

## SAFE SANCTUARIES

### Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church

Minimum standards for local churches, ministries, events and programs at the conference, district and local church levels in the New York Annual Conference

The minimum recommended standards listed are to be used in all churches, ministries and programs held at the conference, district and local church levels within the New York Annual Conference. These standards are in place to protect our children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation. While these standards are the basics that must be included in all Safe Sanctuaries policies, each church, ministry and program is different. A policy for each church should be created for these reasons. Consultants are available for training and guidance in writing a Safe Sanctuaries policy for your church, ministry and/or event. Resources are listed in Appendix 3.

Guidelines are as follows:

#### Recruiting and Screening of Volunteers and Paid Staff

- Adult volunteers will be active in the church for a minimum of six months before being placed in a supervisory role
- A volunteer/staff application will be submitted which will include references
- Volunteer/staff will consent to a criminal background check
- Background checks will be redone minimally every 3 years, optimally every 2 years

#### Basic Procedures

- Follow the “two adult rule”; two unrelated, non-cohabitating adults will be present at all times
- One adult must be at least 21 years old; second adult may be 18 years old but must follow the “5 year older rule”
- Follow the “5 year older rule”; adults must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child or youth they are in charge of
- Youth up to the age of 17 may be invited to help with programs but can not be counted towards the two adult minimum
- Adult to Child ratios that will be followed – infants 2:5, toddlers 2:8, preschool 2:10, school age 2:15, junior and senior high school 2:16 (N.B. UMC Safe Sanctuaries highly recommends no more than 2:13)
- All programs should be conducted in open view (open doors, windows in classrooms, etc.)
- Registrations for events for children and youth will include photo permission release. No names may be attached to the photos without further parental/guardian consent.
- Permission slips should be obtained if transportation of children or youth will take place. Local church, district or conference level insurance policy rules for drivers will be followed when selecting drivers. All drivers should have a clean driving record for at least 3 years. The church/ministry program should keep a copy of the driver’s license and proof of insurance on file.

- See Appendix 1 for more specific procedures for conference and district sponsored events
- See Appendix 2 for the definition of “vulnerable adult”
- See Appendix 3 for resources

#### The Virtual World and Social Media

- See Appendix 3 for resources specific to this aspect of Safe Sanctuaries

#### Response Plan

- Include a clear response plan for reporting abuse in the Safe Sanctuaries policy
- Contact the district superintendent if the accused is the pastor
- Refer all inquiries from the media to the Bishop’s assistant

#### Follow Up

- Policy needs to be reviewed annually
- Policy and procedures need to change as programs and needs change
- Train volunteers and staff annually
- Inspect property, furnishings, equipment, etc. annually for safety
- Church’s insurance policy and state laws should be reviewed for compliance

## Appendix 1

### Conference, District and local Church Sponsored Events for Children and Youth

For all New York Annual Conference events in which children and youth are participants, the following conditions must be met in addition to the basic procedures outlined on page one

- All activities involving children and/or youth must be age appropriate. If a child does not fit the age of the event, a parent/guardian must stay to supervise the child.
- Each participating group will have at least two unrelated, non-cohabitating adults participating with the children/youth. One adult must be at least 21 years old; second adult may be 18 years old as long as the 5 year older rule is followed. Both adults must have applications and criminal background checks on file with their church.
- If the event is co-ed, adequate male and female leaders are required for participation. Adult to children ratios from the basic procedures section apply
- All leaders and participating adults are trained in Safe Sanctuaries procedures
- At least one adult at the event should have current CPR and First Aid training
- Emergency contact information and needed medical information will be given to staff prior to the beginning of the sponsored activities.
- Volunteers/staff agree to make their responsibility for children/youth their primary focus and keep distractions to a minimum. E.g. Appropriate use of cell phones
- Best practices will be in place to ensure that children and youth are properly supervised in all New York Annual Conference activities.

## **Appendix 2**

### Definition of Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable adults are those that are reliant on others to meet their basic needs. All New York Annual Conference programming for vulnerable adults will follow Safe Sanctuaries policies to ensure that vulnerable adults are safe and treated with respect and dignity. It is important that all those who work with vulnerable adults are aware of the sacred trust that exists in the relationship.

## Appendix 3

### Resources

- <http://www.nyac.com/safe-sanctuaries>
- <http://www.gbod.org/lead-your-church/safe-sanctuaries>
- Safe Sanctuaries consultants are available for help through the Connectional Ministries office
- Available to borrow from The Learning Center or for purchase from Cokesbury written by Joy Thornburg Melton
  - ***Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth***
  - ***Santuarios seguros: Prevención del abuso infantil y juvenil en la iglesia***
  - ***Safe Sanctuaries: The Church Responds to Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Older Adults***
  - ***Safe Sanctuaries in a Virtual World***
  - ***Safe Sanctuaries for Ministers: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church***
  - ***Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth*** (DVD)
  - ***Cyber Safety for Families*** by Paul O'Briant (CD)