

Good Shepherd United Methodist Church (GSUMC)

Safe Gatherings Policy

Revised March 2020

I. General Policy

The Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church and Good Shepherd United Methodist Church have made this commitment to Safe Gatherings training because of our call as Christians to prepare and offer a just and hospitable environment; one safe and free from harm or fear for people everywhere. Jesus taught us that children, youth and vulnerable adults are to be included and provided for within the community of faith.

Safe Gatherings is an abuse prevention program with 5 primary objectives: 1) **prevent abuse** in ministry settings whether on- or off-site, and ensure that all children, youth, and vulnerable adults have safe and secure gathering places. 2) **Raise awareness** of the importance of abuse prevention. By acknowledging that abuse can happen anywhere, churches and faith-based organizations can focus on providing environments that will help keep all people safe. 3) **Establish and communicate transparency and accountability** by keeping the door open to dialogue on tough subjects such as abuse and abuse prevention. 4) **Provide training and best practices guidelines** to all leaders, staff, and volunteers who serve them. 5) **Equip those serving with information** to make responsible decisions about their own and others; behavior, and provide the necessary knowledge to responsibly report when abuse is suspected or witnessed.

Children/Child/Youth/Vulnerable Person Is defined as child/children (ages birth-6th grade) and youth (7th-12th grade) who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise participating in an event, activity, program, or class sponsored by Good Shepherd or Little Lambs Preschool. Persons over 18 years of age are considered to be vulnerable people if they have needs that require continual adult supervision and/or periodic monitoring.

1 Peter 5:1-3 *"I have a special concern for church leaders. Here's my concern: that you care for God's flock with all diligence of a shepherd. Not because you have to, but because you want to please God. Not calculating what you can get out of it, but acting spontaneously. Not bossily telling them what to do but showing them the way."* (The Message)

What to expect from this training:

- To be equipped with information to make healthy decisions about your own and others' behavior when it comes to supervising and caring for children, youth and vulnerable people in the church environment. This will include campus specific safety procedures for fire, tornado and other grave threats to the building and its inhabitants.
- Learn appropriate ratios between adults and children or youth, appropriate ways to establish boundaries, and ministry specific supervision expectations.
- Ministry specific policies on appropriate use of technology and social media.
- Guidelines for all off-site activities with specific focus on overnight lodging requirements.
- Identification of types of abuse and neglect and ways to avoid an environment where these might occur, including state laws. *Talking about the types of abuse may be uncomfortable for you. It is important that we are in touch with our own feelings as we deal with abuse of others.*
- Appropriate steps for reporting negligence in safety or abuse or neglect.
- Understanding the process for allegations made against you and the rights of the accused.
- Signing an agreed upon Safe Sanctuary Covenant between you and the Ministry Director on this policy for protecting the population you will be responsible for.
- Submitting to a criminal background check if you are 18.5 years or older.
 - As a precautionary measure, and not because Good Shepherd suspects anyone of wrong-doing, all staff and volunteers working with children, youth or vulnerable adults will undergo a national criminal background check (Christianbackgroundchecks.org) for the purpose of obtaining information regarding any criminal convictions or child abuse findings. Background screenings must be renewed every three years along with an updated application and covenant. The cost for this background check is \$12 per person.

II. Purpose

This document was developed in order to assure that reasonable safety measures are taken to safeguard the physical and emotional welfare of children, youth and other vulnerable people that participate in the ministries of Good Shepherd. It is our desire to handle any situation in a Christ-like manner.

This policy applies to all paid staff and volunteers who participate with children, youth or other vulnerable persons while at a Good Shepherd campus or sponsored event.

Therefore, it is our commitment to make the church a safe gathering for all children, youth and vulnerable persons. We also recognize our responsibility to protect staff and volunteers who participate with the children, youth and vulnerable people in the following ways:

Local Training is required of all staff and volunteers interacting with children, youth and vulnerable people while at church, or church sponsored event, group, ministry or activity. Examples are events, groups and activities relating to the Children's or Student Ministries, Childcare, and Little Lambs Preschool.

Conference Certification is specifically for staff or volunteers participating in District or Conference sponsored activities that include children, youth or vulnerable adults. There are additional Conference screening requirements and costs. Examples include but are not limited to Mission Trip leaders, summer camp counselors, or other conference or district sponsored events. Conference Certification does not replace local training.

Safe Gatherings Administration (SGA)

The Safe Gatherings Administration is responsible for reviewing policies and procedures on an annual basis. The SGA will ensure that training and screening requirements are met. The SGA shall give the Ministry Directors authority to screen and train staff and volunteers. The SGA will have the authority to accept or deny and applicant.

The Safe Gatherings Administration shall consist of 3-4 people including Children's Ministry Director, Youth Ministry Director, and at least one lay representative.

Definitions and Standards of Staff and Volunteers:

Definitions:

Staff

Paid church employees shall be defined as staff without exception, including clergy, ministry directors, childcare workers and all Little Lambs Preschool employees. Compensated workers include hourly, salaried, part-time and full-time. Paid staff must be at least 16 years old.

Screened Volunteer

Is defined as any non-clergy or staff person serving, supervising, or assisting in an event, class, or activity. This may include members and non-members of Good Shepherd actively seeking spiritual growth and have completed the required paperwork, initial training and criminal background check if 18.5 years or older. It is a best practice to enact a waiting period of 3 months before volunteering with Children or Youth if no known history of attendance or involvement with Good Shepherd has been recorded.

Probationary Volunteer

Is defined as any non-clergy person or staff who wishes to serve but has not yet completed the appropriate paperwork, initial training and/or criminal background check. Probationary volunteers will be paired with screened volunteers and every effort will be made to complete the screening process and training in a timely manner. Probationary volunteers may serve up to three times while paperwork, initial training and criminal background check is completed.

Peer Mentor

Is defined as youth between the ages of 11-15 years old serving under the supervision of a screened ministry director and/or their screened volunteers who are assisting in the ministry program, class or event in any way. Peer Mentors have undergone the under 18 Safe Gatherings training with at least one of their parents or guardians. A parent or guardian of the peer mentor must also sign off on the ministry covenant.

Supervision: Is defined as the ability of a person to be in charge of a group of children, youth or vulnerable people, giving direction, setting boundaries, disciplining appropriately, maintaining safety guidelines and being the adult in all situations.

Standards as staff or volunteers:

Volunteers working *regularly* with children must be at least 13 years old and paid staff must be at least 16 years old and both must be five years older than the oldest program attendee. A screened volunteer or staff over the age of 21 must also be present and knowingly available in case of an emergency.

All volunteers and staff must be willing to interview with a pastor and another adult volunteer upon request of the Safe Gatherings Administration.

Anyone with a prior conviction of any form of child abuse will not be eligible to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults in any capacity.

Once an applicant has been identified for employment or to serve in any capacity, the forms from this training must be submitted to the appropriate Ministry Director or Supervisor for approval and verification. Completed files are confidential and kept for three years. Staff and Volunteers will renew their application, covenant and criminal background check every three years.

III. Ministry Descriptions and Procedures for Programming and Events

Childcare:

Local church program that involves the ongoing care of children ages birth to 4th grade for the duration of church worship services, adult small groups/study groups, adult group activity such as but not limited to band practice or outings such as but not limited to serving off campus.

Small Group:

Local church program that involves a meeting or gathering of children, youth or vulnerable people in a more intimate setting for a regularly scheduled amount of time such as, but not limited to, a classroom.

Good Shepherd Ministry Programs that involve children, youth or vulnerable people include but are not limited to:

Little Lambs Preschools, Childcare, gsKids, Club 5/6, gsYouth, Family Promise, Guatemala Mission trips, and Scout meetings held on campus.

Large Group Activity or Community Event:

Local church, conference, or district sponsored activity or ministry that involves a large gathering of children, youth or vulnerable people from within the church and/or community in general such as but not limited to summer camps, Easter or Christmas programs or events.

Procedures for Ministry Programming and Events

All volunteers and staff will maintain appropriate interpersonal boundaries between adults, youth, and children. Volunteers must role model respectful and nurturing behaviors that do not interfere with another person's privacy or personal boundaries. Including but not limited to dress, language, and demonstrations of affection.

Ratios

Volunteer to child: 1:4 for birth to 12 months Adults/volunteers must be at least 16

Volunteer to child: 1:6 for 13 months-3yrs Adults/volunteers must be at least 16

Volunteer to child: 1:8 for 4yrs-11yrs Adults/volunteers must be at least 11 (respective to the 5 year rule below and second adult 16 or older present)

Volunteer to youth 1:8 (ages 12yrs-18yrs) Adults/volunteers must be at least 15 (respective to the 5 year rule below and second adult 16 or older present).

Two Person Rule

Two or more screened volunteers and/or staff shall be present during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth. These persons cannot be married or cohabitating. This includes but is not limited to youth led groups, or children's small groups.

At least one staff/volunteer must be over 21 years of age and must be in the building for the entirety of any activity. It is your responsibility to identify who those staff/volunteers are in case of an emergency. If possible, staff/volunteers from the same household shall not be scheduled together unless there is a third screened person present. If two volunteers are not available, the activity must be clearly visible through an unobstructed window or an open door and a *second* screened staff/volunteer must periodically check the room.

If there are small group activities, where only one screened volunteer is available to supervise a group, then another group with adult leader(s) should meet within sight and sound of each other.

This is also applicable to online meetings. In a Zoom Room, or other online platform, at least two adults need to be present, one being over the age of 21.

A staff/volunteer should never be alone in any space, ie. elevator, classroom, closet, online meeting etc., with a minor that does not allow for them to be in plain view of others.

Five Year Age Difference Rule

Any staff/volunteer must be five years older than the oldest child and youth involved in the program, event or activity. Volunteers must be 13 year or older. Paid staff must be at least 16 years old and will be partnered with an adult over 21 years of age.

Observation Windows in Classrooms

Each room set aside for children and youth must have an observation window that is clear from all obstructions. If the room does not have a window for observation the main door or connecting door must remain open.

Restrooms

In situations where an escort is needed for a trip to the restroom, the staff/volunteer will stand outside the restroom and only assist the child if needed. Whenever a staff/volunteer is in the restroom with a child the door will remain open. There shall never be a closed-door situation with a child. If a child soils themselves, every attempt will be made to locate a parent. If a parent is unable to be located, two volunteers will be present while cleaning up the child. Please note where child friendly bathrooms and adult restrooms are located at your specific campus. When a child is using an adult restroom while in your care do not allow another adult to enter the restroom until that child is finished and has exited.

Discipline

Corporal punishment, of any kind, is never appropriate. Staff/volunteers are asked to redirect a child if they display inappropriate behavior that harms themselves or others. If the inappropriate behavior continues the staff/volunteer will partner with the parent or guardian to implement an appropriate plan of action.

Vehicles

When car trips are necessary for Good Shepherd sponsored programs and events involving youth, one staff/volunteer may be present as long as there are two or more youth present. For travel, where there is the need for one youth and one adult to travel together, written parental permission is required. Seat belt use is mandatory at all times and drivers must be at least 25 years of age, have a valid driver's license and current state minimum insurance. A copy of insurance and driver's license must be on-file before the event.

Overnight/ Trips

These procedures cover youth activities which require an overnight stay and are sponsored and/or supervised by Good Shepherd. This includes, but is not limited to camping, lock-ins, and overnight stays in hotels, churches or a personal dwelling.

Mission Trips

There will be at least 2 adults at each work site at all times. No youth will be allowed to be alone with an adult from the host mission; includes pastors, congregation members, homeowners, etc. An adult mission team member is not to be alone with a youth from the host

mission. When traveling outside the United States, there needs to be 2 adults in the room with the youth. Both adults sharing a room with a youth must be Conference certified.

Rules for Travel Issues

- A signed parent permission form will be required of each child prior to the overnight or off-site activity.
- There will be one adult per eight students.
 - If the group is of mixed gender, there will be at least ½ female and ½ male screened volunteers present at all times during the event.
- Each minor shall have his/her own bed and shall not share with another minor or adult.
- Accommodations with a connecting room between minors and adults will only be appropriate when there are two conference safe sanctuaries certified supervising adults present together in the same connecting room.
- Accommodations at a hotel/motel shall only be used when there is only interior door access to the hotel/motel rooms. Exterior door accesses to rooms are not permissible. The doors of each room may not be locked on the exterior in a way that would prevent escape in the event of an emergency.
- There will be separate sleeping areas for youth males and youth females.
- No members of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room.
- If an individual identifies as transgender, an individual plan will be made with the student to ensure they are safe and comfortable.
- Adults will not be allowed to sleep in the same bed with a child/youth. Two adults of the same sex are required to sleep in the same room.
- There will be at least 2 adults in the sleeping rooms with youth or no adults.
- Open showers are prohibited. Separate shower times for minors and adults shall be designated to prevent youth and adults showering together. There will be shower monitors.
- Instances may occur where swimsuits will be needed.
- Adults need to be sensitive to privacy issues of children and youth, such as dressing and undressing in public places.
- When there are both male and female youth, there must be male and female adults when swimming.

Permission and Release Form

- Parents of children will be asked to sign an activity-specific permission form for each planned off-site and overnight activity that is part of regular programming.
- All youth shall have a completed medical release form with the team leader/event leader.
- All youth shall have a completed parental permission form.

Drop-off and Pick-up

Children participating in an event or program may only be checked-in and released to an adult with proper authorization. Staff and volunteers have the right to ask for identification before releasing a child.

Technology

The internet has become the "new" social hangout place. People post information, pictures of themselves and their friends. It is possible to find email, phone numbers, addresses, and other

personal information about people.

Online predators are using the internet as well. They have online contact and build a relationship to have a face to face meeting.

Online predators seek out vulnerable victims. They seduce with attention, kindness and even gifts. They listen and sympathize with the child's/youth's problems.

Gradually they begin to introduce sexually explicit information, material or pictures. They eventually will set up a meeting face to face.

- Official social media ministry pages and web sites/pages must be monitored and administered by ministry staff
- Include other adult sponsors, counselors for any online or text communication.
- Encourage parents to be part of the emails and social media.

Technology Risks

Issues of concern to churches for local church policies and procedures:

- Identification of persons: do you put names, phone numbers, emails of students on the web sites or social media? If there are names or other information, it is easy to trace them and get more information.
- Educate parents and children/youth on information they put on the web.
- Texting and emails do not always send the complete message and can be misunderstood. Be careful on what you send through texting and emails.
- Texting information that has yet to be shared with concerned parties can be harmful and create issues that are hard to correct.
- Church computers need to be monitored. Blocks are not fool proof. It is important to check the sites that are being visited.
- Use of cell phones and cameras during church events: Pictures can be sent, phone to phone. Need to help students understand the importance of pictures that are sent or posted, can be harmful.
- Be sure every adult is identifying themselves as to who they are when sending messages through cyber methods to children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- Wireless internet in churches needs to be password protected and the password is obscure.
- With the internet now accessible on phones without even using the church wireless, it is important that adults not allow students to use their phones without being monitored.

Volunteers should not submit "friend" requests to minors or youth. Youth may ask to be "friends," and volunteers should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests. All staff and volunteers at GSUMC need to be accountable for their social media communication.

Texts, personal phone calls, email and other forms of private one-on-one communication should be used to promote ministry or prayer related events only. Personal communication via these formats should be kept to a minimum. Parents should be aware of any personal communication between adults and child/youth. Texts, phone call logs, email and other forms of communication should never be deleted from the adults' phone.

Any derogatory material on any website or social media (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused, neglected, or exploited should be immediately reported to the Staff for further investigation. If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and removed immediately. This includes pictures and/or text.

Alcohol or Controlled Substances and Tobacco use/Smoking and Vaping

No alcohol or non-prescribed controlled substances shall be consumed by any Good Shepherd participant (adult, youth, young adult, volunteer, or staff) at church-sponsored events planned for children and/or youth. Persons found under the influence will be asked to leave the premises. If there is an issue of safety for self or others, transportation will be arranged. Tobacco usage (including chewing tobacco) is not permitted at any children or youth sponsored events. There is to be NO SMOKING OR VAPING in any Good shepherd building or in any vehicle transporting children or youth.

If a student is found with or under the influence of controlled substances (i.e. tobacco, marijuana, non-prescribed medication, alcohol, etc), those substances will be confiscated, and the parent(s) or guardian will be notified. The student will be asked to leave the present event. If this happens 3+ times, a parent will be required to be in attendance to any church sponsored event the student is present at.

Weapons

Weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited while working or volunteering with children, youth or vulnerable adults. This included pocket-knives and hunting knives.

IV. Emergency Procedures

(Each GSUMC campus has a separate and specific safety plan)

Supervising staff or if none, supervising volunteer will make effort to contact parent when an injury or emergency has occurred.

If medical attention is needed, staff or volunteer will follow directions given by parents in medical release form if available. If not, volunteer will contact supervising staff and discern level of care.

If there is an injury with visible signs of trauma or worse, or a child, youth or vulnerable adult continues to complain of pain for an extended period of time after an incident then an incident report must be completed and filed by a Ministry Director on staff to the Executive Director's Admin.

It is your responsibility to know the campus specific evacuation routes and/or safety procedures for Fire, Tornado and Shooter on Site.

It is a best practice to be aware of any allergen concerns when working with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

V. Abuse and Neglect

Boundaries

Inappropriate behavior or the perception of inappropriate behavior can lead to abuse or the accusation of abuse. Boundaries and behavior are the responsibility of the adult.

Boundary is an invisible protective fence around our personal space. Our service to others is guided by respecting their boundaries and honoring their trust. When we act in ways that use someone's vulnerability to satisfy our own personal needs, we have crossed boundaries inappropriately and betrayed a sacred trust. A boundary is a gift. It gives shape to all our relationships. The type of relationship determines the guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate boundary crossing, not in a hierarchical way, but a way that prevents harmful or unhealthy behavior. Appropriate behavior between parent and child will be different than that of ministry leader and child or youth.

As volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults, we must be sensitive to and respectful of the boundaries of others. There must be transparency and accountability in ministry, meaning there are no secrets. We must know our own boundaries.

Appropriate Touch

The gift of touch is one that can offer healing, support and comfort. Touch can also be perceived as an invasion of privacy, too forward, unwanted, and frightening. It is important that we honestly examine our own patterns of touching. Are you comfortable with being touched? Are you a hugger? What things influence your touch? Do you use touch to share God's compassion and care?

- **Why touch?** Jesus touched others to heal, comfort, and calm. The only reason to touch is to show God's compassion.
- As persons in ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults, it is **ALWAYS OUR RESPONSIBILITY** to establish appropriate boundaries with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- We forget that their bodies are their bodies; we forget that their bodies are sensitive and responsive. Some children and youth do not like to be touched by just anyone.
- Children, youth and vulnerable adults have the right to determine who, what, where and how they are touched.
- Children, youth and vulnerable adults should initiate the touch.
- Volunteers are always responsible to maintain the appropriate boundaries of good touch. There are those children, youth and vulnerable adults that are not aware of good boundaries and we need to help them learn. We do not want someone else to take advantage of them in other settings.
- The message you send with touch may be perceived differently from the message you thought you were sending, causing much confusion. What you consider a "good" touch may be perceived as a confusing or "bad" touch by the other person.

Criteria for 'appropriate' versus 'inappropriate' touches

Location on the body: not intimate or in private places

Duration or intensity: not prolonged

Relationship to the other person: long-time friends, equal power

Who initiates: child/youth/vulnerable adult should always initiate

Cultural heritage: different cultures have different traditions and understanding of touch

Age of child: rocking a toddler is appropriate, while rocking an older child is not

Motivation of the touch: to share God's love, not our own pleasure

Types of appropriate touches might be

- Shake hands, high fives, fist bumps
- Lightly touch a shoulder or top of head
- Lightly hold a hand, as in a therapeutic touch or guidance
- Give an A-frame or sideways hug

Types of touch that should never be used

- Don't use prolonged touch anywhere on the body including tickling.
- Don't stand too close in someone's personal space (at least 3 feet is appropriate public space)
- Don't touch with any part of your own body (hands, head, arms, feet) on any sensitive "hot spots" of another such as buttocks, hips, chest, lower arms, genitals, head, neck, thigh
- Don't give full frontal hugs
- Don't sit in another's lap or allow others to sit in your lap (unless initiated by young child)
- Don't implement games that require prolonged or inappropriate use of touch. (this can be touch of youth to youth as well as youth to adult)
- Don't kiss, even if using as a greeting

Body language that says "no"

- Fold arms in front of chest
- No eye-contact
- Rigid body
- Stepping away or squirming to get away
- Hands in front of body
- Turning to the side
- Making faces or sounds of dislike

TYPES AND SIGNS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

We hear about incidents of abuse and violence against children in churches, communities, schools, and homes. The latest statistics indicate that 3 million incidents of abuse were reported in the United States alone. Shockingly, child advocacy experts estimate that 6 million incidents go unreported each year and **most abusers are known by the victim.**

In the United States, more than half of all reports that alleged child abuse or neglect were made by such professionals as educators, law enforcement, legal and social services, medical and mental health persons, child daycare and foster care providers.

- Boys and Girls **reported** abuse physically in about equal percentages
- Girls have **reported** sexual abuse at a higher rate than boys
- In 80% of abuse cases, the children or youth know their abuser

- 70% of abused children are under the age of 3

Neglect

Failure to provide for a child's need of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision to the degree that the child's health, safety, and well-being are threatened with harm.

Physical Abuse

Any non-accidental physical injury to the child" and can include striking, kicking, burning, squeezing, biting the child, or any action that results in a physical impairment of the child.

Emotional Abuse

Verbal or non-verbal assaults that inhibit the psychological growth and development of a child, including belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on a child's or youth's performance or intentional isolation from normal social activities.

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Any sexual contact or sexually explicit language, gestures, or images by a volunteer or staff person with, or directed to, a participant. Sexual exploitation includes allowing the child to engage in prostitution or in the production of child pornography.

RECOGNIZING ABUSE

Physical signs: one or more may occur

- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area
- Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens
- Pregnancy
- Poor hygiene or begging for food
- Untreated medical conditions
- Inappropriate dress for the climate

Behavioral indicators:

- Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior
- Sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior and/or knowledge
- Poor peer relationships
- Delinquency or running away
- Fear of a particular person
- Fear of "going home"
- Anxiety, aggression, depression
- Nightmares, bedwetting
- Flashbacks
- Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
- Eating disorders

Abuse at church:

- Unusual nervousness about going to church or Sunday School alone
- Reluctance to participate in church activities when previously enthusiastic
- Unexplained hostility toward a youth group adult leader or teacher
- Negative comments about church leader

Mandatory Reporting

All clergy, staff and volunteers in children or youth ministries of Good Shepherd shall be mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse. Witness reports to Director of the Ministry and is required to participate in both the phone call to The Division of Family Services and the written report with said Director.

State Reporting Requirements

Missouri Law states:

If a childcare worker . . . teacher . . . or other person with responsibility for the care of children has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subject to abuse or neglect or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse/neglect, he/she shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Divisions of Family Services. . . . Evidence of sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any child less than eighteen years of age shall be turned over to The Division of Family Services within twenty four hours by those mandated to report.

The United Methodist Church states:

“. . . Children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse.” From *The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church* ¶162C.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

How to report an incident

Report any suspicious, inappropriate and questionable behavior immediately to the ministry director or volunteer responsible for the program, activity or event. You will be asked to provide a detailed written account of the event. You will also be asked to file a report with the state.

NOTE: It is not the reporter’s responsibility to determine the validity of any claim made. It IS their responsibility to report any suspicions or claims of abuse.

After an Initial Report is Made

1. Move the alleged victim to a safe and secure area.
2. Determine if there are injuries requiring first aid, and if necessary, contact emergency medical personnel to manage the injuries.
3. Notify the parents of the child/youth immediately.
4. Contact immediate supervisor
5. Contact the proper law enforcement agency or the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline **1-800-392-3738**. A form can also be completed at **dss.mo.gov**.

- a. NOTE: please keep this number in your phone in case of emergency.
6. Contact the Missouri State Division of Family Services and report the alleged abuse incident within 24 hours of receiving the allegation.
 - a. Be prepared to provide: alleged victim's name and location, parent's name, alleged abuser's name and location.
7. Complete a written detailed report of the incident within 24 hours of receiving the allegation and give to the lead pastor.
8. The lead pastor will share all reports with appropriate local, state, and Missouri Conference representatives to support the investigation of the abuse allegation. Any and all written reports concerning investigations of questionable and inappropriate conduct will be considered confidential and will be filed in such a manner as to protect the reporter's confidentiality to the fullest extent as is reasonably possible.

Allegations Made Against a Volunteer

In addition to the procedure above the following will occur:

Volunteer

1. The accused individual will voluntarily remove his/herself from duties.
2. The volunteer is not permitted to serve in any capacity until the allegations are resolved.

Under no circumstances is anyone affiliated with Good Shepherd United Methodist Church permitted to make a public statement other than the authorized media representative.

Rights of the Accused

A person being investigated because of a report of child abuse has certain rights:

1. The right to be informed of the nature of the report (not including information about the person reporting the alleged abuse).
2. The right to provide information regarding his/her knowledge of the alleged report and to identify witnesses who can support his/her explanation.
3. The right to be informed of the agency's decision and the basis for decision.
4. The right to request a formal hearing by a State Department hearing officer.
5. The right to be represented by a lawyer.

Volunteers who work with children and youth should understand that sexual relationships, physical abuse, and emotional abuse with minors can lead to a felony conviction and imprisonment.

Good Shepherd's insurance policy will not provide a legal defense for a sexual, physical, or emotional misconduct charge, or pay any portion of a jury verdict assessed against them because of such conduct.

Disclaimer

All information and policies stated in this document are subject to revision as the laws of Missouri change and Good Shepherd's response to these changes is developed.

Good Shepherd Safe Gatherings Covenant

Good Shepherd is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, it's staff and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No person who has been convicted of child abuse (sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or ritual abuse) is permitted to volunteer or work with children and youth in any church-sponsored activity.
2. Survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any survivor who desires to volunteer to work with children or youth is encouraged to counsel with one of the pastors or program directors before accepting an assignment.
3. All screened volunteers involved with children or youth must have regular worship attendance for at least three months before beginning an on-going volunteer assignment and maintain a regular practice of worship during their commitment period.
4. Volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "Two-Adult-Rule" at all times so that no one is ever alone with children or youth.
5. Volunteers with children and youth shall attempt to attend regular training when provided by their ministry directors. A background check and recertification are required every 3 years to keep staff and volunteers updated of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
6. GSUMC Staff and Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor or ministry director any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? Yes No
2. Do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times? Yes No
3. Do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your assignment? Yes No
4. Do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor?
 Yes No
5. Do you agree to inform a pastor or program director of this church if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? Yes No

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____
(guardian signature if under 18yrs.)

Rules for acceptance and participation in programs are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap.