

Child/Youth Protection Policies and Procedures



Table of Contents

<i>Section I</i>	<i>Safe and Secure Environment Commitment</i>	<i>3</i>
	Introduction and Purpose	3
	Underlying Principles	3
	Statement of Covenant	4
	Scope	4
	Responsibility	4
	Conclusion	4
	Common Questions and Answers	4
<i>Section II</i>	<i>Screening Policies and Procedures/Volunteer Selection</i>	<i>5</i>
	Scope	5
	Screening Process	5
	Disqualifying Offenses and Legal Review Process	5
	Participation Covenant	6
<i>Section III</i>	<i>The Two-Adult Rule</i>	<i>8</i>
	Introduction	8
	Policies	8
	Procedures for Waiving the Two-Adult Rule	8
<i>Section IV</i>	<i>Reporting Responsibility and Response Plans</i>	<i>9</i>
	Reporting Responsibility	9
	CRUMC Abuse Response Process	9
	CRUMC Accident Response Process	10
<i>Section V</i>	<i>Supervision Policies and Procedures</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Section VI</i>	<i>Child Abuse Related Education and Training</i>	<i>11</i>
	Introduction	11
	Education and Training	11
<i>Section VII</i>	<i>Use of Private Vehicles</i>	<i>12</i>
	Introduction	12
	Policies	12
<i>Section VIII</i>	<i>Other CRUMC Policies and Procedures</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Section IX</i>	<i>Definitions</i>	<i>13</i>

I. Safe and Secure Environment Commitment

Introduction and Purpose

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19:14). Custer Road United Methodist Church (CRUMC) sees our ministry to children and youth as a central part of Christ’s calling for the church. In seeking to follow the mandates of Christ, CRUMC desires to provide a safe and secure environment in which all can grow in their faith. Because children and youth are so highly esteemed, the staff and members of CRUMC provide the following document as an integral part of our work with children and youth.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the policies and procedures that have been adopted by CRUMC in providing a safe environment for the children and youth entrusted to our care. CRUMC devotes countless hours, resources and energy toward the development of children and youth in nurturing their faith. This is a charge that we take seriously. This is a charge given by Jesus to each of us.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Sometimes this means that, through neglect and intentional acts of abuse, adults in the community of faith on occasion inflict harm upon minors instead of serving as channels of life and grace. This is a serious matter, especially because of the nature of children not to be fully equipped to understand or defend themselves. Such abuse leaves many victims. The ministry of the Church is not brokenness, but wholeness and healing.

So, CRUMC is addressing child safety through this policy. Abuse, whether mental, physical or sexual, whether inflicted by laypersons or clergy, professionals or volunteers, cannot and will not be tolerated at CRUMC.

The purpose of our child/youth protection policies and procedures is:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for all children and youth at CRUMC.
- To protect children and youth from any possibility of abuse, inasmuch as humanly possible.
- To reduce the probability of false accusations against volunteers, staff and clergy.
- To educate and train our staff and volunteers to identify and guard against child abuse.
- To reduce the legal risk and liability of the church.

Underlying Principles

There are a number of principles that underlie the details of this. They are:

1. Allegations of child abuse are to be taken seriously.
2. An accused person has the right to due process, both civilly and per the *Book of Discipline*.
3. The concern of CRUMC is the well-being and care of all involved.
4. Incidents of abuse are to be handled forthrightly, but with due regard for confidentiality and privacy.
5. CRUMC will cooperate with the civil authorities responsible for handling incidents of child abuse.
6. A victim is not to be held responsible for abuse that occurs.
7. As disciples of Jesus Christ, all persons directly or indirectly involved with incidents of child abuse are to act with honesty, charity and confidence in God’s power to forgive and to heal.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate our workers with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Scope

These policies and procedures apply to all members, visitors and staff of CRUMC. Special requirements apply to all current and future workers, compensated and volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of minors.

Responsibility

The Program Council (PC), with support from the clergy, is defined as the body responsible to:

- Maintain the policies of this document.
- Investigate infractions of these policies.
- Be an advocate of safety and respect in conjunction with the Administrative Board.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, CRUMC is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" ("Baptismal Covenant II," *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

Common Questions and Answers

1. Why is this policy being implemented?

For the safety of our children. We acknowledge that we live in a sinful world. This policy is just one tool in offering the gospel of Jesus Christ *in safety* to our children. Other organizations working with children and youth (i.e. Scouts, YMCA, etc.) have established such policies, and we care for our children as much as they.

2. I have been teaching Sunday school for six years. You know me. Do I have to go through this process?

Yes. We are so thankful to those faithful volunteers who have served over the years in children and youth programs. We know what an impact you have on our children and youth. However, once this policy is effective, we cannot be "selective" in who should or should not have to comply with these requirements. We have tried very hard to make this policy fair. We must now make sure that it is consistently applied.

3. Will anyone be able to work with the children or youth if they don't complete and turn in the needed forms?

Beginning August 23, 2003, only those adults that have received notification that they are listed as a screened adult will be able to participate in these programs. Applications may be submitted on a flow basis throughout the year and processing should be completed within a week after the application is submitted.

II. Screening Policies and Procedures/Volunteer Selection

Scope

Screening will include (but may not be limited to) the following people at CRUMC.

- All ministerial staff
- All paid staff members
- All volunteers who work with minors
- All Custer Road Christian Day School (CRCDS) staff
- All employed childcare teachers

All volunteers and staff must be at least 18 years old. Teen volunteers (youth age 13-17 years of age) are wonderful in assisting with group activities. Teen volunteers do not satisfy the Two-Adult rule and two cleared adults will supervise the teens at all times. Our adult volunteers care enough about both children and youth safety to make sure that teen volunteers do not have to supervise a child or children alone or with only one adult.

Screening Process

Volunteers (full or part-time) serving with minors or any age level should fulfill the following. Volunteers who are interested in serving are encouraged to complete the application process at the earlier of their joining CRUMC or attending regularly. See **Addendum D** for sample forms.

1. Complete a **Volunteer Application** and **Consent Form** including Participation Covenant and Release and **Request for Criminal Records Check**.
2. If contacted by MinistrySafe, complete an online **Training Course** as soon as possible, but within twenty-one (21) days of the date Volunteer Application is submitted. Failure to complete this online course may delay final processing of the Volunteer Application.
3. Return the completed Volunteer Application to CRUMC.
4. Read and review this **Child Protection Policies and Procedures** packet.
5. Be available for periodic in-house **training sessions**.
6. **Regularly attend** CRUMC for at least six (6) months. Exceptions may include Friday NITE Friends or Vacation Bible School, which use volunteers from the community who do not regularly attend CRUMC. Such exceptions must be approved by a minister, by the director of the program, and by a member of the Trustees *or* a member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (3 people altogether).

The following should be maintained in the strictest confidence by the church administrator and personnel director only, except on a “need to know” basis:

1. All personal information voluntarily disclosed,
2. The results of all criminal history/background checks,

Disqualifying Offenses and Legal Review Process

- CRUMC shall comply with the North Texas Conference Criminal Background Policy Statement (**Addendum A**). This includes the guidelines suggested by *Background Information Services*, which lists disqualifying offenses.
- Persons who have ever been convicted of any disqualifying offense, been on probation or received deferred adjudication for any disqualifying offense, or have presently pending any criminal charges of any disqualifying offense before a determination of guilt is made including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication shall not serve with youth or children.

- Volunteers in a supervisory capacity should be at least five (5) years older than the age group of the minors they are serving.

Participation Covenant

CRUMC desires that all children and youth find the church to be a safe place to grow in their walk with Christ. Therefore, we ask that all volunteers with children and youth commit to the following:

I

I commit myself to respect and protect the inherent human dignity of each of the minors with whom I have the privilege to work. I will strive to treat all with respect due children of God.

Therefore, I shall make a good faith effort NOT to discriminate among minors based upon gender, race, color or ethnic background and financial situation. Because God does not discriminate, neither shall I.

II

I commit myself to serve as a positive role model of a mature United Methodist Christian witness by my speech and actions as well as by the presentation I give to the Christian faith by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, and maturity to act and react with Christian love and understanding in all situations.

Therefore, I shall make a good faith effort to:

- a. Give witness by my example to the centrality of worship in the life of CRUMC;
- b. Stay with the goals and objectives of the approved curriculum;
- c. Impart teachings or personal beliefs to minors that are in harmony with the recognized teaching of the United Methodist Church;
- d. Introduce only materials that are approved by the Directors of Children's Ministries or Youth Ministries or a minister;
- e. Not smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of minors;
- f. Not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or non-prescribed inhalants in the presence of minors;
- g. Not have possession of weapons, including licensed and unlicensed guns, in the presence of minors unless I am required to do so as a law enforcement officer;
- h. Not allow the presence of obscene or pornographic materials at any CRUMC function or show movies rated other than G, PG (not including PG-13), or equivalent. The use of PG-13 movies should only be shown with junior or senior high students and only with caution. In all cases, I will preview a movie that we are considering showing at a children/youth activity.

III

I commit myself to interaction, which is affirming of the goodness of minors and adds to their positive self image and which enables mutual acceptance among themselves.

Therefore I shall make a good faith effort to:

- a. Discourage or halt teasing or bullying of one person by another;
- b. Never verbally abuse, demean, or cause mental or emotional injury;
- c. Not use language, such as profanity, which is demeaning or crude or tolerate its use in the presence of a minor;
- d. Not inflict bodily injury or demonstrate physically abusive behavior;

- e. Not allow physical neglect including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to CRUMC activities;
- f. Work with minors only when my physical or psychological conditions will not adversely affect their health.

IV

I commit myself to affirming CRUMC's positive teaching on the role of human sexuality and the grace of human relationships.

Therefore I shall make a good faith effort to:

- a. Touch only appropriately and never in a sexual manner;
- b. Not make inappropriate sexual comments using innuendo, jokes, inference or solicitations;
- c. Act in a fashion, which could never be easily interpreted by a minor to be a sexual advance or threat;
- d. Not allow any display or demonstration of abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor;
- e. Not allow any inappropriate sexual advances or activity of any kind between any adults or minors;
- f. Never forget the vulnerability of minors to misinterpret sexual information or references;
- g. Strive to remember that abuse can not only be the intention of the perpetrator but also in the perception of the receiver.

V

I commit myself to the building up of this community as a sign of God's presence and God's Kingdom in which all may feel secure and valued.

Therefore I shall make a good faith effort to:

- a. Adhere to the "Two-Adult Rule;" (see section III below)
- b. Keep the safety of minors as a priority;
- c. Immediately report to my supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate;
- d. Respect the students and fellow ministers with whom I have the privilege to serve;
- e. Maintain the confidence, intimacy and trust of the small group or of a particular minor except as required by Texas Law.

VI

I commit myself to maintaining a positive ongoing personal and working relationship with the minors of CRUMC.

Therefore I shall make a good faith effort to:

- a. Periodically update personal information forms;
- b. Be teachable, realizing that none have arrived at Christian perfection;
- c. Attend training and educational events provided by the church to keep staff and volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse;
- d. Agree to be subject to an annual criminal background check;
- e. Understand that any violation of this Code may be grounds for removal as a volunteer.

III. The Two-Adult Rule

Introduction

In order to make every effort to ensure the safety of our minors and to protect the good work and reputation of our staff and volunteers, the following guidelines are established to protect all.

Policies

1. The goal of CRUMC is that any staff or volunteer of our church should not be alone with minors, but be in the view of another screened adult.
2. Minimum circumstances may arise in which only one adult is present with one or more of our minors in a room in our facility or away from our facility. In such circumstances
 - a. Another screened adult should be present in the building.
 - b. The door to that room should be unlocked, and
 - c. The door should be either open or have a window either in the door or the wall.
 - d. The lights of the room should be on.
 - e. A reasonable ratio of workers should be maintained in activities involving minors.
3. Two screened adults should be present for transportation of minors.
4. Two screened adults should be present for the supervision of minors before and after scheduled events.
5. All activities of CRUMC, staff, or volunteers should be planned with consideration of this Two-Adult Rule.
6. The following are examples where exceptions may be made to the Two-Adult Rule.
 - a. Any emergency where the safety or welfare of a minor is at risk.
 - b. In the case of counseling on CRUMC premises, where privacy is required. However, policy number 2 (above) still applies.
 - c. A temporary situation that may arise, for example, if a teacher has to escort a minor to the bathroom or remove the minor from the class for disciplinary reasons.
7. For ministry events taking place off-campus, two related individuals do not satisfy the Two-Adult Rule. There must be a third screened adult present in that situation.

Procedures for Waiving the Two-Adult Rule

1. In situations that involve one adult supervising a group of minors, advance permission should be obtained from the CRUMC Director of Children or Youth Ministries or a minister.
2. In situations where one adult supervises one minor, parental permission should be obtained and notification of the CRUMC Director of Children or Youth Ministries or a minister should be completed in advance where this is possible.
3. For situations where one adult meets with one minor and the meeting cannot be anticipated or delayed, a report should be made as soon as possible after the meeting and submitted to the CRUMC Director of Children or Youth Ministries or a minister for review.

IV. Reporting Responsibility and Response Plans

Reporting Responsibility

The obligation of any person under current Texas law is to immediately report within 48 hours to a law enforcement agency, the designated local agency, or the Texas Department of Human Services if they have cause to believe that a minor has been or may be abused.

Clergy, employees or volunteers who have cause to believe that a minor has been or may be abused by another clergy, employee or volunteer, or receives a report of such an act, should also report the incident immediately to their direct church supervisor and the senior minister or an associate minister of CRUMC.

CRUMC will respond to all allegations. Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.

CRUMC Abuse Response Process

Note: Use the attached **Incident Report Form** and **Clergy Checklist**

1. The following are the basic steps to be followed in possible abuse cases:
 - a. The Senior Minister or a delegate should investigate the incident immediately. For incidents involving clergy and staff, immediately remove the accused from the situation and suspend the accused from duties involving minors.
 - b. For incidents involving volunteers, immediately remove the accused from the situation and notify the closest available clergy who will suspend the accused.
2. Make written documentation of everything done and said using the **Incident Report Form**. The clergy receiving the initial report should be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the minor within 48 hours.
3. The pastor will inform the alleged victim's parents or legal guardians as soon as possible and will inform them of the steps that are being taken, respond to their questions/concerns and continue to keep them advised of the status of the church's involvement in the investigation.
4. The appropriate staff will reach out to the victim and family and treat the accused with dignity and support.
5. After the information is secured, the pastor will contact the proper civil authorities within 48 hours of notification of the alleged abuse—they, not CRUMC, will handle the investigation (see **Addendum B**).
6. Upon notice, the senior minister should notify the Conference office and Conference Attorney of the facts and allegations.
7. The senior minister should form a *Response Team* that should consist of people who have experience and skills in the fields such as psychology, pastoral care, legal work, nursing, or social work. The *Response Team* should
 - a. Meet within a week of the substantiation of the matter and devise a short term and long term plan.
 - b. Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible.
 - c. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.
 - d. Report its plan to the senior minister who should agree on its implementation including the assignment of responsibilities.
 - e. Confer on a regular basis during the implementation of its short and long term plan.
8. The short and long-term plan should include the following elements:
 - a. Notify the insurance carrier of the incident immediately and comply with its investigation.

- b. Cooperate fully with legal and state authorities in their investigation, if any.
 - c. Prepare a written statement and designate the senior minister or a spokesperson to respond to media inquires. *Only this spokesperson is allowed to speak to the media about the incident in question and other staff is expected not to speak to the media.*
 - d. Provide assistance to the alleged victim and family in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed.
 - e. Provide assistance to the accused in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed.
 - f. Respond to the needs of the families of the alleged victim and the accused to seek a redemptive solution for all involved.
 - g. Inform the affected volunteer(s) and paid staff members of the need for confidentiality.
 - h. Consider and respond to the concerns of other parents.
9. Within five (5) days of the alleged abuse, the clergy staff person who made the original report should prepare a written report and send one copy to the state agency and should give one copy to the senior minister.
 10. The senior minister or associate minister should notify the person who made the initial report whether the incident has been reported to the civil authorities. The reporter, of course, retains the right to report the incident to the appropriate civil authority personally, if this has not already been done.
 11. In the event the allegations are made about an appointed minister, the Conference should conduct the investigation. In such case, the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations (SPR) should notify the Conference offices and offer the resources and assistance of CRUMC *Response Team* during the response phase.
 12. Confirmed child abuse is grounds for immediate dismissal of the volunteer. Member termination should be considered as appropriate for the circumstances, per the *2000 Book of Discipline* paragraph 2714 item 6.
 13. If the charges do not appear substantiated, the original copy of the investigation report should be placed in a confidential file of the senior minister (or personnel files in the finance office) and kept for ten (10) years. All other copies should be destroyed.
 14. If the charges are substantiated, the Senior Minister or District Superintendent or appropriate Conference official should place the accused person on a leave of absence from any official duties pending the final resolution of the matter.
 15. If the charges are substantiated, it is essential that effective, immediate and compassionate care be provided to the victim and the victim's family, in close consultation with the civil agency (or agencies) that are involved.
 16. The *Response Team* will devise a plan on communicating any incident to the congregation as a whole.

CRUMC Accident Response Process

Note: Use the attached **Accident/Illness Report** form.

1. The senior pastor or a delegate should investigate the accident immediately and should take preventive measures to prevent reoccurrence.
2. CRUMC should provide assistance to the person in obtaining medical attention, if needed.
3. The senior pastor or a delegate should notify the insurance carrier of the accident immediately and comply with its investigation, if any.

V. Supervision Policies and Procedures

1. Children (birth through second grade) should be released to a properly identified person.
2. CRUMC expects parents or guardians to be prompt in retrieving children from their activities.
3. Minors should not be left unsupervised.
4. CRUMC staff should supervise volunteers on an ongoing basis.
5. CRCDS shall follow its own supervision-related policies and procedures.

VI. Child Abuse Related Education and Training

Introduction

CRUMC recognizes all forms of child abuse, as that term is defined herein and under the Texas Penal Code. CRUMC reminds its members that abuse of minors can take on many faces. The thrust of these policies and procedures is to provide for the safety and respect of our minors.

Education and Training

All employees of CRUMC, key leaders and volunteers serving with minors will be offered education on the subject of child abuse.

Education and training should include the following:

- The reading of this Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Lecture, written materials, and/or video(s) on child abuse with discussion about:
 - Moral responsibility of the CRUMC community;
 - Legal liability of CRUMC;
 - Texas' definition of child sexual abuse, reporting requirements and criminal sanctions under the Texas Penal Code;
 - Discussion of all supervisory guidelines that are in effect (i.e. two adult rule);
 - Reporting – Explanation of reporting requirements (i.e. when mandatory, to whom to report, when proper to report, forms);
 - Responding – Explanation of responding requirements (i.e. checklist, forms).

The congregation will be offered education on the subject of child abuse to better understand the problem and rationale for CRUMC's new policy.

VII. Use of Private Vehicles

Introduction

The following policies are intended to ensure the safety of our minors and to protect them when being transported during church-related activities.

Policies

1. No tobacco products shall be used in the vehicles.
2. No alcoholic beverages shall be allowed in the vehicles.
3. User should provide one or more screened adults in addition to the driver for each vehicle when minors are being transported. Exceptions may be made for trips within the DFW metroplex with prior consultation of the director of the activity, a minister, *and* a member of Trustees *or* a member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (3 people altogether).
4. All passengers, including the driver, shall wear a seat and shoulder (when available) belts.
5. Nothing shall extend out of the windows.
6. The maximum number of people in the vehicle shall be the same as the number of adult seats in the vehicle with seat belts.
7. All vehicle drivers shall:
 - a. Have a valid driver's license and provide a photocopy of driver's license and liability card to CRUMC;
 - b. Have a good driving record (i.e. no moving violations within 12 months on their record or been convicted, or received deferred adjudication, for driving under the influence of a controlled substance within the past ten (10) years);
 - c. Authorize CRUMC the right to check their driving record with the Texas Department of Public Safety;
 - d. Read and comply with this policy.
8. The driver shall have complete authority over the passengers and full responsibility for the safety of the passengers at all times.
9. Each driver shall drive no longer than a continuous two hours at any one time without a rest stop, and no one driver shall drive a total of more than eight hours in any one day. Drivers shall stop the vehicle(s) and rest for a period of time equal to ten minutes for each hour driven before stopping. Drivers may rest while an alternate driver takes over. On long trips, the user shall have available an alternate approved driver to relieve the primary driver if necessary.
10. For at least 12 hours prior to driving the vehicle(s), all drivers shall not have consumed any alcoholic beverages.
11. Drivers shall operate vehicle(s) in compliance with speed limits, traffic laws, and road conditions.
12. In the event of an accident, with or without injury, the driver shall report the incident to the proper police authority and to a church staff member (using attached **Private Vehicle Accident Report Form**) within 24 hours. If anyone requires hospitalization, the driver shall notify the church office or staff member by telephone as soon as possible. Once the driver has returned from the church function, a **Private Vehicle Accident Report Form** must be completed.

VIII. Other CRUMC Policies and Procedures

All members, employees, visitors and volunteers should comply with all of the other policies and procedures of CRUMC.

IX. Definitions

Definitions to this policy are attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference. For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions should apply.

1. **“Adult”** shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
2. **“Child Abuse”** shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a minor.
3. **“Clergy”** shall be defined as any pastor ordained, commissioned, and/or licensed to the ministry by the United Methodist Church and officially appointed to or hired by CRUMC.
4. **“Member”** shall be defined as any person who has joined CRUMC by profession of faith, transfer of membership from another United Methodist Church, or transfer from another denomination.
5. **“Minor”** shall be defined as any preschooler, child, or youth under the age of eighteen (18) or mentally challenged individual whose mental capability is that of a minor.
6. **“Program Council”** shall be defined as the staff of CRUMC and the lay representatives nominated to chair these positions of the programs of the church. (Examples of programs: Education, Missions, Scouts, Singles, Music, etc.)
7. **“Response Team”** shall be defined as a body consisting of the senior pastor, church administrator and two of the following:
 - Chair of the Board of Trustees (BOT)
 - Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPR)
 - Chair of the Administrative Board (AB)
 - Lay Leader
8. **“Screened Adult”** shall be defined as an adult who has satisfactorily passed a criminal background check and agreed to CRUMC’s Child Protection Policies and Procedures.
9. **“Teen Volunteer”** should be defined as any worker at least thirteen (13) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18).
10. **“Volunteer”** shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer person and is eighteen (18) years of age or older.