



Revised March 2009

Safety Policies



for Ministries
with Children, Youth,
and
Vulnerable Adults

at Puyallup United Methodist Church
1919 W. Pioneer Ave.
Puyallup, WA 98371

Please answer each of the following questions:

As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to:

1. Observe and abide by all church policies regarding working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults?

Yes No

2. Report promptly abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor?

Yes No

3. Complete, sign, and submit the Washington State Patrol background check form?

Yes No

I have participated in a training event or have read and understand the training materials provided by the church related to my volunteer assignment.

I have read and will retain this *Safety Policies for Ministries to Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults*, and I agree to observe and abide by these policies.

Signature

Print full name

Date

1. Introduction

Theological Statement

As Christians we are called to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. From our ancient Hebrew roots, we receive a legacy of justice and mercy. Hospitality and generosity were essential elements of the covenant between the people and their God. Holy places of worship were treasured as places of safety and harmony.

The New Testament continues to affirm our covenant relationship with God and with the whole community of faith. We are called to live just and generous lives, following the great commandments set forth by Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith, in worship, in loving nurture and encouraged to grow in their own faith. Today, the church may be the only place where some children and vulnerable adults find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow, to thrive, and to become faithful people. As a Christian community, we must live up to that responsibility with secure and open hands and hearts.

We must also recognize that we live in a world where there are risks and uncertainties. An open and hospitable Christian community will always, to some degree, be a vulnerable community. Yet it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risks by following a thorough and practical policy of prevention. Your pastoral team is committed to training and supporting our children, youth, parents, vulnerable adults, and all volunteer leaders in understanding and following the safety procedures and policies outlined in this brochure.

May God bless all of our efforts to be the faith community Jesus Christ has called us to be.

Portions of this statement come directly from *Safe Sanctuaries* by Joy Thornburg Melton; Discipleship Resources, 1998.

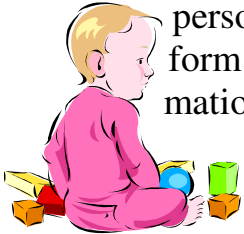
2. Policies

Background checks

All paid staff and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are required to complete a Washington State Patrol Background Check.

If the Background Check shows an individual has been convicted of a crime against a child, youth, or vulnerable adult or of the possession, sale or misuse of drugs or alcohol in the past seven years, he or she will be denied the position of working with these populations.

Additionally, paid staff (outside of clergy who are appointed by the Conference) will be required to fill out a standard application form which includes documentation of their work history for the past ten years and which requests personal references with complete addresses. The form will also include a consent to verify all information provided, a waiver of any right to confidentiality, and of any right to pursue damages against the church caused by the reference's response, and certification that the information is true and correct.



Prevention

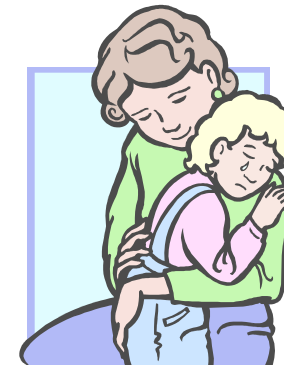
The church's volunteer and paid staff should be encouraged to protect all those in their care from potential abuse by being:

- Cognizant of potentially abusive situations.
- Informed and watchful for signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Supportive of the church's abuse policy.
- Willing to attend orientation and/or training in abuse prevention.
- Aware that we all need appropriate human touch and that trouble is only caused when touch is not appropriate.

Participation Covenant for Volunteers Working with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

The congregation of the United Methodist Church of Puyallup is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, and volunteers who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The attached Safety and Risk Management policies reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

As a volunteer in this congregation, we want you to know that you are welcome to discuss with a pastor of this congregation, in a confidential setting, your experience, if any, as a survivor of abuse.



*Puyallup United Methodist Church
1919 W. Pioneer Ave.
Puyallup, WA 98371*

has a window through which parents may observe their children. The children are to be signed in by their parent(s) or other designated adult and will be greeted by the nursery attendant/teacher. There is a pager system in place that enables the nursery staff to alert parents in the building if they are needed.

Advance notice to and involvement of parents

It is our practice and policy to give the parents advance notice and full information regarding the events in which their children will be participating. If the event requires transportation away from the church or includes overnight stay, parents are required to give written permission to the event. An open-door policy, allowing parents access to programs and events at any time, will help keep lines of communication open.



Annual First Aid/CPR training

The church will encourage, on an annual basis, all church members working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, as well as ushers and Care Team Members, to receive or renew First Aid and CPR training.

Staff identification

Puyallup United Methodist Church staff, frequent volunteers, Sunday School teachers, Youth Leaders, and Puyallup PlayCare staff will wear badges identifying them as staff for their respective programs. Any other adults encountered in the hallways may be asked by any of these staff about their reasons for being present.

Preventative safety procedures for working with children and youth

The following procedures protect both the young person from abuse and the adult from false accusations of abuse:

- Have two adults in every classroom or youth group meeting.
- When children's programming is in session, at least one "rover" will be available in the hallways of the Sunday School wing so that in the event that classrooms have only one teacher present, the "rover" can be available if the teacher should need help in any way. The rover can also supervise students who leave their classrooms to pick up supplies or to use the bathrooms.
- If only one adult is present, the room door should be kept open; a childproof gate will be used if needed to keep very young children in the room.
- Use safe touching practices: ask first; use firm and clear touch, not suggestive touch; pat shoulders and heads, not chests and bottoms; hug from the side; discourage children above the age of nursery care from sitting on laps.

Annual training for staff, adults and helpers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults

Volunteers in this capacity are required to attend a training session in which they are informed of the church's policies for the prevention of child and other abuse, and are taught about the various forms of abuse and how to recognize signs of abuse. The training will include procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth; appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse; and details of the state laws regarding abuse.

At the end of the orientation/training, all will be required to sign a covenant to abide by the church's policies and procedures. Workers unable to attend will be provided with the written training information and will be required to sign the covenant. These policies will be attached to the covenant and are to be retained by the volunteer after the covenant is signed and returned to the supervising ministry team.

Such training is offered annually; volunteers are expected to attend one every three years.



Dealing with reported incidents of sexual or physical abuse and incidents of same by paid or volunteer staff

Reporting is important. Our children are our greatest resource and, as the Church, we have an obligation before God to do all within our power to provide physical safety in our programs, as well as quality content and leadership. This applies to vulnerable adults as well. Reporting is, at present, the best hope that the abuse will stop and that wholeness and shalom might be restored.

Any paid or volunteer staff who either makes the observation of abuse or who receives information from a child, youth, or developmentally disabled/adult dependent person (or his/her guardian), will contact one of the pastors. If one of the pastors is the accused, contact will be made with the chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee who will then report to the District Superintendent. The suspected incident should not be discussed with anyone else. **Confidentiality is important.**

Classroom/program dismissal

Children in second grade and younger are to be collected from their classrooms by their parent(s) or other responsible adult. These adults will have been listed as people who are authorized to pick up each child. Registration forms for Sunday School students include space to specify if there are persons who are legally restrained from having contact with the child. Parents will re-register their children every fall and will specify who, is authorized to pick up their child.

Children are not to be left alone

- Children will not be left unattended in the classrooms.
- If there is an emergency and the teacher must leave the classroom, the rover will be asked to step in and supervise until the teacher returns.
- When a child needs to leave the classroom for any reason, the teacher will ask another child of the same sex to accompany him or her.
- Parents are asked not to bring their children to the classroom until five minutes before the class is to begin so that teachers will have adequate time to prepare for class and to ensure that the child will be adequately supervised.

Nursery safety

The nursery will be staffed by a paid staff member who is trained in early childhood development. Nursery staff will maintain certification in infant/child CPR and in First Aid.

The door to the nursery is to remain closed or gated at all times to help keep the children safe inside, but the door