

# Safe Spaces Policies and Procedures

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**Rationale:** Connection UMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, staff and volunteers who participate in ministries and missions sponsored by the Church. We are committed to serving God and others with a place of safety and protection.

## **Definitions:**

Adult – Age 18 and older and no longer in high school

Teacher – Person approved and designated to lead a class or activity

Leader – Person approved and designated to lead an activity

Volunteer – Adult who is not a teacher or leader but is present with children/youth

Youth – Rising 6<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade

Children – From birth through 5<sup>th</sup> grade

Paid Staff - Persons currently paid by salary or hourly rates by CUMC

**Overview of who uses this document:** All groups using the church campus must adhere to the current policies and procedures in this document. All groups representing CUMC off-campus must adhere to the current policies and procedures in this document.

**Background reports** shall be maintained in a locked area of the church office. Should concerns arise about a report the Pastor and/or another leader of CUMC will meet with the person whose background check is a concern. When appropriate, plans will be made to keep an individual out of contact with children/youth. Background reports are valid for three years at which time a new report will be required.

## **Paid Staff**

All church staff must have a background check prior to serving CUMC that gives a report indicating no concerns that the person is a safety threat.

## **Teachers/Leaders/Volunteers:**

All teachers/leaders/volunteers present with children or youth must have a background check prior to being with the children/youth that gives a report indicating no concerns that person is a safety threat.

A minimum of two adults who are not members of the same household are required for all organized activities. Exceptions could include mentoring of confirmands by persons approved by parents/guardians of confirmands.

Visibility into classrooms will be maintained.

Teachers/leaders/volunteers must be at least five years older than students.

Youth helpers to teachers/leaders/volunteers must be at least four years older than participants.

Children and youth shall be supervised by parent/guardian or designated adult when not in organized activities.

To be a teacher/leader/volunteer the individual shall have been active in the worship life of CUMC-for at least six months.

Any teacher/leader/volunteer shall be familiar with this document which is updated every two years. Persons are encouraged to attend our Conference events that highlight best practices. All persons will be invited to training sessions for these policies and procedures at least every two years.

### **Safety**

Walking speed will be maintained inside the building.

First aid, CPR and AED training are recommended for each teacher/leader/volunteer.

First aid kits are located in the kitchen, nursery, foyer and office. The AED is located in the hallway beside the elevator on the Sanctuary level floor.

Medications are not to be left with children in the church. If need for medicine is anticipated prior arrangements must be made with parents and teacher/leader/volunteer in charge of activity during which medicine will be required and parent must be available to administer.

Each child and youth must have on file with the church office a current emergency medical form. Copies of forms must be taken on off-campus trips.

No smoking, no illegal drugs or paraphernalia, alcohol or weapons are allowed on church premises or on church related trips of children and/or youth.

### **Transportation**

Permission slips for each trip must be signed and returned before a child or youth is allowed to participate in off-campus activity.

Drivers for church trips must be at least twenty-three years old, have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance and have had a satisfactory background report. Drivers of any vehicle owned, rented, or leased by CUMC must be listed on the church insurance policy.

## **Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians**

Parents of children/youth must take responsibility to ensure that at least two teachers/leaders/volunteers are present before leaving their child/youth on the church campus or in the church building.

Parents are to familiarize themselves with this document and when possible attend training meetings about these policies and procedures.

Children/youth are to be picked up at the designated ending time for each event by the person who dropped off the child/youth or by another previously designated adult.

Parent/guardian/designated adult must remain in the church building when leaving child(ren) in Nursery. A cell phone number for adult must be provided to nursery staff.

Nursery-age children's belongings must be labeled.

Nursery age is up to age five with exceptions made, when appropriate, ahead of time by the Spiritual Formation Chair and/or Pastor.

Children and youth must be free of fever, vomiting, diarrhea and/or signs of other contagious diseases for at least twenty-four hours before participating in church events including the Nursery.

## **Nursery Workers**

Nursery workers and volunteers must be age eighteen or older. Youth helpers must be approved to be in the Nursery prior to being in the Nursery by the Spiritual Formation Chair and Pastor.

Two non-cohabitating adults are required in the Nursery at all times. If a ratio of infant/adult exceeds 4:1 then another adult needs to be present in the Nursery. A ratio of 6:1 for children ages two and above in the Nursery when exceeded will necessitate adding an additional adult.

At least one phone must be available in the Nursery.

## **Incident Reporting Procedures**

Any accident or injury on the church campus or during church-sponsored events shall be documented in writing and provided to the Pastor, Church Office, and the Trustee Chair as soon as possible after the event.

First aid kits are available in the kitchen, the church van, and the Nursery.

The AED is located on the Sanctuary level next to the elevator.

Children and youth workers are encouraged to be familiar with signs of abuse and reporting procedures. *Everyone in Tennessee is a mandated reporter under state law, per Department of Children's Services at [www.tn.gov](http://www.tn.gov).*

In the event an incident of abuse is alleged related to the church campus or church sponsored activities then the incident shall be reported to the Pastor and/or District Superintendent as soon as possible. A designated spokesperson from The Annual Conference will speak on behalf of the congregation, including any and all news media communication regarding any allegation. The designated spokesperson will not discuss details of the case or the identity of individuals involved with the news media but will emphasize the church's concern for safety and will describe safe spaces policies and procedures being followed by the church. No person from the church is to speak publicly about an alleged incident and it is expected that no unnecessary conversation regarding an alleged incident will be spoken.

### **Administrative Procedures**

The Spiritual Formation committee will review this document at least every two years to keep information current. Changes in procedures will be made by the Spiritual Formation Committee. Any changes in the document will then be shared with the Connection Leadership Board for final approval.

Any exceptions to this policy should have the expressed written consent of the Lead Pastor or his/her designee.

The Connection Leadership Board (CLB) fulfilling the functions of the former Board of Trustees will have oversight over the church insurance policy as it relates to coverage.

Incident Reports will be maintained in the Church Office.

Background check forms will be provided by the Church Office.

Background reports will be kept in locked area in Church Office.

Background checks will be required to be updated every three years or as determined to be necessary by Spiritual Formation Chair and/or committee.

This document shall be available through the Church Office. Persons of all ages who are part of the community will be encouraged to be familiar with this document.

*Original document approved by Administrative Council in October, 1998. Changes made most recently in January 2021.*