

Child Protection Policy
Pilgrim United Methodist Church
Approved January 13, 2009
(Revised May 19, 2009)

Statement of Purpose

In order to protect itself, its staff, its participants, and its volunteers from instances or allegations of abuse, Pilgrim United Methodist Church has formulated the following guidelines based on recommendations supplied by the West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church.

While we realize that we are unable to absolutely guarantee that no child/youth will ever be harmed in any way while they are in our care, the development and implementation of this policy represents our strong commitment to their safety and well-being. These policies are designed to protect the children from harm and their adult leaders/care-givers from unwarranted accusations.

Policy Guidelines

Supervision

1. Two Persons present:

Nursery will have **two** volunteers present at all times. Teen volunteers may be used in the nursery with the presence of an adult volunteer. Teen volunteers shall be at least 13 years old.

Sunday School, Potter's House, Caravan, Junior Choir, and VBS classes should have at least **two** volunteers (one can be a teen volunteer) present for each class. When only one adult is present, a volunteer hall monitor will periodically check on each class.

At least **two** trained adults (one of which is age 22 and older) will be present at all youth group meetings of Senior and Junior High Youth.

2. Every child (under 12) will be under adult supervision during church-sponsored activities for children.

3. Adult supervision will begin 10 minutes before children's activities are scheduled to begin. Children must be picked up within 10 minutes after the activity is completed. It is required that through second grade, parents, guardians, or older siblings will drop off and pick up their children at the classroom door. At least two volunteers (can be one adult and one teen volunteer) will remain until every child is picked up.

4. An adult may help preschool children in the nursery bathroom only if the door is left open. For children 4 years - 3rd grade that can help themselves in the bathroom, the adult will wait outside. The buddy system is recommended for children under 12 years when leaving a classroom to use the bathroom.

Supervision Cont'd...

5. On Sunday morning children (under 18 years) are the responsibility of their parents or guardians when they are not involved in Sunday School or Children's Church.
6. Parents of children participating in Pilgrim programs are welcome to observe the program of their child at any time.

Over-night and Special Events

1. At an over-night event at the church or a special event away from the church grounds, children/youth must always have a signed permission slip in order to participate. (This does not include short field trips that take place within the regularly scheduled meeting times).
2. At an over-night event at the church or a special event away from the church grounds, we recommend there be at least two volunteers (at least one being an adult) of the same sex with children/youth to supervise. No male volunteers will share sleeping quarters with female children/youth and no female volunteers will share sleeping quarters with male children/youth. It is recommended that a ratio of no more than 5 children or 7 youth to one volunteer be used.
3. Persons designated to provide automobile or van transportation to or from church events must be known to the designated leader of the event. The driver must be:
 - 18 years of age
 - Carry a valid driver's license
 - Have no record of convictions for the past 5 years for drunken driving, driving under the influence, driving with a suspended or revoked license or reckless endangerment.
 - Have proof of insurance

Counseling

At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the door of the room should remain open for the entire session. Also, be sure others know that the meeting is taking place and that someone else is in the building.

The "Older" Rule

A paid or unpaid adult leader of Junior or Senior High Youth must be significantly older than the oldest youth they are leading. We suggest they be at least 21 years old.

Screening of Volunteers

Volunteers will have a background check by a Law Enforcement Agency.

Waiting Period

No volunteer will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children or youth until he/she has been regularly involved in Pilgrim Church for six months or more.

Orientation for Workers

All workers with children and youth, whether the workers are paid or volunteer will attend an orientation session at least once every three years in which they are informed of the:

- Church's policies for the prevention of child abuse
- Procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth
- Appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse
- Details of the state laws regarding child abuse

Behavioral Guidelines for all adults working with children or youth

- It is the duty of a person working with children and young people to prevent abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected.
- All staff either paid or volunteer is not to give gifts to individual children or young people without prior knowledge of the parent(s) and responsible work area chairperson or Pastor. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be for the whole group or for special occasions only. Be wise with your relationship with the children – do not be over friendly with some at the expense of others. No favorites.
- Male helpers need to be particularly careful in what they say, and in being around forward young females. Female helpers similarly need to be careful with forward young male children.
- Never smack, spank, shake, hit, or physically discipline a child except by “holding” which may be used if there is an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person.
- Develop healthy relationships with children by listening to and respecting them.
- Be mindful of the safety of the children at all times and in all circumstances.
- Respect the privacy of children and youth; avoid questionable activities (such as rough/sexually provocative games or comments).

Reporting Procedures for an Incident of Child Abuse

1. Anyone who sees or suspects that a child is being subjected to inappropriate behavior or abuse in the church or on the grounds of the church, must report their concern to the Pastor or the person in charge of the event. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person to substantiate the alleged abuse. Pastor/chair of the event will make a written record of the concerns of the Incident Report Form. Within 24 hours a verbal report must be made by the person witnessing the abuse to the Clinton County Children's Protective Services Office (989-224-5500). Within 72 hours a written report must be submitted to the Clinton County Children's Protective Services Office.

When reporting, the following information will be requested:

- Name, age, and gender of the child and other family members
- Description of suspected abuse
- Current condition of the child
- Address, phone number, and/or direction to the child's home

2. If it is determined that a child may be experiencing abuse **outside** of the church, the Children's Protective Services Agency will be contacted.

3. The church will work with authorities to assure the child's safety and welfare during the investigation and beyond.

Review of Policy Application

Some of the policies may be modified due to special circumstances in a given situation or staffing needs. In the event that this is the case the application of the policy may be modified in the following manner.

Procedure

If there is need to modify a procedure, an appeal for change, either temporary or permanent the appeal should be made to the Pastor Parish Committee. The Pastor Parish Committee or a subcommittee of the Team will rule on the issue presented.

Staffing

If there is a desire to modify the policy on the use of volunteers or the volunteers used, that issue should be presented to the Leadership Team for consideration in a similar process.

Emergency Review

There are circumstances that are not anticipated and a situation needs immediate resolution. The Pastor may temporarily approve any changes in the policy that circumstances dictate necessary.