

# Northern Illinois Conference Policies

## Abuse Prevention Policy

*This policy is a working document for the Northern Illinois Conference to be perfected and then presented to the June 2012 Annual Conference. Please send any input to Natarsh Gardner at [ngardner@umcnic.org](mailto:ngardner@umcnic.org)*

- For Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults
- The Northern Illinois Annual Conference is committed to the well being of every person entrusted to its care as well as those persons entrusted to the care of the United Methodist Churches throughout Northern Illinois.

# Scope

- Northern Illinois United Methodists affirm that all children, youth and vulnerable adults (See definition below) have the right to safe sanctuary. Therefore, Northern Illinois United Methodists are determined to provide an environment in which these persons are safe from neglect or abuse. The scope of this policy and its provisions shall apply to all staff and volunteers, clergy or lay, who have direct or indirect contact with children or youth in conference and/or district sponsored events. The Northern Illinois Conference in consultation with the Safe Sanctuaries Committee shall be responsible for reviewing and revising this policy. Each conference and/or district ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall adopt procedures to implement this policy.

# Definitions

- 1. Physical Abuse is
- 2. Sexual Abuse is
- 3. Neglect is
- 4. Staff includes
- 5. Volunteer is
- 6. Certification Authority.
- 7. Participants are children and youth who
- 8. Vulnerable adults are
- 9. Children are persons 0-11 years of age.
- 10. Youth are 12-18 years of age.
-

# Standards for Staff / Volunteers

1. Youth who are at least 15 years of age may serve as volunteers when
2. A background screening approved by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee is required
3. Staff/Volunteers shall submit a written Application Form.
4. All staff/volunteers shall be participants in a local church/ministry for a minimum of six months prior to the event.
5. Staff/Volunteers shall participate in the required training program.
6. Staff/Volunteers must be able to provide supervision to those 18 years and under in District or Conference Events.

# Screening for Staff/Volunteers

- Careful screening is one way to provide for the safety of participants. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of persons who can provide supervision in a safe environment. This may include application, background screening, references and training. The Certification Authority must review all screening procedures developed by individual conference/district ministry groups for approval.

# Training

- Conference and district ministry groups shall be responsible to provide all training required by the Certification Authority. That training shall include, but not be limited to, the following elements: recognizing the signs of abuse; avoiding situations when abuse might take place or conduct which could be perceived as abusive; and reporting requirements of the state of Illinois and the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church related to abuse and media response procedures.

# Local Churches Use of Conference Training and Screening Process

- Local churches may have their volunteers go through the Conference process for training and screening. The local church may include in their Safe Sanctuaries policy that their volunteers will go through the conference process. However, the designation of Conference Certification is specifically for District or Conference activities.



# Training and Screening Reciprocity

- The Safe Sanctuaries Certification Authority accepts training provided by other United
- Methodist Conferences or United Methodist churches in other conferences after review of the policies and procedures implemented in the other conference or church. Screening will be accepted provided that it has been a National Screen that included National Criminal screen and National Sex Offender check.



# Certification Authority

Shall be responsible for reviewing and for final approval of the procedures developed by individual conference and district ministry groups.

1. Shall periodically review said procedures...
2. Where screening reports and/or forms are required, the Certification Authority shall receive, review and maintain these reports...
3. The applicant for Certification understands that by making this application they waive any right to inspect or copy any information which the Certifying Authority may use to make its determination....
4. Shall reserve the right to revoke an individual's certification at any time.

# Reporting of Incidents

Incidents may involve inappropriate behavior by staff/volunteers or other participants toward a participant and call for immediate on-site corrective action. Incidents may involve abuse of participants by staff/volunteers or other participants and mandate reporting through the Illinois DCFS Abuse Hotline (1-800-xxx-xxxx).

# Statement to the Media

The Conference Director of Communications or their designee shall be the designated spokesperson for the NIC

# Guidelines for Procedures

- Every ministry of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference that relates to children, youth, and vulnerable adults in its programming or oversight, shall create procedures for implementing the conference policy. Administrative Teams/ Conference Staff who give oversight to these ministries shall be responsible for implementing and monitoring the compliance of said policy and related procedures

# 1. Procedures shall address at a minimum:

- a. Reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers for supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
  - b. Educating said workers of the policy and procedures, along with ongoing monitoring so that compliance is maintained;
  - c. Reporting incidents of child abuse or abuse of youth or vulnerable adults in accordance with the state Laws of Illinois and the written guidelines of the Northern Illinois Conference;
  - d. Dealing with the safety of those who may have been victimized;
  - e. Active communication with family members and public media;
- A copy of the Procedures shall be retained in the Conference office

2. Every ministry shall be responsible for providing sufficient liability coverage.
3. The Safe Sanctuaries Certification Authority shall be responsible for training and
4. Every church in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference shall have a Child Abuse and Abuse of Vulnerable Adults Prevention Policy with accompanying procedures. These policies and procedures shall include:

# Every church in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference shall

- a. Reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of both employee and volunteer workers with children, youth, and those vulnerable adults;
- b. Educating said workers of the policy and procedures along with ongoing monitoring so that compliance is maintained and, using age appropriate languages, educating children, youth, and those vulnerable adults of definitions of abuse and procedures for reporting;
- c. Reporting incidents of child abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults in accordance with the State Laws of Illinois, the written guidelines of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, and the written guidelines of the local United Methodist Church;
- d. Providing for sufficient liability coverage;

# Every church in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference shall

- e. Dealing with the safety, protection, and ongoing emotional support of those who may have been victimized;
- f. Active communication with family members, the congregation, and the public media;
- g. A copy of the policy shall be on file in the church's District Office; Program Office
- h. Administrative bodies of the local church shall be responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy and accompanying procedures.
- i. Copy of the local church safe sanctuary policy will be included in the charge conference documents to the congregation
-

# **Policy for Use with Registered Sex Offenders**

No person who is registered as a sex offender, or is required to do so, but has not, will be Safe Sanctuaries certified to act in an adult supervisory role at Northern Illinois Conference or district events.

Should a person is who is registered as a sex offender, or is required to do so, but has not, desire to participate in a conference or district event in which children, youth, or vulnerable adults may be present, he/she may do so only after the following requirements are met:

**Items 1- 6**

# **NOTE:**

**This does not include youth sponsored events such as camping, mission trips, etc. A sex offender would not be allowed to attend these events.**

# Information from the 2008 Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church

- 355. Church Participation by a Registered Child Sex Offender
- The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: “We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms—verbal, psychological, physical, sexual—is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God’s redeeming love.”
-

## **A. Local churches should:**

- hold discussions in the church council and in adult education settings about the possibility of facing the situation of a convicted sex offender returning to or joining the church. These discussions should be held and general agreements reached about actions to be taken should the church find itself in this circumstance;
- develop a carefully constructed and openly negotiated covenant between the offender and the church community. The covenant should include agreements in the following areas:

## **B. Annual Conferences should:**

- develop similar plans and covenant for situations in which a convicted and/or registered sexual offender is involved or seeks involvement in the conference, its activities or facilities;
- • include information about this concern and assistance with implementation of this resolution in its training and resourcing of clergy and local church lay leaders;
-

## **C. The General Board of Discipleship and the General Board of Global Ministries should:**

- cooperatively develop and promote a process and specific guidelines to assist congregations in the education and covenant tasks outlined above.
- ADOPTED 2004      Readopted 2008
- Approved by Certification Authority March 22, 2007

# Reciprocity Policy and Procedures

- **Reciprocity Policy Statement**

The Safe Sanctuaries Certification Authority accepts training provided by other United

Methodist Conferences or United Methodist churches in other conferences after review of the policies and procedures implemented in the other conference or church...

- **Reciprocity Procedures**

The following requirements and steps must be met in order for Reciprocity to be approved:

- 1-7

# **Waiver of Right to Review Statement**

I understand that by making this application I am waiving any right I may have to inspect or copy any information which the Certifying Authority may use to make its determination....

# **Northern Illinois Conference Procedures**

- **Procedures for Youth and Children at  
Conference and District Ministries**

- 1. Two Adult Rule:
- 2. Four year older rule
- 3. An adult and youth will not share a motel room/hotel room/tent
- 4. There will be separate sleeping areas for males and females
- 5. In the event of open showers, separate shower times for children/youth and for adults.
- 6. The adult/youth ratio will be at least 1:8 at retreats/rallies/meetings; adult/youth ratio will be 1:4 at offsite camps and mission trips. Some events may require smaller ratios.

- 7. When a group of youth from any local church consists of both genders, the accompanying adults shall also be of both genders.
- 8. There will be two adults at each work site at all times on mission trips
- 9. All adults in leadership positions or serving as chaperones at conference and district youth /children events must be certified through the NIC Conference certification process.
- 10. All youth/children shall have a completed medical release form and completed parental permission form.

- 11. For all camps and mission trips will be secured by the conference. At retreats/rallies each local church's insurance will be the secondary insurance; the conference shall carry liability insurance.
- 12. District youth coordinators and adults serving on Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM) shall be at least 23 years of age.
- 13. For travel and lodging, where there is the need for one youth and one adult to travel together, written parental permission is required.

- 14. When VIM teams are primarily in settings with children and youth, such as VBS, all team members shall be Conference Safe Sanctuaries trained.
- 15. All team leaders of conference-sponsored VIM teams with youth participants shall have at least two conference Safe Sanctuaries certified adults, one being the team leader.
- 17. Technology
  - a. Official “Face Book” and web pages must be monitored by staff/camp event director.
  - b. Computers will be used only in public areas

# Certification Procedures

- Certification Process for First-time Applicants
  1. Screening..
  2. Verification.
  3. Background Check..
  4. References.
  5. Training.
  6. Fee. A Certification Fee is required, and is nonrefundable.
  7. Decision..
  8. If a prospective staff/volunteer does not have a Social Security number, the person must supply three references, Pastor, employer and general reference from non family member, and church membership for at least 6 months.

# **Summary of Certification Process for First-time Applicants**

- **Child Care Procedures for Workers with Child Care for the Northern Illinois Annual Conference Sessions**
- **Items 1-12**

# Reporting of Incidents

- Incidents may involve inappropriate behavior and call for corrective action, or may involve abuse and require reporting through the Illinois DCFS Abuse Hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE).
- When an incident involves abuse, the protection of children and youth is paramount. In
- such cases, the following procedures shall be followed:
- See items 1. - 14

# Background Screening Procedures

## Review of Significant Issues (Flags)

- The Safe Sanctuaries Certification Authority of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference shall be responsible for supervision and implementation of a careful screening process for conference participants. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information to help ensure persons working in ministry with youth or vulnerable adults can provide a safe environment.

# Procedures for Review of Significant Background Screening Issues (flags)

- 1. Applicant is contacted by the Connectional Ministries office and invited to respond. Documentation is made in the file.
- 2. After all information is complete in the file, it is reviewed by the Certification Authority.
- 3. A majority of Certification Authority members must be in agreement as to decision regarding Denial or Approval of certification. The decision to Deny or Approve is documented in the applicant's file. Notification letters are sent.

- A. Items that immediately disqualify a person from certification, pending response from applicant
  - • Presence on sex offender registry
  - • Any felony conviction for which person continues on parole
  - • Any conviction for child abuse or neglect within last 7 years
- B. Items that require further documentation prior to certification
  - • Any flags on background screenings dated within last 7 years
  - • Any references that are less than excellent on every item
  - • Any self-disclosures that indicate previous behavioral mistakes

C. Items that Safe Sanctuaries Certification Authority may or may not choose to request additional documentation

- Background screening flags that are more than 7 years old and for which the
- person has completed parole
- Background screening flags that do not indicate convictions or may be misdemeanors
- D. Applications that lead to automatic approval
- All of the following
  - All references indicate excellence in every area
  - No flags on background screenings
  - Self-disclosure that indicates no previous behavioral problems
  - Satisfactory completion of training
  - Payment of application fee



# Your input is needed!

Your Safe Sanctuary Committee welcomes comments and suggestions for improving this document in the coming months.

A refined document will be submitted to the Annual Conference in June of 2012.

Please use the 3x5 card to for any initial comments you may contact us through Natarsha Gardner at [ngardner@umcnic.org](mailto:ngardner@umcnic.org)