

St. Andrew's United Methodist Church  
Policy Manual  
For The  
Reduction of the Risk of Abuse.

# Policy

We, the congregation of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church, Baton Rouge, LA recognize that there is no human being that falls outside the Psalmist's claim that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God; "knit together in [our] mother's womb"<sup>1</sup> by the Creator of the universe. Further, we cannot deny that humankind has been deemed "very good"<sup>2</sup> by this very same Creator. This inherent value which we possess, coupled the Scriptures' admonition to avoid "anything that makes your brother or sister stumble,"<sup>3</sup> particularly the "little ones,"<sup>4</sup> calls us to also recognize the grievous harm present in all instances of abuse. Such incidents, whether sexual, physical, emotional or harassing in nature, are devastating to all who are involved. God calls us to make St. Andrew's a safe place, doing all we can to protect children, teens and other vulnerable persons from the devastating effects of abuse. Thus, in covenant with one another, we adopt this policy for the prevention of abuse in our church.

## Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Risk Reduction/Safe Sanctuaries and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all who come under our care.

## Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of who come under our care. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of both staff persons and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs, ministries and events; we will provide broad education regarding our policies, as well as recognizing the signs of abuse; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will respond immediately and compassionately to any reported or suspected abuse, again following the requirements of state law and the policies of The Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church. The procedures for fulfilling this covenant can be found in the Procedure section of this document on the following pages.

## Conclusion

In all of our ministries, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that every child of God will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (Baptismal Covenant II," *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

---

<sup>1</sup> From Psalm 139:13-15 NRSV

<sup>2</sup> From Genesis 1:31 NRSV

<sup>3</sup> From Romans 14:21 NRSV

<sup>4</sup> See Matt 18:6-9 or 19:13-15 or Mark 9:16-15 or Luke 18:15-17

## Procedure

- I. Any person, paid or volunteer, who works in a ministry area of St. Andrew's will be required to be screened. A list of people who have been screened at each level will be maintained and made available to any church member.
  - A. **Level 1 Screening** – Level 1 Screening is the most stringent level of training and screening.
    1. What positions require a Level 1 Screening?
      - a) All paid employees of St. Andrew's UMC, whether full or part time, lay or clergy, Preschool staff, Summer Camp Director and Assistant Directors, and any volunteer working with children or youth who will be participating in overnight activities, or who will spend extended time with children or youth without another person with a level 1 screening present.
    2. What is included in a level 1 screening?
      - a) Complete a staff or volunteer application form (A.4 or A.5)
      - b) Have been an active member of the church for at least six months (exception: hired staff members). A person with a Level 1 screening must be involved in activities other than the ministry for which they are volunteering. (This requirement will be waived for ministry professionals who are hired through the SPR process)
      - c) Attend annual risk reduction policy training, and sign a statement agreeing to abide by all policies and procedures
      - d) Have a criminal background check and a reference check to be repeated every 3 years (for clergy, checks will be performed at initial appointment to St. Andrew's)
      - e) Personal interview with the Senior Pastor, Staff person, Staff Parish Relations Committee, or a designee.
      - f) Give written consent to verify information included in the interview and application process
      - g) Sign the Risk Reduction Policy Acknowledgement
      - h) Training in (or willingness to be trained in) CPR, AED, and First Aid. For persons who will be working with infants, Infant CPR is also required.
  - B. **Level 2 Screening** – A Level 2 Screening includes many of the same checks as level 1.
    1. People with a Level 2 Screening will work primarily when a person with Level 1 screening is present.

1. What positions require a Level 2 Screening?
  - a) Sunday School Teachers, UMYF counselors, Summer Camp teachers other than the Director and Assistant Directors, teens who work with younger children in the nursery, preschool, or Summer Camp, and any other volunteer who regularly supervises, or works around, children or youth.
2. What is included in a level 2 screening?
  - a) Have been an active participant in the life of the church for at least six months. A person with a Level 2 screening must be involved in activities other than the ministry for which they are volunteering. (This requirement will be waived for ministry professionals who are hired through the SPR process)
  - b) Complete a volunteer application form. Application must include at a minimum:
    - (1) Identification of work area/service to be performed;
    - (2) Experience and skills specifically related to the position;
    - (3) Personal references;
    - (4) Address & contact information etc.
    - (5) A statement of disclosure of any criminal history or accusations of sexual, physical or emotional abuse, misconduct or harassment.
    - (6) A statement agreeing to inform ministry of any arrest for any crime or any allegation of sexual misconduct or abuse of any nature that occurs after the completion of the above referenced statement.
    - (7) A statement of consent to verify all information or obtain a criminal background check.
  - c) Give consent for St. Andrew's to verify the information included in the interview and application process
  - d) Have a reference check to be repeated every 3 years
  - e) Personal interview with the Senior Pastor, Staff person, Staff Parish Relations Committee, or a designee.
  - f) Attend annual risk reduction policy training
  - g) Sign the Risk Reduction Policy Acknowledgement

- C. **Level 3 Screening** – A Level 3 screening will be conducted for anyone else who has responsibility with children or youth in connection with any ministry of St. Andrew's

UMC. Level 3 Screened volunteers will only work when a person with a level 1 or 2 screening person is present.

1. What positions require a Level 3 Screening?
  - a) Substitute Sunday School Teachers
  - b) All adults involved in VBS, Easter Egg Hunts, Youth or Children's Music programs, or Youth or Children's activities, including parents of the children or youth involved, unless the parent will be interacting primarily with his or her own child (example: parents' visiting day at preschool or Sunday School).
  - c) People who work in ministry only to adult groups, such as Adult Sunday School Teachers
  - d) Speakers, musicians, and featured guests at any Children's or Youth event; for example, a biologist who visits the Preschool to talk about insects, or an outside pastor who comes to lead a Youth Retreat.
2. What is included in a level 3 screening?
  - a) Be recommended by someone with a Level 1 or 2 screening
  - b) Be made aware of the Risk Reduction Policy, including the requirement that there always be a person with a level 1 or 2 screening present when s/he is volunteering with children or youth.
  - c) Sign the Risk Reduction Policy Acknowledgement

II. All information gathered during the screening process shall be kept strictly confidential. Access to information gathered at any stage of the process will be limited to those directly involved in the decision making or supervisory process.

III. All adults, no matter their screening status, will use non-violent language and discipline at all times.

- A. Physical discipline (spanking, hitting, etc.) will not be used at any time on St. Andrew's UMC's campus, at any off-campus activity, or during transportation to or from such an event. Any such action is to be reported immediately.
- B. The behavior of a child who is a constant disruption to a class, activity or program should be discussed with his or her parents and the Children's Director. In appropriate circumstances, the parents can be asked to attend the activity to observe or control the problem behavior. If the behavior persists, the child shall be removed from the classroom. Any child who is a danger to him/herself or other children shall be removed immediately by the worker, and the parents or guardians shall be promptly notified.

IV. Children and youth will be adequately supervised at all times.

- A. For this section, "adult" means someone over 18 AND at least five years older than

the oldest child/youth participant AND has a level 1 or 2 screening. Persons who do not meet the age requirements may assist in the supervision, but for every teen or adult who does not meet the age requirements, there must be one who does.

1. Romantic relationships between youth workers and youth are strictly prohibited, regardless of the proximity of age or the screening level of the worker. Recent high school graduates who are dating people who have not yet graduated will not be allowed to volunteer with youth.
- B. A minimum of two unrelated adults shall be present anytime a child or teen is in a church facility or on a church sponsored activity. If both boys and girls will be participating, both male and female adults with Level 1 Screening are recommended. If the activity is a coed overnight activity, both male and female adults with a Level 1 screening adults are required. (Note: this would not apply to a parent or guardian with his or her own child our youth.
- C. All classes, studies, workshops, fellowship/recreation opportunities, one on one counseling sessions, private meetings or mentoring, etc with youth or children shall be conducted in a public space or in a space easily observable by others at all times.
1. At no time should an adult and a youth or child be in a car alone together, even if they are headed to a public space. One adult driver and multiple children or youth can be in a car only if all criteria of section V below are met.
  2. If a room is observable from outside and another qualified adult is available and present to observe, the second adult does not have to be in direct proximity to the contact. This allows a Sunday School teacher to be in a class with no other adults, provided the door is open and/or has a window, and another adult is "roaming" during the class time.
- D. There will always be enough adults to supervise the number of children or youth present. Ratios should never exceed the following. If an adult finds him or herself in a situation where the ratios are not met, s/he should immediately notify the roaming teacher, who will find someone to assist in the classroom.
1. Infants and Toddlers: six children to one adult; minimum of two adults at all times. Roaming adults will not be counted toward the ratio or toward the two-adult rule.
  2. Preschoolers: Six children to one adult; minimum of two adults at all times. Roaming adults will not be counted toward the ratio or toward the two-adult rule.
  3. Elementary School Age: eight children to one adult; minimum of two adults at all times. During Sunday School, roaming adults will be counted toward the ratio. Roaming adults must be in the same building, but need not be in the same room.
  4. Seventh through twelfth grades: one adult to every ten youth; minimum of two adults at all times. During Sunday School, roaming adults will be counted toward the ratio. Roaming adults must be in the same building, but need not be in the same room.

St. Andrew's UMC Policy Manual for the Reduction of the Risk of Abuse

- E. Children must be supervised when travelling between classrooms, and when travelling to and from the restrooms.
  - 1. Adults must not be alone in the restrooms with a child. If a child needs to be assisted, the adults can prop the main restroom door open, ask another unrelated adult or Teen Volunteer to go along or observe, or take (or send) children in groups. Parents should be encouraged to take their children to the restroom when dropping them off and picking them up.
- F. Church staff and/or trained volunteer observers shall make unannounced visits to classes, nurseries, events and gatherings etc. Logs will be kept of such visits (see appendix).
- G. All children below Kindergarten age must be checked in and out when attending Sunday School, nursery, preschool, summer camp, or any church-sponsored activity. The check-in-check-out procedure must provide a way to match the child to an adult approved to pick the child up. Some examples of how this might be accomplished may include sign-in and sign out forms on which the signatures can be compared, a PIN number system in which parents must leave a password or PIN that must be repeated when the child is picked up, or a matching system, in which children are pinned with a color or animal that can be matched with the adult's color or animal.
  - 1. For summer camp and preschool, it's acceptable to have parents fill out a form at the beginning of the season stating who has permission to pick up the child, but it must include a statement that the parent is responsible for notifying us of changes.
- V. When children or youth are transported away from the St. Andrew's UMC Campus, additional care will be taken to keep our children safe while traveling or while off-campus.
  - A. Permission slips are required for any activity that occurs in whole or in part off the St. Andrew's UMC campus. A sample permission slip is included in this policy.
  - B. Drivers transporting anyone other than themselves and their own children must meet the following standards:
    - 1. Possession of a current, valid driver's license.
    - 2. Proof of insurance at the State minimum limits.
    - 3. Not be otherwise disqualified from driving (i.e., under medication, extremely tired, under the influence of mind altering substances etc.)
    - 4. Must be 25 years of age or older.
  - C. Drivers and all passengers must use seatbelts or car seats as appropriate. Passengers should never outnumber the functioning seatbelts in a vehicle.
  - D. While driving, the following rules must be followed:
    - 1. Driver must obey all traffic laws.

St. Andrew's UMC Policy Manual for the Reduction of the Risk of Abuse

2. No horseplay will be allowed in vehicles
  3. Vehicles must be mechanically sound and inspected
- E. In most cases, two unrelated adults must be in a car traveling with children or youth. One adult will be allowed in a car with children or youth only if both the following criteria are met:
1. More than two youth or children are in the vehicle, and
  2. The vehicle is traveling in caravan with at least one other vehicle. (For trips involving four or more vehicles, it may be easier to have each driver coordinate with a partner, rather than having all cars coordinate together. In this case, "partner" drivers must not be related to each other.)
- VI. Special care will be taken for overnight trips and events.
- A. All adults making an overnight trip with children or youth must have a level 1 screening.
  - B. Whenever possible, children and teens should not share hotel-style rooms with adults, since it would conflict with the two-adult rule. Sometimes, because of the nature of the event, it will be unavoidable; in that case, adults should take advantage of any controls they can, such as using adjoining rooms, agreeing to make reciprocal unannounced visits to rooms, checking in with children or youth by cell phone regularly, etc.
  - C. The coordinator of any off-campus event has the authority to create a separate Behavior Covenant for that event.
- VII. All activities on our campus will be conducted in a safe manner.
- A. Parents will be expected to monitor their children's behavior during worship and church-wide activities. All adults will be expected to redirect any child who is engaging in dangerous or destructive behavior.
  - B. When someone uses the church facilities for a special event (such as weddings or baby showers) they will be made aware of what areas are free to use and what areas are off-limits. They will also be made aware that children and youth must be adequately supervised at all times.
  - C. When an outside group uses the church facilities on a regular basis (such as Scouts, AA, Weight Watchers) they must have a responsible member who is aware of the rules regarding children and youth, even if children or youth are not expected to be present.
  - D. No children or youth will be allowed in the balcony of the Friendship Building without a parent or an adult who meets the Level 1 or 2 screening requirements being on the balcony with the child or youth. An adult on the first floor is not adequate supervision.
- VIII. Any electronic ministry or communication at St. Andrew's UMC will be conducted so that

adults, children, and youth, and our gifts of equipment are protected from harm.

A. Web Page Policies

1. Our website will contain an area that is open to outsiders and an area that is open only to members. Anyone desiring access to the members-only area must be approved by the Web Team.
  - a) In the public area of the website, children and youth will never be identified by last name. If parents requests that their children not be included in the public area at all, that request will be honored immediately upon being reported to the Webservant.
  - b) Personal information, such as would appear in the membership directory, will only be accessible in the members-only area.
  - c) Some areas of the web page will only be accessible by members of smaller groups in the church. All areas, no matter what the access level, will be accessible to website administrators, including the Senior Pastor, the Church Secretary, and the Webservant.
  - d) Photos are often included on the website to publicize and commemorate our church's activities. Photos will never intentionally be used in a way that embarrasses or harms anyone. If a photo inadvertently harms or embarrasses the person in the photo, it will be removed immediately. No reason or justification will be required or expected.

B. Internet Use and Safety on Church Computers, phones, and email

1. St. Andrew's is blessed to have abundant electronic resources to assist us in our ministry and administration. None of this equipment may ever be used for any activity that is inconsistent with those purposes. Users may occasionally use the computers for personal use as approved by the Senior Pastor, but the equipment will never be used in a manner that is illegal, harmful, immoral, disrespectful to others, or damaging to the equipment.
2. Any email sent from St. Andrew's' computers or through St. Andrew's' email addresses should be free from any language or content that is racist, sexist, disrespectful, or intolerant to any human being.
3. The St. Andrew's UMC email system shall not be used for mass forwards or advertisements (other than publicizing our ministries).
4. No one other than staff will download anything onto a church computer. If a need to download something is identified, it must be referred to staff and/or the church's computer consultants.
5. The use of church computers for web browsing (other than in direct connection with ministry use) will be discouraged.

C. Use of Social Networking Sites such as MySpace and Facebook

St. Andrew's UMC Policy Manual for the Reduction of the Risk of Abuse

1. Social Networking can be an asset to our ministry, primarily to youth, but must be used in a way consistent with the teachings of Christ. Any social networking account associated with St. Andrew's will be closely monitored by adults. These accounts will never be used to harass, insult, bully, denigrate, or otherwise hurt another person. Likewise, anyone who is networked with St. Andrews will be "unfriended" if they engage in such activities.
  - D. Instant messaging and text messaging between adults and children or teens is discouraged, except in regard to specific church activities.
- IX. Adults, too, will be protected from abuse, exploitation, or harassment. All of us are called to ministry. As we minister to each other and the world, we will acknowledge that as a sacred trust, and will not allow sexual abuse within the ministering relationship. Ministry to adults, whether by clergy or laypersons, paid or volunteer, will be conducted in such a way to protect against harm to the person in ministry, the person to whom s/he is ministering, and the other ministries of the church.
- A. A ministerial relationship exists when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, or other position of leadership) engages with another person. Sexual conduct or sexualized behavior within a ministerial relationship is strictly prohibited.
  - B. All one-on-one meetings between adults on behalf of the church or its ministry will be held in a public place where there are others present and observing. No interactions will be held behind a closed door unless three or more people are present.
  - C. Harassment (unwelcome verbal or physical conduct) of a sexual nature, or harassment based on gender, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or retaliation will never be allowed. Unlawful harassment is a form of discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal authority. Such harassment occurs when:
    1. A supervisor's harassing conduct results in a tangible change in an employee's employment status or benefits (for example, demotion, termination, failure to promote, etc.) or
    2. The conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment. Hostile work environment harassment occurs when unwelcome comments or conduct based on sex, race or other legally protected characteristics unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Anyone in the workplace might commit this type of harassment – a management official, co-worker, or non-employee, such as a contractor, vendor or guest. The victim can be anyone affected by the conduct, not just the individual at whom the offensive conduct is directed.
      - a) Examples of actions that may create a sexually hostile environment include:
        - (1) Leering, i.e., staring in a sexually suggestive manner
        - (2) Making offensive remarks about looks, clothing, body parts

- (3) Touching in a way that may make an employee feel uncomfortable, such as patting, pinching or intentional brushing against another's body
    - (4) Telling sexual or lewd jokes, hanging sexual posters, making sexual gestures, etc.
    - (5) Sending, forwarding or soliciting sexually suggestive letters, notes, emails, or images
  - b) Other actions which may result in hostile environment harassment, but are non-sexual in nature, include:
    - (1) Use of racially derogatory words, phrases, epithets
    - (2) Demonstrations of a racial or ethnic nature such as a use of gestures, pictures or drawings which would offend a particular racial or ethnic group
    - (3) Comments about an individual's skin color or other racial/ethnic characteristics
    - (4) Making disparaging remarks about an individual's gender that are not sexual in nature
    - (5) Negative comments about an employee's religious beliefs (or lack of religious beliefs)
    - (6) Expressing negative stereotypes regarding an employee's birthplace or ancestry
    - (7) Negative comments regarding an employee's age.
    - (8) Derogatory or intimidating references to an employee's mental or physical impairment
3. A hostile workplace environment does not include simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not extremely serious. Rather, the conduct must be so objectively offensive as to alter the conditions of the individual's employment. The conditions of employment are altered only if the harassment culminates in a tangible employment action or is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment.
- X. Any activity sponsored by or occurring at St. Andrew's UMC will be required to abide by this policy. This includes UMYF, UMY trips, retreats, and off-site activities, Sunday School, Scout groups affiliated with St. Andrew's, Preschool, Summer Day Camp, Scouting groups, Vacation Bible School, Children's Choirs, and any other ministry that may be added.
  - A. For organizations that are not church ministries but use our facilities, such as scouting, an equivalent screening and training completed by the organization can be substituted. Leaders of the group will be expected to sign an agreement to abide by the procedures in this policy.

- XI. Any suspicion of abuse, exploitation, inappropriate sexual behavior, or harassment will be reported immediately.
  - A. Intervention is always our first obligation. Any time any member observes a situation in which someone appears to be victimized, or in which children or teens are behaving in an unsafe manner, the person observing is obligated to intervene.
  - B. Any observed misconduct or other abuse or violation of these policies should be reported immediately. The observation or suspicion should be reported the Senior Pastor. If he or she is the alleged abuser or victim, the allegation should be reported to the Staff-Parish Relations Chair, Administrative Board Chair, or Church Lay Leader. These church leaders are required to act upon the allegation in accordance with any and all applicable civil laws, The Book of Discipline, and Louisiana Conference Policy.
  - C. Reporting the incident to a church leader does not substitute for Mandated Reporting. Mandated Reporting guidelines can be found in the appendix.
  
- XII. All members of the church family will be educated about this policy. The level of education and training will depend on the part the person will play in ministry.
  - A. Parents and church members will be offered a chance each year to meet with church staff and leadership to discuss this policy. This training will also be made available to the community, and will cover, at a minimum,
    - 1. Our policy, and what is required of all church members
    - 2. When and how to intervene in an abusive situation
    - 3. How to recognize the signs of abuse, and what to do if you suspect it
  - B. Staff and volunteers with children and/or youth will be trained annually on this policy and on child abuse awareness and safety. The amount and depth of the training will depend on the person's screening level.
  - C. Workers with children or youth who are level 1 or 2 screened will be offered First Aid, AED, and CPR training.
  - D. Leaders of adults will be trained every three years on abuse issues that affect them.
  - E. Responsibility for training groups shall be as follows:
    - 1. Staff training will be the responsibility of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
    - 2. Training for Youth Counselors will be the responsibility of the Youth Director.
    - 3. Training for Preschool teachers will be the responsibility of the Preschool Director.
    - 4. Training for Sunday School teachers will be the responsibility of the Director of Christian Education or Education Committee Chairperson.
  - F. This policy will be available in the church office, in the narthex, by mail or email from the church office, and on the church web page.