

SAFE SANCTUARIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
BASIC ESSENTIAL OPERATING PROCEDURES
For: _____ United Methodist Church
_____ (town), North Carolina

1. IMPLEMENT A POLICY FOR RECRUITING, SCREENING, HIRING, AND REGULAR TRAINING YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S STAFF AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS. Criminal background checks, as well as previous employment and all references MUST be checked for those in supervisory capacities with children and youth, including but not limited to paid staff. Training sessions for all workers with children and youth will be held annually.
2. TWO ADULTS: Two (unrelated) adults must be in the room or vehicle at all times. No child or youth should be alone with one adult at any time. Adults working with children or youth must be a church member for at least six months.
3. AGE LIMITS: Staff and volunteers should be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised. No one under the age of 18 should be given supervisory capacity.
4. VISIBILITY IN ROOMS: Every room that is used for activities and teaching of children and youth should have a window in the door, or a half door, that gives visibility to all areas of that room. The window must be left uncovered. If there is no window, the door must be left open at all times.
5. OPEN DOOR COUNSELING: Pastoral counseling is expected to be confidential in nature, but it is for the protection of both parties that such sessions take place where other people are nearby even though not within hearing distance. The pastor's study should have a small glass window in it.
6. ROVING MONITORS: In the event where there are not two adults in the classroom, you must have a roving superintendent or monitor during the meeting or teaching time, and the door must be left open.
7. FIRST AID & CPR: At least one adult present at every church activity should be certified in basic first aid and CPR. The church should offer training annually.
8. COMMUNICATION AND ADVANCE NOTICE TO PARENTS: Parents should always be kept abreast of the programs their children or youth are involved in, and be given advance notice and information regarding any activity which deviates from the traditional classroom instruction offered at the church during Sunday school, UMYF, Vacation Bible School, or other regular activities at the church. Permission forms with medical information should accompany children/youth for any activity involving travel or extreme sports activity (skiing, etc.). Have a "Safe Sanctuary" training time for the parents and family of your children and youth, with copies of the policy for your church, available.
9. AGE AND ACTIVITY APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT: Examine the safety and appropriateness of the equipment you are using in your nursery, classrooms, youth room, play ground.
10. MAINTAIN ADEQUATE LIABILITY INSURANCE COVERAGE for both your activities of the church family, both on and off the premises. Know what coverage your church has for sexual misconduct.
11. DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON: Your church should have a designated spokesperson in case of an incident or allegation abuse. You will want to have a prepared statement before releasing any information to the press. Contact your District Superintendent and the WNC Conference Director of Communications for assistance. All other persons at the church must refrain from speaking to the press. (Page 61 in the Youth edition and page 47 in the Children's edition of "Safe Sanctuaries").
12. TRANSPORTATION: No youth may drive to any off-grounds church-sponsored event or transport others. Your local church policy must specify the insurance guidelines regarding adults using their personal vehicles. The Trustees will have specific guidelines for drivers of the church van, in agreement with their insurance policy, and will do DMV checks on anyone permitted to drive the church van/bus. (Please be aware of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration guidelines for operating 15 passenger vans more safely.)

These procedures (and other suggestions) are outlined in detail in "Safe Sanctuaries" by Joy Melton (Discipleship Resources) in both the Youth and in the Children's editions.