

Woodland United Methodist Church

Safe Ministry Policy for Work with Children and Youth

(June 2005)

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Introduction:

The congregation of Woodland United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church.

Jesus, time and time again, spoke of the importance of young people being included and provided for within the community of faith. Our hope and belief today is that the church is a place where children and youth will find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive.

Sadly, the abuse of children happens all too frequently. Abuse often happens in settings where children and youth should be able to feel safe—in homes, schools, camps, and even at Church. Abuse does occur in churches, large and small, rural and urban. It is a problem which cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real.

Purpose:

God has given us a sacred opportunity and great responsibility to nurture and protect children and youth and the persons who work with them. Our Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of safe sanctuary for them. Thus we establish this Safe Ministry Policy for Work with Children and Youth to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of this group of individuals.

It is the purpose of this policy first to protect the children and youth who come to us. The second purpose of this policy is to protect our staff, both paid and volunteer, from unfounded and/or malicious allegations of abuse.

Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures govern all volunteers and paid staff who work with children and youth.

1. There will be an annual orientation for volunteers and paid staff at which they will be informed of the following:
 - The church's policies for the prevention of child abuse (see [this] Policies and Procedures section)
 - The procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth (see [this] Policies and Procedures section)
 - Appropriate steps to report an incident of suspected child abuse (see Reporting Child Abuse section)
 - Details of the state laws regarding child abuse (as stated in California Penal Code Section 11166(c)(1), a copy of which is on file in the church office.)

At this orientation, the volunteers and paid staff will be given an opportunity to renew their covenant to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures. The church will keep an updated record that it has informed all of its volunteers and paid staff about its policies. Volunteers and paid staff will be given the church policies in writing.

2. First Aid/CPR training will be provided to all volunteers and paid staff who work with children and/or youth. At all off-site events involving these children and/or youth, at least one adult with first aid and CPR training will be present.
3. All paid staff and volunteers who work with children and/or youth will fill out an application for the position and will have their fingerprints recorded and checked by the California Department of Justice. If there is a conviction for child abuse on the Department of Justice record, this person may not serve as a volunteer or paid staff with children and/or youth.
4. The "Two Adults Rule" will apply whenever possible. No fewer than two volunteers and/or paid staff should be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and youth. If two adults are not present, doors to meeting rooms should be left open, and a "roamer" will be assigned to drop in where they are gathered.
5. At any one-on-one counseling session with children and/or youth, the door to the counseling office will remain open.
6. The windows in the doors of all classrooms or meeting rooms where children and/or youth meet must be uncovered. If there are no windows, the doors will remain open.

Policies and Procedures (continued)

7. All volunteers involved with children and/or youth must have been actively involved in the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
8. The “Five-Years-Older Rule” will apply. Any volunteer or paid staff recruited or hired to work with children and/or youth should be at least five years older than any of the children or youth with whom he/she will work, unless specifically reviewed and approved by the Nursery Coordinator, Children’s Ministry Coordinator, or Youth Director.
9. All volunteers and paid staff should be eighteen years of age or older unless specifically reviewed and approved by the appropriate church committee, Nursery Coordinator, Children’s Ministry Coordinator, or Youth Director.
10. Parents or guardians will be given advance notice and full information about events in which their child will be participating. Parents must give written permission for their child’s participation in off-site events. Please see attached sample permission slip. Parents will be provided with names of chaperones if requested by parents.
11. Any volunteer who transports children and/or youth in his/her own car or in a car belonging to the church or another church member will have at least three years’ driving experience, provide a copy of a valid California driver’s license, and provide a copy of a valid insurance card.

Reporting Child Abuse

It is the policy of the Woodland United Methodist Church that any volunteer or staff member who works with children and/or youth is required to report suspected abuse. Reference is made to California Penal Code Section 11166(c)(1).

At any church event, if a volunteer or staff member suspects the abuse or neglect of a child or youth, whether it has occurred at the event or prior to the event, that person must report his/her suspicions to the leader of the event or the church pastor, and together they must ascertain the details needed to make an accurate report. This report must be made within 24 hours or immediately upon return to the church if the event is off site. The report should include the following information if obtainable:

- The name, address, sex, and birth date of the alleged victim
- The name and address of the alleged victim's parent(s) or guardian(s)
- The nature and extent of the alleged abuse and neglect
- Any evidence of previously known or suspected abuse or neglect of the alleged victim and/or their siblings
- The name, address, and relationship to the alleged victim of the person who is alleged to have perpetrated the abuse or neglect
- Any other information known to the person making the report that would be helpful to the investigation of the alleged abuse

Response Plan

The event leader or pastor will contact Child Protective Services of the appropriate county. A copy of the information reported should be kept and considered confidential.

If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is providing ministry to children and/or youth under the auspices of the Woodland United Methodist Church, he/she will be required to refrain from all events involving children and/or youth until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any activities, care must be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in an activity, the entire staff of that activity will cooperate with the investigating agencies.

The California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church will be notified of any alleged incident of abuse by paid staff or volunteers. The response plan of this conference will be followed. A copy of this plan will be on file in the office.

Response Plan for Known Convicted Offenders

Should a convicted child and/or youth abuse offender seek to attend the church and the leadership of the church becomes aware of the person's conviction, the church will require this person to enter into a written covenant agreement containing guidelines for the person's involvement and activity within the church.

**Woodland United Methodist Church
Children and Youth Ministry**

Volunteer Recruitment Procedure

- 1. The group or team leader recruits volunteer with the advice of the pastor, including a discussion of the gifts and graces of the volunteer.**
- 2. The volunteer fills out an application/disclosure form and discusses it with the group or team leader.**
- 3. The application is reviewed by the appropriate leader with the advice of the pastor or his/her designee. All “yes” answers on the disclosure form will be considered in this review.**
- 4. The volunteer submits his/her fingerprints to the Department of Justice using the Livescan process, available at the Yolo County Sheriff’s Department on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm (by appointment only).**
- 5. When the Department of Justice Report is returned, the pastor will advise the leader , and the volunteer may begin if the Livescan report is clear.**

**Woodland United Methodist Church
Safe Ministry Volunteer and Paid Staff Disclosure Form**

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

California driver's license number (if driving) _____

Position of Service _____

The congregation of United Methodist Church of Woodland is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and youth, staff and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. We require disclosures by all persons who will be working with these groups. All those who wish to work as youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, or drivers of such persons must fill out this form completely and give it to the Pastor of the church.

History (*Please answer yes or no to each question, and attach an explanation for each "yes" answer*)

1. Have you ever been convicted for the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the past five years? _____
2. Have you ever been convicted of, or charged with, a crime against children or other persons? _____
3. Have you ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor other than traffic offenses? _____
4. Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children and/or youth? _____
5. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the past three years? _____
6. Within the past 30 days, have you abused alcohol or illegal drugs? _____
7. Have you ever been reviewed by church and/or secular bodies and been restricted from involvement with children and/or youth, or been restricted from children and/or youth ministry? _____

I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct.

Signature: _____ Date: _____