

**NORTH FORK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SAFE SANCTUARIES**

**BASIC PROCEDURE FOR SAFE MINISTRY
WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

The Two Adult Rule: two adults should be present, whenever possible, during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth. If possible, the adults should not be related. At this point in time, this rule will be adhered to during Nursery/ Sunday School class by the assignment of an adult “roamer,” who will move in and out of the classrooms, bathrooms, and stairwells.

The Buddy Rule: Children shall travel with a buddy, whenever possible.

Orientation for Workers: All workers with children and youth should be given a copy of these policies for the prevention of child abuse.

Participation Covenant for All Participants and Leaders: All leaders and participants in children’s and youth ministries should sign the attached covenant statement, in which they agree to: Take part in the ministry, give their best efforts to the ministry, respect the other participants, and treat the others as well as they would wish to be treated.

The “Five-Years-Older” Rule: The lead person in a Sunday School class, youth group, etc., should be at least 5 years older than those they are leading.

No Workers Under the Age of Eighteen Years: Those under 18 may assist in a group setting. However, no one under the age of 18 should be in sole charge of a younger group of children.

The Six Month Rule: Whenever possible, no person who has been affiliated with North Fork UMC less than six months shall be eligible to volunteer to work with children and or youth.

Windows In All Classrooms Doors: Each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window in it.

Open Door Counseling: At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room being used should remain open for the entire session. Ideally the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance

What to do if you should encounter a stranger in the church: the church policy states Should you encounter someone who you think is in the church without authorization you are to leave the building immediately and call the pastor or a trustee. Never confront just leave.

Tell someone that you are at the church policy: you should never enter the church without telling someone where you are furthermore it is suggested that you never enter the building alone

Advance Notice to Parents: Always give the parents advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. Parents should be notified of any event in which a worker will be alone with a child.

To and From Sunday School Class: An adult will lead the children out of the Sanctuary and down to the Sunday School. At the end of church, a teacher will lead the class upstairs, to meet the parents in the foyer.

Discipline of Children and Youth: All teachers, children and youth are expected to treat one another with courtesy and respect, abiding by the Golden Rule at all times. There is zero tolerance for hitting, smacking, tripping, etc. There is no room for sarcasm in a Sunday School Class, a “3 strikes and you’re back with your upstairs with your parents” rule is in effect, if a child is acting out/ misbehaving. (This is per class, not for the rest of the year) The teacher should be very clear about which behaviors are unacceptable. The teacher may use a time-out, if he/she deems it more appropriate. Parents should always be informed when their child is acting out in class.

With regard to youth, if a youth continually is disruptive, they may be asked to refrain from attending events until they are ready to behave in an appropriate manner. Parents should be notified of any misbehavior. With regard to retreats/trips, at pre-trip meetings, parents and youth should be made well aware of the rules and regulations of decorum.

Nursery: Children will be signed in and out of the nursery.

Adequate Insurance: North Fork UMC will maintain adequate insurance with regard to its children and youth ministry.

Fire Drills/Exit Plans: Exit plans shall be located on walls and attached hereto. In case of fire, children will leave through the downstairs exit. Teachers must take the attendance sheets with them, in case of fire drill or exiting, so that attendance can be checked against the number of children exiting and to ensure that all children have been evacuated.

Accident Reports: Should a child be involved in any sort of “incident,” be it a bump, bruise, scrape, etc. appropriate first aid shall be administered and an Accident Report filled out and filed in the church office. A copy of the Accident Report Form is attached.

Outside Organizations: Any organization working with children or youth and using the North fork UMC facilities should be given a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and procedure, and they shall be asked to sign the policy.

RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE OR KNOWN INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE

The primary goal must always be to protect the victim.

In accordance with the Sexual Ethics Policy and Procedure Document adopted in 1997 by the New York Annual Conference, with regard to sexual abuse/ child abuse for those under 18 years of age, the following applies:

- A. There is no discretion. It must be reported. Call the Child Abuse Hotline 1 (800) 842-2288 this is a 7day/week, 24 hour emergency number, when the alleged abuser is a pastor, parent, baby-sitter, Sunday school teacher, youth advisor, day care/nursery school provider, or anyone in any care-taking capacity. You will need the following information to file a report: Child's name and address, names of child's caregivers, what you suspect. (Incident report attached)
- B. Do not confront or discuss with the alleged abuser without first reporting the incident and getting professional guidance.
- C. Contact the appropriate church authority: i.e. Pastor, District Superintendent, or Bishop
- D. Call the Sexual Ethics Response Pool if you have questions. That list is attached and also posted in the Sunday school and church offices.

Attachments:

North Fork UMC Safe Sanctuary Form
Accident Form