

ROGERSVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

ADOPTED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD AUGUST 11, 2013

Policy Statement

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs." Matthew 19:14

The problem of abuse is so great, its frequency so frightening, its consequences so severe, that a plan for reducing the risk of abuse in the church is part of every church's obligation to its children and vulnerable adults.

The Rogersville United Methodist Church is aware that the 1996 and the 2008 General Conference of the church adopted resolutions aimed at reducing the risk of abuse in the church. This policy affirms Rogersville United Methodist Church's commitment to creating a Safe Sanctuary that reduces the potential risk of injury or abuse to the infants, children, youth and adults serving or participating in our church activities.

In this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures, Rogersville United Methodist Church seeks to:

- Adopt reasonable safety measures for the selection and recruitment of adults serving with children and youth;
- Provide education for adults serving with children and youth regarding the church's policy and procedures, as well as the reporting requirements of the State of Missouri;
- Provide sufficient liability coverage; and
- Adopt a plan for communicating with family members of those who have allegedly been victimized, and with the media, if necessary.

Definitions

Adults: Persons 22 years of age* and over

*The legal age of majority for the State of Missouri is 18; however, Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures, and Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuaries policies stipulate that an adult be at least 22 years of age. This adherence ensures a 3 year gap exists between the youth in an activity, and the adults responsible for the welfare and protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults at these events.

Children: Persons birth through grade 6

Youth: Persons grades 7-12

Vulnerable Adult: An individual aged 18 or over, who, because of age, developmental disability, mental illness, or physical handicap requires supervision or person care, and lacks the personal and social skills required to live independently.

Staff: Any paid member identified through election or appointment, holding responsibility or authority within Rogersville United Methodist Church, and/or the District Conference.

Volunteer: Any unpaid person, not appointed official responsibilities, or authorities within Rogersville United Methodist Church and/or the District Conference, who donates their time, skills, and efforts to an event in which a child, youth or vulnerable adult may participate.

Key Leader: Any adult (staff or volunteer) with the primary responsibility of overseeing, leading or coordinating an event in which a child, youth or vulnerable adult may participate. Persons in this category will be the Sunday School Teachers, Vacation Bible School Leaders, and Youth Leaders.

Assistant: Any person with secondary responsibilities in providing support in an event in which a child, youth or vulnerable adult may participate. This person can be an adult or a youth.

Safe Sanctuary Response Team

The Safe Sanctuary Response Team shall consist of the Pastor and Lay Leader(s).

General Procedures

1. The Church Council approves Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures. This policy is on file at the District Conference and is available to church members.
 - a. Staff and volunteers will receive a copy of Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures.
 - b. Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures is available for download on the Rogersville United Methodist Church's website.
 - c. Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures will be placed in new member packets, and will be available online.
 - d. A committee of four people will review Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures every two years. The committee will consist of :
 - Lay Representative of the Staff Parish Relations
 - Lay Representative of the Board of Trustees
 - Lay Representative of the Education Committee
 - Lay Representative of the Youth Ministries Team
2. Rogersville United Methodist Church will adopt a tiered approach to vetting staff and volunteers who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults. This tiered approach

is a common sense approach to balancing safety with written policy to all parties. The intent is to provide a safe environment surrounding children, youth, and vulnerable adults at any Rogersville United Methodist Church event while still allowing a maximum number of volunteers to assist. It is our goal that at least one adult will have completed a background check and has been trained in Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures.

a. Staff will

- Be trained in the implementation of Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures.
- Complete the Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuary training.
- Be required to have a background check.

The Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuary Online Training is located at <http://moumethodist.org>. Once trained, the certification will be valid according to the policies set by the United Methodist Church Missouri Conference, with is currently four years.

b. Key Leaders will

- Be trained in the implementation of Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures.
- Complete the Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuary training.
- Be required to have a background check.

The Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuary Online Training is located at <http://moumethodist.org>. Once trained, the certification will be valid according to the policies set by the United Methodist Church Missouri Conference, with is currently four years.

- c. Assistants/Volunteers (e.g. chaperones, VBS assistants) are those persons who assist infrequently (i.e. 1-2 times per month, or less than 12 times per year) at events where children, youth and/or vulnerable adults may participate. Rogersville United Methodist Church will provide specific training of the Rogersville United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures, prior to specific events (e.g. VBS). Rogersville United Methodist Church will use the attendance roster from the training session as confirmation that the assistant received instruction.

** If the volunteer exceeds the above frequency state above, volunteers on a regular basis, or assumes more of a leadership role within the ministry of Rogersville United Methodist Church, they will be required to be certified as a Key Leader.*

3. Staff and volunteers who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults, will submit a background check through the Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church.

- a. Background checks for Rogersville United Methodist Church's staff and key leaders will be paid for through the church's budget, as approved by the Board of Trustees.
 - b. Background checks for volunteers of other organizations using the church's facilities (e.g. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, other churches) are the responsibility of that organization.
 - c. Personnel must renew Safe Sanctuaries training and certification every 4 years, according to the Missouri United Methodist Church Conference Policy. This includes an updated background check.
 - d. Personnel can check currency of Safe Sanctuaries certification at the Missouri Conference website: <http://moumethodist.org>.
 - e. Persons who do not hold certification will not be allowed to serve as staff, key leaders or assistants with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
4. Facility doors will be closed when not in use, this includes classrooms, and closets. Classroom doors will be opened 10-15 minutes prior to Sunday school, and closed 10-15 minutes following Sunday school. Doors may be shut during the instructional period to facilitate learning.
 5. Windows will not be covered when rooms are in use by children or youth.
 6. All staff and volunteers will know the location of emergency aid kits, and will have telephone access for emergency medical assistance.
 7. No fewer than two volunteers will be present at all children and youth events, on or off campus.
 - a. At least one adult, 22 years of age or older, who has received training in Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures, will be present at every event.
 - b. A minimum ratio of 1:10, adult/volunteer workers to children/youth will be maintained in each situation requiring the supervision of children and youth.
 - c. In the event it is not feasible to have two volunteers in every room, a floater will check on each group.
 - d. Volunteers who serve as teachers will be at least three years older than the oldest child or youth in the class or event being taught or led.
 - e. Assistants will be a minimum of 12 years of age, or graduated from the sixth grade according to the school calendar year, and at least three years older than the oldest child or youth in the class or event he or she has volunteered

assistance for. An adult will be present (directly or indirectly), if the assistant's age is between 12 and 22 years of age at the time he or she is volunteering.

- f. There will be at least two adults of each gender present at co-ed overnight events.
 - g. At least two or more adults of the same gender as the participating children or youth will be present at single gender overnight events.
8. Children or youth attending a church-sponsored event may not leave prior to the end of that event without previous contact between the parents and the staff in charge.
- a. Children will only be released to persons other than parents if prior contact has occurred between parents and the staff in charge.
 - b. Permission forms will be required for each off-campus event involving children and youth.
9. Liability insurance coverage: Rogersville United Methodist Church's Trustees shall maintain liability insurance coverage of at least \$1,000,000.00 per event and \$3,000,000.00 for activities both on and off church property. Liability insurance should include at least \$300,000 coverage for sexual misconduct claims.

Procedures Specific to Children

1. Children will attend the appropriate grade/age level equivalent to the grade/age level they attend in school or preschool.
 - a. Any child pre-Kindergarten or grades above should attend the same grade level Christian education as they attend in school. Any exceptions to the placement policy will be discussed with the key leader, the parent/guardian and the education director.
 - b. Promotion occurs in late August. Children move to the next grade level at that time.
2. Children aged birth through pre-Kindergarten will be signed in/out of any activity by a parent or guardian. It is recommended that signing in and out occur five minutes prior, and five minutes after an event. If a child is not picked up within 10 minutes of the close of Sunday school, that child will be signed into the nursery.
 - a. Pre-Kindergarten to 4th grade may not be released to a sibling less than 18 years of age without written parental permission.
 - b. Children in grades 5-12 may sign themselves in and out of a classroom or event in the presence of a parent, guardian, or an adult with written parental consent.
3. Children not signed into a classroom or events are the responsibility of their parents and must be attended by their parents.
4. Children must be supervised at all times when on church property.

5. Parents are encouraged to remain on church property while their children are signed into Rogersville United Church's ministries. Parents who leave church property while their children are signed into classes or events will provide emergency contact information.
6. As with other class rolls, the Sunday school sign in sheets will become a part of the permanent attendance records and Sunday school archives.
7. During Christian education time, children will use the nearest restroom. A floater or assistant will provide supervision in the common areas.

Requirements for Reporting Incidents of Abuse

Missouri Law Code Section 210.110, et seq.

What constitutes abuse: Any physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by a caregiver (spanking in a reasonable manner not included).

Mandatory reporting required by: Physician, medical examiner, dentist, chiropractor, coroner, optometrist, nurse, hospital or clinic personnel, any other health practitioner, psychologist, social worker, mental health professional, day care center worker, juvenile officer, probation or parole officer, teacher, school official, law enforcement officer, minister.

Basis of report of abuse/neglect: Reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect observes such conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.

To whom reported: Missouri Division of Family Services

Penalty for failure to report, or false reporting: Class A Misdemeanor

Procedures for Reporting Incidents of Abuse

1. According to the laws of the State of Missouri, all persons are mandatory reporters of child abuse.
 - a. If any person learns of or witnesses an instance of abuse, that person shall immediately report the alleged incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the appropriate county or state authorities. Contact 911 to report the incident to the local police for immediate action.
 - b. Call the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-392-3738. The Children's Division staffs this hotline 24/7/365. They will take information and respond to child abuse or neglect. If you live outside Missouri and want to report the abuse or neglect of a child living in Missouri, call 573-751-3448.

- c. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse in children, youth or vulnerable adults will also be reported as soon as possible to the Pastor or Ozarks District Superintendent of the Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church at 417-869-7878.
2. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances, and he or she will make a report that documents all steps taken in reporting the incident of abuse, using the appropriate forms.
3. The Pastor and/or staff member will document all actions taken in reporting the incident of abuse, using the appropriate forms.
4. **The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.**

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to the alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegation can be substantiated or cleared.
2. The safety and security of the alleged victim must be safeguarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
3. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim will be notified immediately.
4. All procedures listed in the previous section on Reporting will be strictly followed.
5. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.
6. All efforts in handling the situation will be carefully documented.
7. The Pastor and his or her designee will notify the liability insurer and the legal counsel for the Church about the alleged incident.
8. The Pastor will be the sole spokesperson for Rogersville United Methodist Church, and the District Superintendent will be the sole spokesperson for the district insofar as media inquiries are concerned.
9. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities, as circumstances dictate, until the allegations are substantiated or cleared.

Approved by the Rogersville United Methodist Administrative Board on September , 2014:

Pastor

Local Safe Sanctuary Coordinator

Board Chairperson

Lay Leader

Secretary

Trustees Chairperson

Pastor Parish Chairperson

Finance Chairperson

Treasurer

Lay Member to Annual Conference