glenn staff and the Education Team.
12. Glenn School and Glenn After School program, as well as independent programs for which Glenn is a sponsoring institution (such as Girl Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, and Boy Scouts) are responsible for developing and implementing their own child and youth protection policies, so long as they are at least as rigorous as the standards set forth in this policy. These programs are free to adopt these policies as their own if they so choose.
13. In an instance in which a child or youth is not picked up in a timely manner at the conclusion of an event, the event leaders will attempt to contact the parent or custodial adult, followed by the Emergency Contacts on file. If no authorized person still comes forward to pick up the child or youth three hours following the close of the event, the event leader is authorized to report the child or youth as abandoned to public safety authorities, in consultation with the Senior Pastor and/or Chair of Trustees.

## **F. Selection and Screening of Staff**

### **1. Employed Staff**

#### **a. Clergy Staff**

The character and fitness of ordained and commissioned United Methodist clergy are determined by the Board of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session of the home conference of the clergy. Clergy staff will be required to give consent for a criminal background check upon commencement of appointment or employment at Glenn. Any questions raised by the criminal background check will be submitted to the appropriate conference Board of Ordained Ministry for review.

b. Other Staff

- i. All persons employed by Glenn Memorial Church shall:
- ii. Be at least 14 years of age.
- iii. Complete a Glenn Memorial UMC Employee Information form.
- iv. Provide one or more character references. These references may be oral or in writing.
- v. Complete a training session on the prevention, procedures and reporting of suspected abuse.
- vi. Complete a consent form for criminal record check. Individuals must pass this criminal record check to the satisfaction of supervisory church staff.
- vii. First Aid/CPR training is offered annually for all church workers who work with children and youth. Employed workers are encouraged to take this course and keep their certification up to date.

**2. Volunteers**

- a. All volunteers working with children or youth shall:  
Be at least four years older than the children or youth with whom they are volunteering to work and if under 21, supervised by an adult over the age of 21.
- b. All volunteers working with children or youth on a continuing basis shall:
  - i. Complete Volunteer Children and Youth Workers Profile form.
  - ii. Complete consent for criminal record check. We are screening for offenses that pose a risk to the health and safety of others only.
  - iii. Complete a training session that includes information on the prevention, procedures, and reporting of suspected abuse the next time it is offered after becoming a volunteer.
  - iv. Be active in the Glenn Memorial Church community for at least six months and supply one or more references if they have been at Glenn less than one year. The references may be oral or in writing.

**G. Implementation**

This policy shall replace the existing child protection policy, adopted in 1999 and revised in 2008, immediately upon approval by the Glenn Church Council. Existing volunteers and staff who commenced service under the previous policy shall be exempt from re-screening under these new procedures.

It is recommended that upon adoption these policies be made readily available on the church web site and that a printed copy be furnished upon request.

It is further recommended that the Church Council, or other church governing body at the time, review these policies at least quadrennially.

Revised by the Children's Education Committee & Education Team, August 2011.

Reviewed by the Trustees, September 2011. Suggestions made.

Revised by the Children's Education Committee & Education Team, October 2011.

Reviewed & approved by the Trustees, October 2011.

Presented to Church Council for Approval, November 2011.