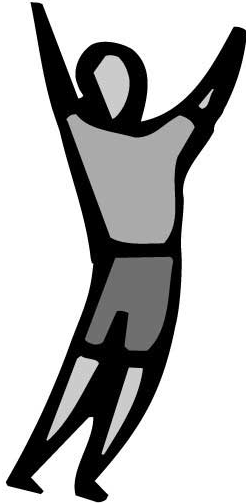


Tabor Heights United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries



A Risk Reduction
and Abuse Prevention Policy
For
Children, Youth, and Adults

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INTRODUCTION

Our hope and belief today is that the church is a place where all people will find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. But, we know that abuse occurs in churches, large and small, urban and rural. It is a problem, which cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. In April 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution (Resolution 65, “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in c\churches, pg. 384, 1996 Book of Resolutions) aimed at reducing the risk of abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in the church. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children, youth, and vulnerable adults very seriously. While we may not be able to completely prevent abuse in every situation, it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a policy of prevention. We are responsible to create an environment of safe sanctuary for children, youth and vulnerable adults, and those who work with them. Thus we establish this Abuse Prevention Policy to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the safety of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

PURPOSE & SCOPE

It is the purpose of this policy to:

- 1) protect from abuse the children, youth, and vulnerable adults that participate in church activities, and
- 2) protect our staff, both paid and volunteer, from unfounded and/or malicious allegations of abuse through a comprehensive plan that includes: screening, training, supervision, reporting procedures, and a response plan. This policy shall be applicable to all ministry settings involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults within ministry settings of Tabor Heights UMC

DEFINITIONS

Abuse: intentional, negligent, or reckless behavior by a volunteer or staff person that is harmful, injurious, or offensive.

Child Abuse – an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust, which is not accidental and which harms or threatens a child’s physical or mental health or a child’s welfare.

Physical Abuse – when an adult injures a child by accident, including assault, shaking, slapping, burning, scalding, kicking and strangling.

Sexual Abuse - sexual contact between an adult or other significantly older, more powerful person and a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. It includes behavior such as inappropriate verbal stimulation, taking or showing sexually explicit photos of or to a child, or exposing a child to pornography or adult sexual activity.

Emotional Abuse – verbal assault or emotional cruelty that affects a child’s self esteem.

Adult: a person 18 years old or older.

Activities: any activity or programs in which children, youth, or vulnerable adults are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.

Background Checks: Researching references and records for indications of past or potential abusive and/or criminal activity.

Child: person from birth until they turn 12 years old.

Conference: The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Person-in-Charge (PIC): Staff person or volunteer who is the person responsible for the event or activity.

Staff person: any person employed by the local ministry setting that is responsible for activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Volunteer: a person who assists in conducting activities under the supervision of person(s) in charge.

Vulnerable Adults: any person 18 years of age or older with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.

We: Tabor Heights United Methodist Church

Youth: any person 12 years old to his/her 18th birthday.

SUPERVISION

1. Required training for all persons having direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Training shall include an annual orientation that includes information about the local ministry setting abuse prevention policy.
2. Our standard practice is that all children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be supervised by adults and that no adult will be alone with any one child, youth, or vulnerable adult out of sight of others. The minimum standard is an open space (open door, window, etc) such that activities can be observed and an adult who is assigned to periodically observe the activities.
3. No person shall supervise any age group of children or youth unless he/she is AT LEAST 5 years older than the children or youth.

WORKERS UNDER AGE EIGHTEEN

While it is preferable to have all workers and volunteers over age eighteen, there are those youth who have shown maturity and wisdom in working with children. To reduce risks, it is recommended that these youth who volunteer to work with children be required to take a Red Cross course in infant/child care and CPR. There should be an adult who can provide periodic supervision.

BUDDY SYSTEM

If children need to leave the room for any reason during the session, children under age ten should not be allowed to leave alone.

ADVANCE NOTICE TO PARENTS

Parent(s) shall be given advance notice and full information regarding any event in which their children will be participating. Included in this information will be the anticipated ratio of adults to children. Before the event, the parent(s) may be required to give written permission for their child's participation.

PARENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION

A family education event should be held periodically, in which information will be shared regarding the latest finding in child/youth sexual abuse and the current policies and procedures of Tabor Heights UMC. An event of this type could include, but not be limited to:

- a speaker from local law enforcement
- a speaker from the local child protective services agency
- a doctor or counselor experienced in treating abused children
- an attorney
- videos about child sexual abuse
- printed information about Oregon's abuse statutes and abuse requirements
- printed copies of Tabor Heights UMC abuse prevention policies and procedures
- a time for worship and prayer

APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT & SUPERVISION

Periodic inspection, at least annually, of all equipment shall be done to prevent injuries to children, youth, and adults. This should include all furniture, toys, and other furnishings in Sunday School rooms. Locks on windows and doors should be examined for safety. Periodic training of all volunteers including persons such as ushers, greeters, and teachers shall include basic first aid, and policies and procedures of Tabor Heights UMC.

ADEQUATE INSURANCE FOR THE SCOPE OF MINISTRIES

The Board of Trustees shall carefully review all ministries in the church and work with the insurance agents, fire department inspectors, and health department inspectors to provide maximum protection and coverage for all persons and activities.

WHAT DOES THE STATE OF OREGON SAY ABOUT CHILD ABUSE?

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any assault of a child and any physical injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including an injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.

EXAMPLES:

Damaged tissue such as multiple bruises on babies who are not mobile
Multiple fractures in various stages of healing
Burns on a child's feet from being dunked into scalding liquid

POSSIBLE BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS:

- Wary of adult contacts
- Apprehensive when other children cry
- Behavioral extremes such as aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Frightened of parents
- Afraid to go home

THREAT OF HARM

Any mental injury to a child, which shall include only observable and substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological abilities to function, caused by cruelty to the child, with due regard to the culture of the child. Threatened harm to a child means subjecting a child to substantial risk of harm to the child's health and welfare. Child selling, which includes buying, selling, or trading for legal or physical custody of a child. This does not apply to legitimate adoptions or domestic relationship planning.

EXAMPLES:

Child living with convicted sex offender
Young child living in a high-risk domestic violence situation
Siblings to victims who have received a serious injury or have died from child neglect or abuse
Lack of supervision (for children under the age of 10 years old left alone)
Caregiver regularly telling a child that if the child tries to make decisions independent of the caregiver or is too curious, then terrifying consequences, possible death, will happen to the child.

MENTAL INJURY OR EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT

Mental injury is the result of cruel statements or actions and includes rejecting, abandoning, or extensive ridicule of a child; terrorizing by threatening extreme punishment against him or his pets; ignoring a child over an extremely long period of time so there is no real relationship to the child; corrupting a child by teaching inappropriate behavior such as aggression, sexual behavior, or substance abuse; or exposing a child to domestic violence.

EXAMPLES:

Child abuse occurs when a person over the age of 18 years old uses or attempts to use a child for their own sexual gratification. Twenty five percent of child sexual abuse incidents involve a juvenile as the abuser. This includes rape, incest, sodomy, sexual penetration, fondling, voyeurism, using a child for pornography, showing a child pornography, or allowing a child to witness adult sexual activity. Fondling includes touching sexual parts of the body, such as breasts, genitals, and buttocks, and may include an adult having a child touch the sexual parts of an adult's body. Voyeurism includes someone exposing himself to a child or exposing the genitals of a child for the adult's sexual gratification.

CHILDREN SELDOM LIE ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE. A child is NEVER responsible for the abuse and should NEVER be blamed for it. Children ARE NOT capable of consent to abusive behavior. Child abuse **IS ALWAYS** wrong and is the responsibility of the abuser.

POSSIBLE BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior.
- Poor peer relationships
- Delinquent or run away.
- Indirect allusions to problems at home such as "I want to live with you."
- Reports sexual assault (children seldom lie about sexual abuse.)
- Fear of a person or an intense dislike at being left with someone.
- Unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters, expressing affection in ways inappropriate for a child of that age.
- May also exhibit behavioral indicators of emotional abuse.

NEGLECT

Negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child includes but is not limited to , failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. Any child who is under care or treatment solely by spiritual means pursuant to the religious beliefs or practices of the child or the child's parents or guardians shall not for this reason alone be considered a neglected or maltreated child. 55% of neglect incidents in Oregon involve children 0 – 5 years old. Most child fatalities in Oregon are due to neglect.

EXAMPLE: Medical neglect: a child is brought to a doctor by a friend with an infected burn because the mother would not bring the child to the doctor.

Nutrition: an infant drops to birth weight for the third time.

Lack of supervision: which lead to harm, like a child who is alone and starts a fire.

POSSIBLE BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- Begging, stealing food
- Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure)
- Constant fatigue, listlessness or falling asleep in class
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Delinquency
- States there is no caretaker
- Shunned by peers

WHAT IF A CHILD* TALKS TO YOU ABOUT BEING ABUSED?

- If it is happening at the time you learn about the abuse, **stop it immediately**, and remove the victim to a safer location.
- Guard your reaction and do your best not to be shocked or over-react.
- Children are rarely able to lie about abuse. Believe them when they report to you. The child protective agency will sort out those issues.
- Commend the child for talking to you and support them with your care and concern. Children frequently blame themselves for the abuse. Reassure them that they are not to blame and it is not their fault.
- Don't ask the child for all the details. They will have to tell their story in full detail to the police or other agency. Protecting them from multiple interviews is important. Let them share what they are comfortable with. Be a good listener. DO NOT "help the child tell their story."
- Explain to them what you are going to do in words they can understand.
- DO NOT promise a child that you will not tell anyone.
- Report the suspected abuse as directed in the church Safety Plan. The person hearing the child first is the person who should make the report. If the child is going to return to a home where the abuse occurred and is at risk, call the police or child protection agency immediately. Child Abuse Hot Line: 503-731-3100
- Write down, as soon as possible, what you heard and to whom it was reported. If more than one person heard the child's story, each person must write his or her own account separately without consulting the other witness. Date and time stamp all reports. Keep a copy for yourself in case you need to reference the information at a later date for clarification or if you are called to testify in court.
- Maintain confidentiality.

* May substitute Youth, Adult, or Elder for "Child".

WHAT IF A PARENT* TALKS TO YOU ABOUT AN ALLEGED ABUSIVE SITUATION?

- Guide the parent through the information outlined in this policy. Guard your reactions and do your best not to over-react and be judgmental. Help them understand that even though reporting is difficult, it is the beginning of the healing process for the family. Encourage them to talk to someone they know and trust or obtain a referral to a qualified counselor.
- Offer to support them while they file the report. If possible, go with them to the police station or other agency and be as supportive as possible.
- The mandatory reporting number is: **503-731-3100**.
- If you think it would be helpful, follow-up the next day with a call of your support.
- If the parent(s) decide NOT to report, gently remind them of your own responsibility to report. Be prepared for their anger, hostility, and threats.
- Document your interactions with the person reporting the alleged abuse as soon as possible.
- Maintain confidentiality.

* May substitute Caregiver, Legal Guardian, Foster Parent, Church Youth Worker, or Volunteer, for "Parent".

**PERSONS AT TABOR HEIGHTS UMC TO BE CONTACTED
IN CASE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE
(2009)**

PASTOR Rev. Don Barnhart
Church Office: 503-232-8500
Cell: 503-347-0077

STAFF/PARISH CHAIR Joanne Dobrinski
(SPRC) 503-492-4757

EDUCATION CHAIR Paulette Meyer
503-236-7795

TRUSTEES Dennis Bridges
Cell: 503-260-8093

DISTRICT Rev. Bonnie Parr Philipson
SUPERINTENDENT 503-249-1851

REPORTING AND RESPONSE

1. The adult who observes or hears of an alleged abuse shall:
 - a) Assure the safety of the victim.
 - i) Whatever the victim says is to be taken very seriously.
 - ii) Make sure that the victim is in a safe place and watched over.
 - iii) Do not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility but immediately remove him/ her from further involvement with children and youth until the matter can be investigated.
 - b) If there is a situation of immediate risk, call the police at 911. Otherwise report the incident immediately to the pastor and/or other persons designated by the ministry setting.

2. The pastor or designee shall:
 - a) Ascertain the details needed to make an accurate report.
 - b) Within 24 hours,
 - i) Write an incident report. The report should include the following information, if obtainable:
 - (1) The name, address, age and sex of the alleged victim;
 - (2) The name and address of the alleged victim's parents or other person responsible for his/her care;
 - (3) The nature and extent of the alleged abuse or neglect;
 - (4) Any evidence of previously known or suspected abuse or neglect of the alleged victim or their siblings;
 - (5) The name, address and relationship, if known, of the person who is alleged to have perpetrated the abuse or neglect; and
 - (6) Any other information known to the person making the report that would be helpful to the investigation of the alleged abuse.
 - c) Contact the appropriate State or law enforcement agency as soon as possible to file the abuse report and provide the aforementioned information and follow the instructions of the agency.
 - d) Report the suspected child abuse to the child's family and any agencies required by law.

3. The alleged perpetrators of the abuse are to be excluded from future events involving children, youth and vulnerable adults until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any activities, care must be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is being conducted.

FURTHER STEPS FOR COMMUNICATION

Notification:

The first step in communication is with victims of abuse. This may begin with an open letter to all church members. At no time, should the letter include the identification of the victim, the accused, or the accuser.

Congregational meeting:

A notification letter detailing a congregational meeting should include the specific time and place of a meeting to be set by the Pastor and to be held within five working days of the report. The church mailing list will be used. The DS will be notified of this meeting and be invited to attend. The congregational meeting shall not be announced at the general morning worship.

Meeting agenda:

A designated spokesperson will be named and open the meeting. A legal or police spokesperson will officiate during the meeting. The meeting and all of the discussion will be kept in strict confidence by all attending.

Response to annual conference and insurance agent:

Conference authorities, either DS and/or the Bishop, shall be notified as soon as allegations of abuse are received. The conference authorities must be kept aware of the congregation's actions throughout the process.

Response to the News Media:

No one but the designated spokesperson should be authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the congregation.

Response to the accused:

The alleged abuser will be removed from his/her position as a volunteer worker with children, youth, or adults until all allegations are fully investigated and resolved.

Continuing the ministry:

It may be necessary to provide support ministries within the congregation. The support may include:

- individual counseling for the victim and their family
- counseling for affected members of the congregation
- counseling for the abuser's family
- a special service of worship and healing may be created as part of the follow-up to the resolution of the incident

SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. All adults, volunteer or staff persons, who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall be required to complete an application including voluntary disclosure of information including legal name and other names previously used, date of birth, and voluntary disclosure of any convictions of abusive behavior.
2. Minimum background screenings shall include:
 - a) Reference checks from application form.
 - b) Review of the Oregon and Idaho lists of sexual offenders or State or National criminal background checks.
3. At minimum, ministry setting abuse prevention policies shall incorporate the following:
 - a) All staff persons and volunteers, who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will submit to the screening procedures.
 - b) Reviewing bodies shall be established (ex: Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee, Education or Nurture Committee, or other organized body).
 - c) The reviewing body is responsible for review and approval of each application before a person's service begins.
 - d) The screening procedure for each individual shall be repeated every five years.
 - e) All records are confidential and will be maintained for a period of at least five years.
 - f) The ministry setting will not knowingly hire anyone with a history of committing sexual abuse on any child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
4. Initial steps for new employees:

At the time of hiring, the respective SPRC liaison will ensure that the new employee has received a copy of this policy. The liaison will contact the new employee within ten days to confirm that they have read the policy.

TRAINING

- 1) Tabor Heights United Methodist Church shall implement or participate in training and orientation procedures for persons in leadership who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Training shall include but is not limited to the local ministry setting's abuse prevention policy and its related procedures.

POLICY REVIEW

- 1) The abuse prevention policy in each ministry setting will be reviewed annually by the administrative board.

I, (print your **full legal** name), _____
understand that:

- Employment may be denied to any person who answers "yes" to any one of the disclosure questions. If hired and the employer later discovers circumstances that would indicate a "yes" answer to any of the above questions, employment may be terminated immediately. The information provided on this form is subject to verification, including a criminal history check and search through any Central Registry of child abusers.
- The employment or volunteer service of any person may be terminated if that person is found, regardless of when discovered, to:
 - o have a history of complaints of abuse of a minor;
 - o have resigned, been terminated or been asked to resign from a position whether paid or unpaid, due to complaint(s) of sexual abuse; and/or
 - o have falsified or omitted information on this disclosure statement.
- This disclosure form must be updated yearly.
- Furthermore, I certify that the information I have provided on this Voluntary Disclosure Form is true and correct. I authorize the verification of the information I have provided by contacting the references I have listed, by conducting a criminal records check, or by other means, including contacting persons I have not listed. I authorize the references to give you whatever information they may have regarding my character and fitness for the job or role for which I have applied.
- Upon being accepted as a paid staff person or a volunteer for a church sponsored event, I agree to abide by and be bound by the Safe Sanctuary Abuse Prevention Policy of Tabor Heights United Methodist Church and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my duties.

Signature _____ Date _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

Other States lived in _____ Social Security Number: _____

Do you have a current driver's license? Yes No Issuing State _____
License # _____

[If needed]
Signature of Minor's Parent or Guardian _____ Date _____

If a background check has been completed for you in the last 2 years, please provide proof or contact information:

Name & Address of Organization that requested the background check Date of last check

Name and Phone Number of reference in above organization

This person has been screened in accordance with Tabor Heights United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary policy and is approved for (name and date of church event): _____

Signature of Person In Charge of event Date

" Careful screening can be important to the prevention of abuse. It provides some assurance that the most reliable, committed and experienced staff and volunteers are in place for every program that involves children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The following are the MINIMUM standards:

- 1. All adults, volunteer or staff persons, who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall be required to complete the Voluntary Disclosure Form.*
- 2. Minimum background screenings shall include:*
 - a) Reference checks from Voluntary Disclosure Form.*
 - b) Review of the Oregon lists of sexual offenders, or State or National criminal background checks.*
- 3. The policy shall be implemented in the following manner:*
 - a) All staff persons and volunteers, who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will submit to the screening procedures.*
 - c) The person in charge of the event and/or their designee is responsible for review and approving each application before a person's service begins.*
 - d) All records are confidential and will be maintained for a period of at least five years."*

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Name of Person Involved: _____ Age: _____

Address of Person Involved: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Parent or Guardian: _____

Witnesses:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Describe the Incident: _____
