

# First United Methodist Church of Keller Child/Youth Protection Policy

Adopted May 2006

Amended April 2007

Revised September/October 2009

## Statement of Purpose:

As a Christian Community of Faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers and volunteers who work directly with and supervise the children/youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of those who work directly with children/youth, implement procedures in programs and events, and educate our workers regarding the policies and state law.

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be “surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (“Baptismal Covenant II,” *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

A. **Effective Date:** June 9, 2006

B. **Definitions:**

“Child/Youth” – any person under the age of 18

“Adult” – a person 18 years of age or older

“Church” – First United Methodist Church of Keller

“Function” – any ministry, party, class, child care, activity, trip or other gathering specifically designed or planned for children/youth and sponsored or supported by the church. This will include functions both on and off the property of the church. Central Texas Conference (CTC) events are not included in this definition and are covered by the CTC policies. **This definition does not include events where children are chaperoned by their own parents or guardians.**

“Child/Youth Protection Committee” shall consist of at least one pastor, two SPRC members, a member of Trustees, Lay Leader, Children’s Director,

Youth Director, Pre-school Director, Director of Adult Education and Programming and a representative from each group working with Children/Youth. The Child/Youth Protection Committee will meet as needed to write and revise the Child/Youth Protection Policy and present it to the Ministry Team for approval.

“Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee” shall be appointed by the clergy and should include an SPRC member, at least one pastor, and the records custodian/staff person in charge of confidential records and Eligibility List. Duties are listed under “E” below.

“Eligible Volunteer” – an adult person who has met all the requirements set forth in “C” below, or a person age 16 or older who has been approved by the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee to be an Eligible Volunteer.

“Eligible Worker” – An employee of the church who has met all the requirements set forth in “C” below.

“Eligible Helper” – A person under 18 who has met all of the requirements set forth in “C” below and has not been designated as an Eligible Volunteer by the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee.

### **C. Eligibility for Volunteers and Helpers**

To be “eligible”, each Volunteer, Worker, or Helper working directly with and supervising Children/Youth at any function must meet the following requirements:

1. Volunteers and Helpers must be a member of the church for six consecutive months prior to eligibility, OR a regular attendee at services or ministries for at least six out of the eight calendar months prior to eligibility.
2. Volunteers and Workers must agree to a screening, including:
  - a. A criminal history check conducted by the church.
  - b. Provide three written references from persons who have known the applicant for at least three years, and are not related to the applicant by blood or marriage.
3. Volunteers, Workers and Helpers must attend a training session approved by the Child/Youth protection committee.
4. Volunteers, Workers and Helpers must sign and agree to the Participation Covenant Statement.

5. At any time, at the discretion of the leader of the Function and/or the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee, an Eligible Volunteer or Eligible Worker may be excluded from supervising a Function.

## **D. Activity Requirements**

### **1. Functions**

- a. At least two unrelated Eligible Volunteers or Workers shall lead or supervise every function. At least one shall be at least five years older than the oldest child/youth participant.
- b. Any person who is not "Eligible" by the definition under paragraph "C" may not work directly with and supervise the children/youth at any function.
- c. Every room where Children/Youth gather should maintain an open door policy or be equipped with a see-through window or a half-door which remains open.
- d. A ratio of 10:1 Children/Youth to Volunteer/Worker/Helper should be required at all times. There are many circumstances when a higher ratio children/youth to volunteer/worker/helpers should be considered. Volunteers and Workers shall strive to make each situation safe depending on the circumstances.
- e. Any co-ed overnight trip shall require both male and female Eligible Volunteers or Eligible Workers.
- f. For any Function involving church sponsored or church organized transportation, the transportation will be Safe Sanctuary compliant (and compliant with this Policy) if the group travels in a contiguous caravan of at least two (2) vehicles with at least one Eligible Volunteer in each vehicle. This provision shall in no way negate the requirements of § D.1.a. for any aspect of the Function other than transportation.
- g. Overnight trips, as a whole, must comply with this Policy. However, for the overnight portion of the trip, the leader/organizer of the trip shall develop a detailed written description of the plan for sleeping arrangements. Prior to the trip, the written plan for sleeping arrangements shall be approved by a pastor and available for parent/guardian inspection.

### **2. Counseling**

Anyone counseling a Child/Youth shall maintain an open door policy and/or ensure the room is equipped with a see-through window or half door which remains open.

### **3. Sign-in/Sign-out**

At any function where parents or guardians leave their children in the care of Eligible persons, a sign-in/sign-out procedure will be implemented for children under the age of 10.

## **E. Records and Screening**

1. A records custodian shall be named by the Child/Youth Protection Committee to keep records of all screening, references, background checks and training of Volunteers, Workers, and Helpers.
2. Records shall be kept confidential and in a locked cabinet, but will be provided upon request to law enforcement, Child Protective Services (CPS), or the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church.
3. The Records Custodian will also keep an updated list of all Eligible Volunteers, Workers, and Helpers listed by category. This list shall be made available to all church staff, members, volunteers, parents, and any person who has an interest in the welfare of the Children/Youth and our programs.
4. The "Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee" shall keep all matters confidential and shall meet only as needed if/when a background check reveals a potentially disqualifying history. In any case, the eligibility of a Volunteer, Worker, or Helper shall be in the sole discretion of the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee. At any time, this committee may suspend eligibility of a Worker/Volunteer/Helper. This committee will also consider applications of persons age 16 and 17 to become Eligible Volunteers.

## **F. Training**

1. Initial training referenced under C(3) shall be provided by the church and approved by the Child/Youth Protection Committee.
2. The church shall also make available annual refresher training on various topics relating to Child/Youth safety.
3. The church shall make available to all volunteers, workers, helpers and parents free training in Pediatric Life Support.

## **G. Pre-school**

Building Blocks Pre-school is a ministry of this church and is also a licensed child care facility which is regulated by the Texas Department of Child Care Licensing. Building Blocks should strive to maintain the same standards as all other church programs as outlined in this policy. However, when this policy is in conflict with the Texas Department of Child Care Licensing, the Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers will supercede this document for the pre-school operation.

## **H. Reporting**

Any suspected incident of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect of a child must be reported immediately to the Senior Pastor, or in the Senior Pastor's absence to his/her designee. If for some reason the report should not be made to the Senior Pastor or his/her designee, it must be reported to the District Superintendent.

### **ADDENDUM ADOPTED APRIL 25, 2007**

Use of FUMC Keller's campus facilities is governed by the Trustees. In any case where a visiting group will be conducting or sponsoring a "function" for "children/youth" as defined by the FUMC Keller Child Protection Policy ("the policy"), the policy will be in effect.

Visiting United Methodist Churches which follow a formal Safe Sanctuary program of their own and offer a formal Safe Sanctuaries course of their own at their home church may use our church buildings if the visiting church follows the policy while using our facilities. To ensure compliance, wherever the policy refers to "FUMC Keller", insert the name of the visiting church. Every eligible volunteer, eligible worker, or eligible helper who will be counted under the policy's "2 adult rule" under D.1.a. must be familiar with the policy and sign the related FUMC Keller Covenant before the event. The visiting church's event leader/contact person is responsible for providing original covenants (for each adult volunteer or staff) to our business office no less than three (3) working days before the event.