



**The North Georgia Conference**  
of The United Methodist Church

# **Creating Safe Sanctuaries**

**Reducing the Risk of Abuse  
in the Local Church**

# Populations We PROTECT

---

- Children – Birth through age 12
- Youth – Age 13 to 18
- Trustees and other church leadership
- Stephen Ministry Care Receivers
- Home Bound or Hospitalized Persons
- Vulnerable Adults - May be a person age 18 or older, or an elder, defined as 65 or older who is mentally, physically or psychologically unable to make responsible legal decisions about his or her own welfare

# Populations Who SERVE

---

Nursery Workers

Children's and Youth Ministries Workers

Leisure Ministry Workers

Stephen Ministry Volunteers

Hospital and Homebound Visitors

Church Trustees / Church Business Administrators

Scout Leaders

Pastors

**Anyone who serves in ministry with people** <sup>3</sup>

# Protection is required of us:

---

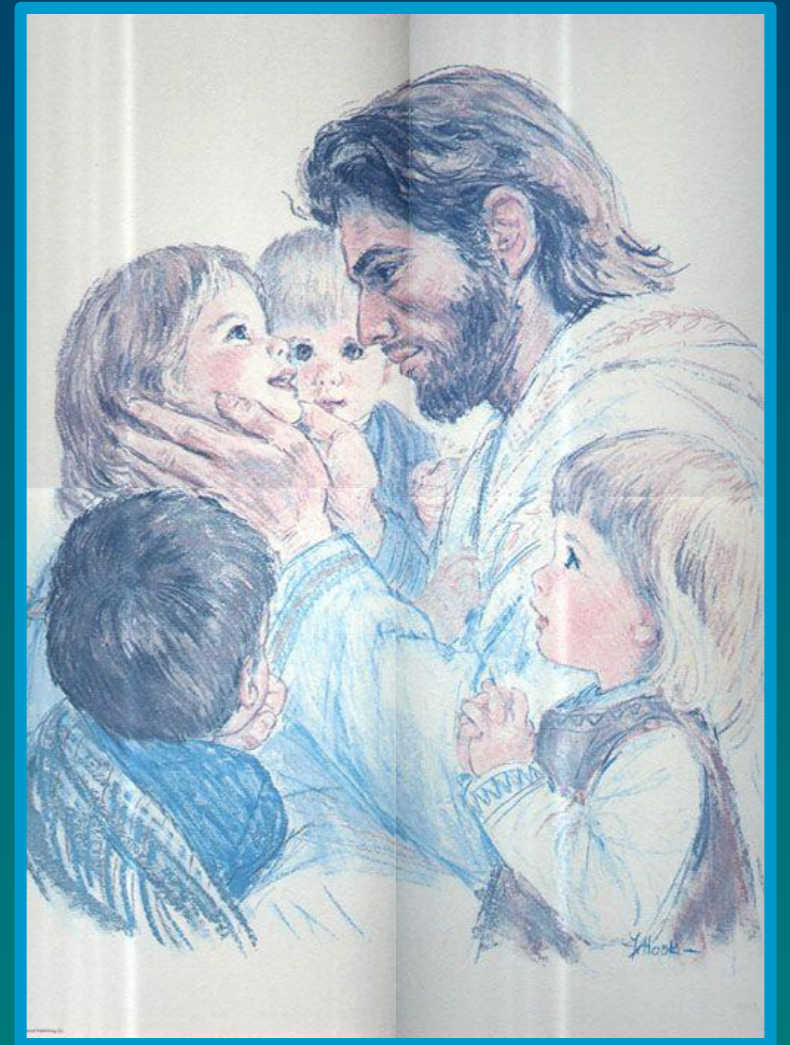
- By the General Conference mandate of 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 & 2016 Book of Discipline
- For the protection of our children, youth and vulnerable adults
- For the protection of all workers, paid or volunteer who work with our children, youth and vulnerable adults
- For the protection of the church reputation and finances

But more importantly, it is required in...

# Scripture - Mark 9:37

Jesus said:

*Whoever welcomes  
one such child in  
my name,  
welcomes me...*



# Matthew 18:6

*If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.*



---

# The Risk

# Why are churches at risk?

---

- We trust.
- We are ignorant of the facts about the prevalence of abuse in communities.
- We provide easy access to children, youth and adults who cannot make sound judgments.
- We don't screen workers as other agencies do.
- We don't do enough training concerning appropriate interpersonal boundaries.



# *Abuse can happen here!*

---

## Roman Catholic Church

- 1998 trial verdict of \$119 million
- In 2008, church leaders paid \$436 million in settlements, attorney fees and other abuse-related costs
- \$2.6 billion paid to U.S. victims since 1950

## Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church

- Case settled for \$3 million – for two victims
- Insurance coverage was inadequate to pay settlement and property was put at risk

---

**Let's Get  
Educated!**

# Abuse can be

---

**Physical, Emotional  
Sexual, Ritual  
Neglect, Financial**

## Abusers can be

**Adult vs. Child or Youth  
Minor Vs. Minor  
Adult vs. Vulnerable Adult**

# Physical Abuse

---

Physical – Deliberate or intentional bodily harm, non-accidental

# Indicators of Physical Abuse

---

1. Hostility and aggression towards others
2. Destructive behavior toward self, others and/or property
3. Unexplainable fractures or bruises - particularly on upper arms (from being shaken) or around wrists/ankles (from being tied down)
4. Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
5. Burns, facial injuries, head trauma

# Sexual Abuse

---

**Sexual** - Non-consensual sexual contact between child and adult, minor and minor or adults, such as fondling, intercourse, incest, pornographic exploitation or exposure

# Indicators of Sexual Abuse

---

1. Advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior
2. Depression
3. Promiscuous behavior
4. Difficulty sitting or walking
5. Bruising/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas
6. Frequent headaches, extreme fatigue
7. Sexually transmitted diseases

# Emotional Abuse

---

**Emotional** – Infliction of mental anguish by threat, intimidation or humiliation - spoken and/or unspoken, violence or emotional cruelty

What about Bullying?

A conscious, willful and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror. Includes both “in-person” or cyber-bullying



# Indicators of Emotional Abuse

---

1. Depression and/or withdrawal
2. Lack of self esteem
3. Threatens or attempts suicide
4. Speech and/or eating disorders
5. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior
6. Excessively seeks adult approval

# Neglect and Abandonment

---

- **Neglect** – Endangering an individual's health, safety, or welfare
- **Abandonment** – the desertion of a child or vulnerable elder by one who has assumed responsibility for care or custody of that person

# Indicators of Neglect

---

1. Failure to thrive - malnutrition
2. Inappropriate dress for climate
3. Chronic hunger
4. Depression
5. Untreated medical conditions
6. Poor hygiene – soiled clothing
7. Signs of being over- or under-medicated
8. In children, indicators that education is neglected

# Ritual

---

Ritual – Regular, intentional physical, sexual or psychological violations of an individual to appeal to a higher authority or power

# Indicators of Ritual Abuse

---

1. Disruptions of memory
2. Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
3. Flashbacks
4. Fear of Dark
5. Nightmares or sleep disorders
6. Any of the sexual abuse symptoms

# Indicators of Elder Abuses

---

1. Sudden changes in financial situation
2. Caregiver belittles, threatens, exerts excessive power and control
3. Strained relationships, frequent arguments between elder and caregiver
4. Bruises, pressure marks, abrasions, burns, broken bones
5. Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, unusual weight loss

“Caregiver” can be family member or paid worker.

---

# Hear the Facts

# Facts

---

- Abuse often occurs in ongoing relationships
- Reported victims of child sexual abuse have been infants, but incidence of abuse peaks with victims between ages 8 and 12



# Facts

---

## Child abuse happens:

3 million cases of child abuse reported each year, involving 5.8 million children

- 8,219 per day
- 342.8 per hour
- 5.7 per minute
- 1 every 10 seconds

1,200 deaths occur every year

Sources: Childhelp USA – Statistics from 2008

# Statistics

---

- 36% of women and 14% of men in prison were abused as children.
- 60% of people in drug rehabilitation reported being abused or neglected as children.
- 30% of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own.

# Types of Molesters

---

Preferential – Prefers sexual activity with the child or youth victim and seeks him or her out

Situational – Takes advantage of a particular situation to sexually abuse

# Profile of a Child Molester

---

- Known by the victim 80% of the time
- Generally identified between 20-30 years of age
- 20% abuse before age 18
- Often married with children
- 1 in 4 offenders is a member of the individual's family or one entrusted with care of the person
- About half are friends of child or family
- 2 out of 3 who are caught and punished abuse again

# Signs Abuse Occurred at Church

---

1. Unusual anxiety about going to Sunday school
2. Reluctance to participate in activities that were previously enjoyed
3. Comments that one does not want to be alone with a given person
4. Nightmares of a frightening experience with a worker
5. Unexplained hostility toward worker

**See it...Report it!**

---

# **Reporting: Documentation**

# What to Report

---

- Accidents – when an unintentional act occurs and an individual is hurt
- Incident – When an action is observed that does not require reporting to DFCS, but does require attention
- Suspected Abuse – When one sees, has been told of, or suspects child has been abused in some way

Church staff should have forms readily available.

Reports should be filed with church staff ASAP.

Information should only be discussed with church staff.

# Reporting Child Abuse— Georgia Law

---

The purpose is to provide protection of individuals whose health and welfare are adversely affected and further threatened by the conduct of those responsible for their care and protection.



# Reporting Child Abuse— Georgia Law

---

**As of July 1, 2012**

**Mandated reporters** include all child service organization personnel – both paid and volunteer.

Clergy are now **mandated** reporters.

All reports are to be made within 24 hours of the time that abuse is suspected.

Failure to report is a misdemeanor.

Anyone making a report in good faith is immune from any civil or criminal liability.

# Church Reporting Plan

---

- Record details of accident, incident or suspected abuse and discuss with appropriate church staff.
- Incidents are handled by staff, who offers alternatives to person in question, and records follow-up.
- For suspected abuse, DFCS needs to investigate. The reporter places the call with knowledge and support of Ministry Director and Senior Minister (or SPR Chair). Insurance Company and the DS are notified. Attorney is contacted.
- Keep information confidential. Talk only with appropriate authorities.
- Only one designated person is to speak to media.

# Who to call..

---

Report child abuse to the Department of Family and Children's Services in the child's county of residence or 1-800-CHILDREN.

Call 1-888-774-0152 to report suspected elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Call 911 if either is in immediate danger.

---

# What Do We Do Now?

# Prevention is Possible!

What can each local church do?

1. Establish a Safe Sanctuary Task Force.
2. Evaluate what is being done currently.
3. Determine areas of weakness.
4. Write a policy statement. **THE COVENANT**
5. Write procedures to support the policy.  
**THE COMMITMENT**
6. Implement the plan.

# What should our church do?

---

1. Put your task force to work.
2. Create a policy the whole church will stand behind.
3. Write recruiting and screening procedures.
4. Write operating procedures that support that policy.
5. Train all workers – implement the plan.
6. Supervise to see that the plan is being followed.

# Our Covenant Statement

---

Our church promises to:

1. Screen all paid and volunteer workers.
2. Establish operating procedures.
3. Train all workers.
4. Have a reporting strategy.

# We commit to....

## Recruiting and Screening

---

- Use a written application for prospective workers.
- Interview prospective workers.
- Check personal references.
- Complete criminal background check.
- Determine what crimes disqualify worker from serving.
- Keep all forms confidential and in a secure location



# We commit to...Operating Procedures

---

1. Two adult rule / Floater
2. Windowed and open doors
3. Age requirement – over 18, 5 years older
4. Nametags and / or identifying clothing
5. Age appropriate check-in and release

# We commit to...Procedures

---

7. Appropriate touch
8. Appropriate Adult Behavior
9. Supervision of workers and children
10. Parent/Guardian Permission
11. Adequate ratios of adults and children
12. Information to and from parents

# We commit to...Procedures

---

13. First aid /CPR training

14. Routine Orientation for Workers

15. Safe Sanctuaries Covenant

# We commit to...

## Computers and Cell Phones

---

### 16. Websites, Photos and E-mails

- Do not post pictures without parent permission
- Get parent permission before email, cell, IM or text messaging a minor.
- Send “Broadcast” emails by Bcc
- Tell youth to use privacy settings on social networking and post safely.

# We commit to...

## Computers and Cell Phones

---

### 16. Websites, Photos and E-mails

- Establish safety rules and enforce them
- Tell them not to post anything they would not want parents, coaches or you to see.
- Educate all ages about the dangers of the internet, cyber bullying, chat rooms, sharing personal information and responding to unfamiliar people.

# Computers and Cell Phones

---

For NGA Conference Social Media

Guidelines, visit:

[www.ngumc.org/socialmedia](http://www.ngumc.org/socialmedia)

# Emergency Procedures

---

## On-site or off-site emergency procedures for accident or illness

- Medical information on file
- **Luke Registry** forms signed prior to trip departure for older adults. Information in a sealed envelope will be given to medical personnel, should the need arise.

# We commit to...

## Discipline: Positive and Planned

---

### Basics:

1. Use positive words.
2. Establish rules and expectations.
3. When necessary, tell parents the good, the bad, then the good. (Sandwich Rule – Good PR)
4. Involve church staff when necessary.
5. Plan strategy when child threatens self or others.



# In all ministries...

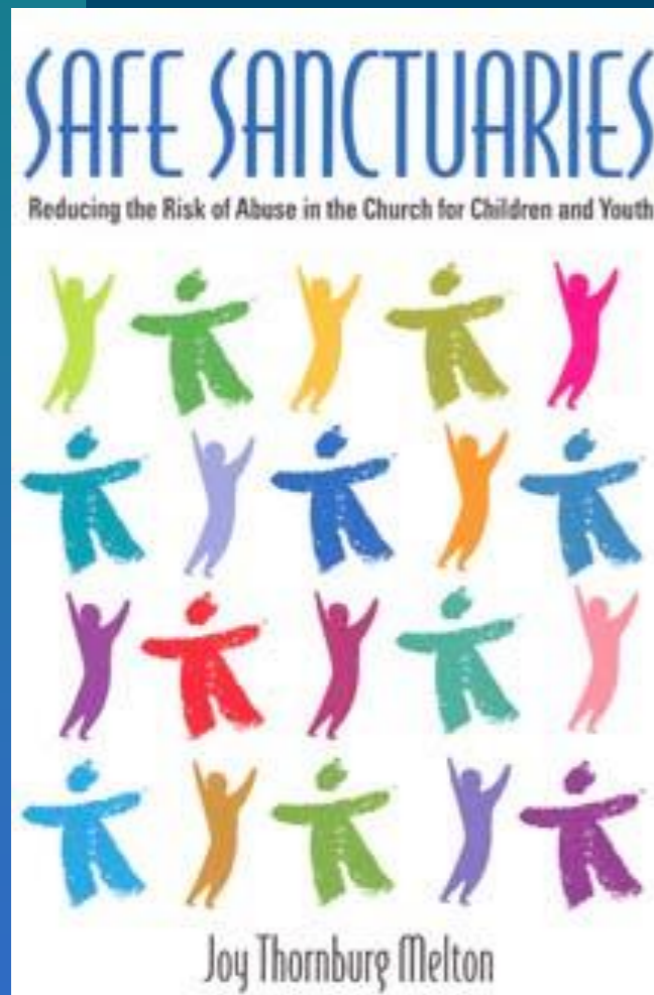
---

Model and teach participants about appropriate interpersonal relationships and boundaries, mutual respect and compassion for others.

Especially with children and youth, incorporate anti-bullying curriculum in all age-level activities.

*Do unto others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31*

# Recommended United Methodist Resource:



The General Conference of The United Methodist Church asked attorney, Rev. Joy Thornburg Melton, Deacon in the N.GA Conference, to write a guide for churches to use when writing policy and procedures.

Our churches have the responsibility to keep safe all participants in ministry. Use the resources provided to reduce the risk of abuse in every one of your communities.

Books for Children and Youth, Videos and DVDs are available through Cokesbury Bookstores or website – Children's book available in Spanish

# More Resources

---

Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services. [www.aging.dhr.georgia.gov](http://www.aging.dhr.georgia.gov).

National Center on Elder Abuse, Administration on Aging

[www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov).

# Be a *Safe Sanctuary*

---

for all who come to worship  
in your church:

Children

Youth

Vulnerable Adults

Those who serve in ministries  
with them.

---

Information provided by  
North Georgia Conference Safe Sanctuary  
Committee

With thanks to Rev. Joy Melton, author of  
*Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth*  
*Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church*