



**Safe Sanctuaries® Guidelines
Children and Vulnerable Adults
Panama United Methodist Church**

Our congregation has established these Safe Sanctuaries® Guidelines in order to provide a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults. Our Guidelines seek to provide an atmosphere where adults are free to teach and love children, youth and vulnerable adults, in a Christ-like manner, and children, youth and vulnerable adults can pursue their journey to know, love and serve God freely without fear.

These Guidelines were written by the Safe Sanctuaries® Committee (SSC), reviewed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) and approved and adopted by the Church Council. SPRC will continue to review and update the Guidelines as needed and seek approval for changes from the Church Council.

Definitions:

1. **A child** is anyone under the age of 18 years old.
2. **A Vulnerable Adult** is, “An adult (a person aged 18 or over) who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.” (Definition referred to in the Consultation Paper ‘Who Decides’ 1997 and in the report ‘Making Decisions’ 1999)
3. **A Supervising Volunteer** is a person who works directly with children or vulnerable adults in an unpaid capacity.
4. **An Assistant** is a volunteer at an activity where children are or may be present, but the assistant will have no direct supervision of children. Assistants include volunteers under the age of 18.
5. **A Rover** is an adult who is available to periodically and routinely observe activities during Sunday school time for youth and vulnerable adults.
6. **Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse** refers to any non-accidental injury; any sexual activity or sexual exploitation; or any neglectful treatment or maltreatment that harms the health, welfare, or safety of a child or vulnerable adults. This includes the following types of abuse:
 - a. **Physical Abuse:** Causing deliberate and intentional harm to a child or vulnerable adult.
 - b. **Emotional Abuse:** Verbal and /or nonverbal cruelty to a child or vulnerable adult. Emotional abuse sends a message to the victim that he/she is worthless, bad, unloved, and undeserving of love and care.
 - c. **Neglect:** Endangering a child’s or vulnerable adult’s health, welfare, and safety through negligence. This includes but is not limited to withholding food, medical care, affection, affirmation, clothing, shelter, hygiene, or education.

- d. **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual contact between an adult and a child, an older and /or more powerful child and a child, or an adult and a vulnerable adult. Sexual abuse may include but is not limited to: fondling, inappropriate touching, intercourse, incest and the exploitation or exposure to pornography and/or prostitution.
 - e. **Ritual Abuse:** Intentional abuse of a physical, sexual, or psychological nature inflicted on a child or vulnerable adult in a stylized way by a person (or multiple persons) with responsibility for the victim's welfare. Ritual abuse may include cruelty or threats of cruelty of animals, and repetitious threats of sexual or physical violence to the victim, or other persons related to the victim.
7. **Two-Person Rule:** At all times, where children or vulnerable adults are present, there will be 2 adults or 1 adult and 1 assistant supervising the activity. Every attempt will be made to include two adults in each classroom as part of the Sunday school activity, however, if that is not possible, rovers will meet the Two-Person Rule during the Sunday school activity.

Guidelines for adult volunteers and employees working with children and vulnerable adults

1. Supervising Volunteers and employees working with children and vulnerable adults must be at least 18 years of age. Those under 18 years of age wishing to assist must be 5 years older than the oldest child being supervised and may not be the primary supervisor.
2. Supervising Volunteers must have a relationship with the Panama United Methodist Church prior to working with children and vulnerable adults.
3. Employees of the church must complete the **Safe Sanctuaries® Check Form for Employees**.
4. Supervising Volunteers must complete the **Volunteer Information Form**. Assistants and volunteers under 18 years of age must complete the **Volunteer Information Short Form**. Volunteers under age 18 must have the co-signature of a parent or guardian.
5. Supervising Volunteers and employees must give written consent for a criminal background check, which could include a local, county, state, and national criminal check, Department of Motor Vehicles Report, NYS Sex Offender Registry, and a Social Security Number Validation.
6. The criminal background check shall be performed at the beginning of service, after every two years of service, and after a break in service of one year or more.
7. Volunteers, employees and assistants must agree to abide by the adopted Safe Sanctuaries® Guidelines of the church.
8. Volunteers, employees and assistants shall observe the *Two-Person Rule*. In the event of a counseling situation it is recommended that a second adult be in visual contact.
9. Any person who has been convicted of sexual abuse shall not work or volunteer in any position involving children / vulnerable adults.
10. It is recommended that adults who are survivors of child abuse should be willing to discuss past abuse confidentially with the Pastor or an SSC representative prior to working as a volunteer or as an employee.
11. A personal interview shall be held for all new supervising volunteers and employees with the Pastor and/ or other official before working with children.

Physical Surroundings:

1. Classrooms, offices and other rooms should have windows that make the rooms clearly visible to outside observers. These windows should usually be in the interior doors. Rooms without clear visibility should leave a door open whenever children or vulnerable adults are present.
2. Spaces used for children and vulnerable adults should be clean and free from safety hazards, such as chipping paint, toxic chemicals, mold, harmful air quality, fire hazards, etc. Fire exits should also be readily accessible and clearly marked.
3. Scheduled activities should be within safety guidelines for facilities and activities. Adult supervision is always necessary.

Other Considerations:

1. Child-to-adult ratios should be carefully considered. Age and care needs of children and vulnerable adults should be taken into consideration. Generally - 1 adult per 3 children ages 0-2 years, 1 adult per 8 children ages 3-4 years, 1 adult per 10 children ages 5-18 years. The *Two-Person Rule* shall apply.
2. Abuse may happen between children and between vulnerable adults. Supervising Volunteers and employees should be aware of potentially abusive and /or misconduct situations whether it is physical, emotional, or sexual occurring between children and between vulnerable adults. There must be supervision at all times to minimize the possibility of this type of abuse.
3. If abuse is suspected refer to **Response and Reporting Plan** section.
3.
4. Program guidelines and procedures including, but not limited to, registration, travel, photographs, use of social media, and events will be developed in keeping with the Safe Sanctuaries® guidelines.
4.

Transportation:

1. Adults transporting children or vulnerable adults must have a valid driver's license, be at least 21 years of age and at least 5 years older than the oldest child.
2. Private vehicles used for transportation must have a current inspection and registration and be properly insured.
3. There must be a seat belt (and car seat for those required by NYS law) for every child/ vulnerable adult that is transported in any vehicle other than a bus. Adults are responsible to see that they are used.
4. In a situation of transportation, the *Two-person Rule* may be suspended, but it is recommended that no adult should ever be alone in a vehicle with a child or vulnerable adult.

Permission Forms: All Permission forms are to be maintained in the PUMC office in perpetuity.

- **Medical Release Form** should be filled out by a parent or guardian for each child at the beginning of each year and kept on file.
- **Sunday School Form** gives permission for children to leave their classroom after Sunday school to join parents or an approved adult, gives permission for things such as walking trips outside of the church during regularly scheduled meetings or classes and provides necessary contact information for each child.

- **Special Event Permission Form** is completed and signed by a parent or guardian for each event outside of the church. The permission form will address use of photographs for print and social media.

Response and Reporting Plan

Indemnification:

Any person who reasonably and in good faith makes a report of allegations of child abuse in accordance with the reporting requirements of the law shall have immunity from civil or criminal liability which might otherwise result by reason of such actions.

Any person who reasonably and in good faith transmits a report to a person or agency in accordance with the reporting requirements of the law shall have immunity from civil or criminal liability, which might otherwise result by reason of such actions.

Prohibitions:

The Pastor and the Chairpersons for SPRC and Church Council are prohibited from withholding from law enforcement authorities information concerning allegations of child abuse against a church employee, volunteer, member or attendee in exchange for a resignation or promise of any kind.

Training:

1. All adults who have regular contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be Safe Sanctuaries® trained in accordance with the minimum standards as described by the Upper New York Annual Conference.
2. The Upper New York Annual Conference shall make available standardized training programs to assist the church.
- 6.
3. Training programs shall be offered annually or as deemed necessary by the Pastor or Chair of SPRC. These programs shall include but not be limited to the need for Safe Sanctuaries® and the topics addressed therein.
- 7.
4. *All adults who have regular contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, shall be provided with a copy of the PUMC Safe Sanctuaries® Guidelines annually.*
5. The Safe Sanctuary ®Guidelines for PUMC will be posted on the PUMC website. A summary of the Safe Sanctuaries® Guidelines will be posted within the church. *A summary of the Guidelines will also be included in the church newsletter on an annual basis.*
6. Records of training, including an outline of the content, dates, and times, the name of trainer, and the names of all attendees will be kept on file in the church office.

Procedures for Reporting and Responding:

1. Reporting shall be required by an employee or volunteer that personally witnesses an incident of abuse or exploitation, or when an allegation is disclosed to the employee or volunteer, or when there is suspicion of abuse.
2. The employee or volunteer reports the incident immediately to the person in charge of the ministry\activity. The person in charge of the ministry shall immediately call:

- New York State Child Protective Services Hotline: 800-342-3720
 - New York State Office of Children and Family Services Adult Abuse Hotline: 844-697-3505
 - The report shall include the name, age, gender, address of the alleged victim, the name and address of the adult responsible for their care and a specific account of the allegations.
3. The pastor or his\her designee is to be informed immediately before or subsequent to making of a report.
 4. After the person in charge of the ministry\activity has reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the pastor shall immediately report the incident to the district superintendent. If the district superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's office.
 5. If the accused is the appointed clergy or a member of his\her family, the allegations shall be reported immediately to the district superintendent or, if district superintendent is not available, to the Bishop. The district superintendent shall immediately notify the proper authorities identified in item number two. The accused shall be required to refrain from all ministry\activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities' and\or in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*.
 6. The person in charge of the ministry\activity must give a written report of the steps taken in response to the reported abuse. This report shall contain factual information relevant to the situation. The report will be filed in a secure place in the church office.
 7. Confidentiality must be maintained. The allegations are never to be disclosed to anyone other than the designated county officials and law enforcement.
 8. Notification of the parents\guardians of the victim will be influenced by the direction of the investigating authorities. *The Pastor may notify the parents\guardians if the health and safety of the child is not threatened by such action.*
 9. Any outreach to the victim and the victim's family will be determined by the pastor.

Media:

All media requests for statements or information shall be directed to the Annual Conference Director of Communications.

Amended by the Safe Sanctuaries® Committee on 10.29.2017
Submitted to the SPRC for approval on
Submitted to the Church Council on