

BAYLAKE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

I. Purpose

Baylake United Methodist Church seeks to establish reasonable procedures to reduce the risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children as they participate in church ministries, and to protect staff and volunteers from false allegations of misconduct.

II. Biblical Foundation

Baylake United Methodist Church seeks to express God's love of young persons and to provide for their personal wholeness. This faith community seeks to provide an environment which is caring and secure for all persons. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures and ministries must stand.

And they were bringing children to Him, that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them.

Mark 10:13-16

Today, we continue to recognize that each individual is a child of God and must be allowed to live free of fear, surrounded by love. As Christian adults, we must establish and maintain a nurturing, loving, safe and secure Christian environment, providing support and assistance to our children, youth, and at-risk adults, remembering that our mandate is not only a responsibility, but also an opportunity to protect the gift that God has bestowed upon us.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

John 13:34 (NIV)

III. Commonwealth of Virginia Statutes

Under Section 63.1 – 284.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, an abused child is defined as one who is less than eighteen years of age, "whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates or inflicts, threatens to

create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such a child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death or disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions.”

An act of child abuse may be committed by any person responsible for the care of another individual who is less than eighteen years of age. It does not matter whether the person caring for the child under the age of 18 (hereinafter referred to as a “child” or “children”, which term as used in the Policy also includes children 12 years old to under 18) is a compensated or volunteer worker. It does not matter whether the person routinely is entrusted with the care of children or whether such individual only occasionally comes in contact with children. It does not matter whether the person was entrusted with the care of a child for an hour or only a moment. It only matters that a child was abused or neglected by the person who, on the occasion in question, was responsible for the child’s care.

Note: Eighteen-year-olds who have not yet graduated from high school are considered youth under this policy.

IV. Types of Child Abuse

A. Definition

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, care giver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health or welfare. The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

B. Types of Abuse

1. Physical Abuse

A physical injury is a threat or injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiations; bone fracture; brain damage; skull fracture; subdural hematoma; burns; scalding; cuts; bruises; welts; abrasions; internal injuries; poisoning; sprains; dislocations; gunshot; stabbing wounds.

2. Physical Neglect

Physical neglect includes the failure to provide food, clothing, shelter or supervision for a child if the child’s health or safety is endangered.

Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the code of Virginia, which is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by his/her parent or other persons responsible for the child's care. Examples of such abuse are: sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy and other sexual abuse.

4. Medical Neglect

Medical neglect is the refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental or dental care for a condition, which if untreated could result in illness or developmental delays.

5. Failure to Thrive

Failure to thrive is a syndrome of infancy or early childhood, which is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

6. Mental Abuse/Neglect

Mental abuse or neglect is a pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker, which result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

7. Educational Neglect

The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

8. Bizarre Discipline

This includes any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify a child's behavior.

V. Reducing the risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Baylake United Methodist Church and at all church sponsored activities, several abuse prevention measures will be utilized. These measures include: screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions or expungements, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two leader rule, standards of appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms.

1. Six Month Rule

Baylake United Methodist Church will not use anyone as a volunteer leader for nursery, children or youth ministries in the church unless such person has had continuous active involvement in the church for at least six (6) months or is working with a partner who meets the 6-month rule. If a volunteer transfers membership to Baylake United Methodist Church from a previous church, and provides appropriate documentation and references from previous experience in working with children or youth, this period may be shortened to 90 days.

2. Staff Screening

Before beginning the first year of service, each employed leader for nursery, children or youth ministries or child care worker will sign an application which includes a statement indicating that he/she has never been convicted of child abuse nor has he/she had such a conviction expunged. The screening process will ask for the following information: general information, criminal convictions, prior church membership and prior work experience with youth or children. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement will not be permitted to work with children or youth. Each person shall undergo a national background check. A national background check will be conducted on staff every three years. At least one staff member and at least one lay person will conduct the interviews in hiring new staff.

3. Volunteer Screening

All volunteers that work regularly with children and youth must fill out a Volunteer Application Form and Disclosure Statement and undergo a national background check. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement will not be permitted to work with children or youth.

4. Staff and Volunteer Training

Before beginning service, all paid and volunteer workers in the nursery, children or youth ministries are required to read and sign the Child Protection Guidelines and Policies for Baylake United Methodist Church. Anyone failing to do so will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and signed. All paid workers are required to attend one Safe Sanctuary or Child Protection training session, or complete online training and sign a statement to verify that they have completed such training. This training shall be completed once every three years. All volunteers are strongly encouraged to complete such training.

Outside groups using church facilities shall be responsible for operating under their own Child Protection Policies.

5. Two Adult-Rule

Leaders will be assigned in **teams of two** or more for all children or youth activities. These two leaders should be adults, age 18 or older, or one adult and a youth who is **at least 5 years older** than the children with whom they work. If there are not two leaders available, **a floater may be used between groups** or the groups will be combined or the activity cancelled.

If a church sponsored group stays overnight at the church or leaves the premises overnight, two or more leaders must be present. If the group is mixed in gender, the group must include at least one male adult and one female adult not related by marriage. The youth and children must have sleeping accommodations that separate them by gender. If adults are sleeping in the same room as children or youth, there must be a minimum of two adults in the room, and these adults must be the same gender as the children or youth in that room.

Ideally, two adults shall be in any vehicle that is transporting youth or children. In the event that there are not enough adults available to make this possible, vehicles will caravan to and from the event, and at least two youth or children will be present in each vehicle.

6. One-on-One Mentoring, Consultation or Tutoring

Any one-on-one mentoring, consultation or tutoring between an adult and a child or youth will be conducted in a room or area that is in plain view of others.

7. Classroom Discipline

All leaders and workers with children and youth will use the following discipline measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the leader or worker will tell the

child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g. "We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building." If this measure is not effective, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to the primary leader for the activity and left under his/her supervision, in plain view of others. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g. ridicule, are to be used at any time. If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parent or guardian as soon as possible.

8. Open Classrooms

Classrooms or childcare rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents or guardians or other volunteer church workers at any time.

9. Child Protection Policy Review

Every three to five years, the Child Protection Guidelines and Policies will be reviewed by the directors of nursery, children's and youth ministries. Any revisions will be approved by the church staff and church council. The nursery, children's and youth directors shall be responsible for the administration of this policy.

VI. Reporting Child Abuse

Should there be any allegation of child abuse at Baylake United Methodist Church; the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Any allegation of child abuse shall be treated seriously. Strict confidentiality in all matters relating to allegations and investigations will be maintained.
2. Immediately notify the pastor, nursery, children's or youth minister of the substance of the allegations. The person notified shall immediately contact the pastor, unless the allegations involve the pastor.

(A). If the allegations involve the pastor, the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall be notified immediately and he/she shall immediately notify the district superintendent who shall direct the next steps taken by the church in responding to the allegations. The provisions of this policy shall continue to apply except as the district superintendent directs that other steps be taken.

3. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation.
4. Report the allegation to the Virginia Department of Social Services as required by Virginia State law. If you are uncertain about what has happened or how to proceed, you may call anonymously. VDSS will help you determine the next steps and/or will conduct an investigation if one is warranted.
5. Immediately begin documenting all procedures which occur in handling the allegation.
6. Notify the victim's parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge of the alleged incident, unless the allegations involve the parents.
7. Notify the district superintendent.
8. Report the allegation to the church insurance carrier immediately.
9. **Do not** confront the accused with the allegation. If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church, the person should be relieved temporarily of his/her duties until the investigation is concluded. If the person is a paid employee, the question of continuing or suspending compensation during the investigation should be addressed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee.
10. The pastor should extend whatever care and resources are necessary to those impacted by the allegation, but under **no** circumstances should the pastor or any church leader or member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor or church leader, should under **no** circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate the investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.
11. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.
12. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until the investigation is complete.
13. There shall be a single spokesperson for the church, which shall be designated by the pastor. In the event the pastor is involved in the allegations, the Staff Parish Relations Committee will designate a spokesperson.

After reviewing the foregoing Child Protection Guidelines and Policies, please, sign, date, detach and return this portion to indicate that you have read and understood and accept the Child Protection Guidelines and Policies of Baylake United Methodist Church, adopted in February 2012.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____ Date of Birth _____

I have read and understood the Child Protection Guidelines and Policies of Baylake United Methodist Church, adopted in February, 2012. I agree to abide by those policies and procedures. I have no convictions for child abuse or expungements of such convictions. I authorize Baylake United Methodist Church to contact any references or churches concerning my work with children or youth.

Signature Date