

**INDIANA ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
ABUSE PROTECTION POLICY - FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND  
VULNERABLE ADULTS**

The Indiana Annual Conference is committed to the well being of every person entrusted to its care as well as those entrusted to the care of local United Methodist Churches in all of Indiana.

Our calling is to provide safe sanctuary for all of God's people including our children, youth and vulnerable adults. Indiana United Methodists affirm that all children, youth and vulnerable adults have the right to expect safe sanctuary.

To do this well we must create, adopt, and implement clear child protection policies and practices.

**FOR CONFERENCE OR DISTRICT EVENTS AND PROGRAM AGENCIES**

The Indiana Annual Conference has established the following policy in order to provide safe sanctuary for all of God's people including our children, youth and vulnerable adults.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers, clergy or lay, who have contact with or responsibility for children, youth, or vulnerable adults at conference and/or district sponsored events. Each conference and/or district ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall adopt procedures for training and certifying employees and volunteers that minimally include the procedures and certification listed in this policy.

**CERTIFICATION FOR STAFF / VOLUNTEERS**

- 1. Age Requirement.** Adults and some youth are able to serve as volunteers at Conference and District events. Minors may volunteer with the approval of the Event Coordinator. Volunteers under the age of 18 must work with and under the supervision of an adult volunteer.
- 2. Volunteer Certification.** All conference and district event leaders, staff, and volunteers must submit a written application/screening form and references annually. A background screening, including the National Sex Offender Registry and Multi-State Felony Background check, is required annually for all conference and district event staff and volunteers over the age of 18 and must be completed prior to working with children or youth at a conference or district event. Staff/volunteers from outside of the United States of America or without a social security number for whom a background screening cannot be completed must be verified by reference checks and allowed to work under the supervision of a properly certified adult.
- 3. No applicant with a criminal conviction** for any crime against a person, including but not limited to crimes against or including children, sexual misconduct or use or abuse of alcohol or drugs may serve as a Conference or District volunteer in any capacity that involves direct

contact with or supervision of children, youth or vulnerable adults.

**4. Prior to serving** at an event as a conference or district volunteer, volunteers must have been active participants in a local church or ministry for a minimum of one year, or must serve under the supervision of a conference certified adult volunteer.

**5. Staff and volunteers** must complete the conference approved training program prior to serving as a Conference or District volunteer. Training must be renewed annually.

### **SCREENING FOR STAFF/VOLUNTEERS**

Conference and District ministry groups shall be responsible for implementing screening and certification procedures for Conference and District staff and volunteers.

When adults come to a conference or district event with youth or children from their local church, those adults are considered adult participants. They are not considered conference or district volunteers. For adult participants, the local church is responsible for screening those adults and must attest that at minimum a background screening consistent with this policy has been performed on every adult participant attending.

### **TRAINING**

Conference and District ministry groups must provide conference-approved training to group and team members who work directly with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. That training shall include, but not be limited to, the following elements: familiarization with this policy, recognizing the signs of abuse; avoiding situations when abuse might take place or conduct which could be perceived as abusive; reporting requirements of the State of Indiana related to abuse; the policy for responding to an allegation; and communication procedures.

### **REPORTING OF INCIDENTS FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

**Suspected Abuse Case:** If any staff or volunteer has reason to believe a Protected Person is the victim of any form of abuse or neglect, either from information provided by the Protected Person or others or from visual observation, you have a moral and legal obligation to report that to the Event Coordinator . Be prepared to share the following information:

- a. Name, address, and phone number of the Protected Person.
- b. Details about the information you received or your visual observations.
- c. Your name, address and phone number.

You and the Event Coordinator must immediately work together to make sure the Protected Person is not in immediate danger. The Event Coordinator will **immediately** make a report to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or law enforcement and notify the appropriate conference official(s). You will be notified after a report has been made to the appropriate authorities.

If you believe a report has not been made to the appropriate authorities after you notified the Event Coordinator, you must report the alleged abuse or neglect of a child or youth by calling the Indiana Child Abuse Hotline 800-800-5556 (or a local authority – the local number for each county listed at the CPS website <http://www.in.gov/dcs/2372.htm>) or the alleged abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult by calling the Adult Protective Services State Hotline 800-992-6978.

Once you have notified the Event Coordinator or, if necessary, made your report, you must cooperate with local authorities if it is found that the person is indeed in danger. This could include interviews, sworn statements, or court appearances. For your records and reference, you should keep a copy of your report of incident form.

**Reporting An Allegation:** Any allegation about conference staff or volunteers must be taken seriously. An allegation can come before, during, or after the event. The allegation can come from anyone.

If any staff or volunteer receives an allegation about the behavior of conference staff or a volunteer, follow the reporting procedures above. You may ask the person reporting the incident to accompany you to the Event Coordinator. If that person declines, you must take the concern/allegation to the Event Coordinator, who will facilitate filling out the report of incident form. This form can be found in on the child protection page of our website.

The Event Coordinator must **immediately** make a report to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or local law enforcement.

If an allegation is made during an event, the accused staff/volunteer must be removed from service until the situation can be investigated and resolved.

In all cases, regardless of the identity of the accused, the Event Coordinator must make a written report to the Associate Director or Director **and** the Conference Superintendent after he or she has made a report to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or law enforcement. They should be given a copy of the incident report form with documentation of the call.

### **STATEMENT TO THE MEDIA**

No communication with public media should be made.

The Conference Communications Officer shall provide conference and district ministry groups with guidelines for communications with media, and all media communications should be coordinated through him or her.

### **AFTER CARE**

Following any report of incident, the event director/coordinator shall work with conference staff, the Conference Superintendent, and the local church to provide ongoing support and care for all involved.

## DEFINITIONS

1. **Neglect.** A child or vulnerable person's physical or mental condition is seriously impaired or endangered as a result of the inability, refusal, or neglect of a parent, guardian, or custodian to supply the person with necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or supervision.
2. **Abuse.** A child or vulnerable person's physical or mental health is seriously endangered due to injury by the act or omission of a parent, guardian, or custodian.
3. **Sex Abuse.** A child or vulnerable person is the victim of a sex offense (rape, criminal deviate conduct, child molestation, exploitation, seduction, sexual misconduct with a minor, public indecency, prostitution or incest). For purposes of this policy, sex abuse is also defined to include possession or viewing of obscene, explicit, or pornographic material in the proximity of a child or vulnerable person.
4. **Ritual Abuse.** Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare.
5. **Staff.** Includes any clergy person, any paid employee of the conference or a district, and any paid employee of any group, committee, team or agency of the conference or a district if responsible for the care or supervision of a participant at an Annual Conference or District event.
6. **Volunteer.** Any non-clergy, lay worker who is responsible for the care or supervision of children, youth or vulnerable adult participants at an Annual Conference or District event. This may include paid staff members of a local church who are acting as volunteers for purpose of the Conference or District event.
7. **Participants.** Children, youth, or vulnerable adults who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by the Annual Conference or a District.
8. **Conference/District Ministry or Event.** Include ministries or events planned and supervised by the appointed staff and/or volunteers of the Annual Conference or a district of the Annual Conference.
9. **Protected Persons.** Include children, youth and vulnerable adults.
10. **Vulnerable Adults.** Are persons over 18 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities.
11. **Children.** Are persons 0-11 years of age.

12. **Youth.** Are 12-18 years of age.

13. **Social Media.** An internet-based form of communication which allows for conversation, shared information and content creation.