

**BLACKSBURG UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**I. Purpose**

Blacksburg United Methodist Church seeks to establish reasonable procedures to reduce the risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and youth as they participate in church ministries, and to protect staff and volunteers from false allegations of misconduct.

**II. Biblical Foundation**

Blacksburg United Methodist Church seeks to express God's love of young persons and to provide for their personal wholeness. This faith community seeks to provide an environment which is caring and secure for all persons. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures and ministries must stand.

*And they were bringing children to Him, that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them.*

Mark 10:13-16

Jesus teaches us explicitly that young persons have the right and the keys to the Kingdom of God. He demonstrated this through blessing and touch. Our goal in response to this Biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure and loving place where children may grow.

*"Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in,  
so that my house may be filled."*

Luke 14:21 (NRSV)

In the Parable of the Great Banquet, Jesus reminds us that God is in the business of inviting all people to the table, where they can be nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others. Today, we continue to recognize that each individual is a child of God and must be allowed to live free of fear, surrounded by love. As Christian adults, we must establish and maintain a nurturing, loving, safe and secure Christian environment, providing support and assistance to our children and youth, remembering that our mandate is not only a responsibility, but an opportunity to protect the gift that God has bestowed upon us.

*"A new commandment I give you: Love one another.  
As I have loved you, so you must love one another."*

John 13:34 (NIV)

*Blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.*

Matthew 13:16

### **III. Commonwealth of Virginia Statues**

Under Section 63.1-284.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, an abused child is defined as one who is less than eighteen years of age, "whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such a child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death or disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions."

An act of child abuse may be committed by any person responsible for the care of another individual who is less than eighteen years of age. It does not matter whether the person caring for the child under the age of 18 (hereinafter referred to as a "Child" or "Children", which term as used in this Policy also includes youth ages 12-18) is a compensated or a volunteer worker. It does not matter whether the person routinely is entrusted with the care of children or whether such individual only occasionally comes in contact with children. It does not matter whether the person was entrusted with the care of a child for an hour or only a moment. It only matters that a child was abused or neglected by the person who, on the occasion in question, was responsible for the child's care

### **IV. Types of Child Abuse**

#### **A. Definition**

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, care giver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

#### **B. Types of Abuse**

##### **1. Physical Abuse**

A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation; bone fracture; brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma; burns, scalding; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions; internal injuries, poisoning; sprains; dislocations; gunshot, stabbing wounds.

##### **2. Physical Neglect**

The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other

types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition.

### **3. Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the code of Virginia which is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by his/her parent or other persons responsible for the child's care. Examples of such abuse are: sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy and other sexual abuse.

### **4. Medical Neglect**

Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental or dental care for a condition, which if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays.

### **5. Failure to Thrive**

A syndrome of infancy or early childhood which is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

### **6. Mental Abuse/Neglect**

A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker which result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

### **7. Educational Neglect**

The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

### **8. Bizarre Discipline**

Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.

## **V. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse**

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Blacksburg United Methodist Church, the following abuse prevention measures will be utilized.

### **1. Six-Month Rule**

Blacksburg United Methodist Church will require congregants who volunteer with children or youth ministries in the church to have had continuous active involvement in the church for at least six (6) months. An exception may be made to this rule in the case of volunteers who can provide references from a pastor or program staff member regarding their active involvement in the ministries of their home church during the previous year.

## **2. Outside Organizations**

Blacksburg United Methodist Church welcomes opportunities to work with student organizations when they can support our ministries involving children and youth. Volunteers from outside organizations will be limited to assisting roles and will be supervised by workers who have met all provisions of this policy. Because members of these organizations may not meet the six-month rule, the following provisions will apply. Members of the organization will complete the volunteer screening form, participate in Blacksburg United Methodist Church's abuse prevention training, and submit to a criminal background check. They will provide three references, and contact will be made with at least two references in addition to the adult advisor for the student organization.

## **3. Screening**

Any person who may pose a threat to children or youth will be prohibited from working with any minors. Before beginning the first year of service, each employed or volunteer worker for children or youth ministries who is age 16 or older will be asked to sign a statement indicating that he/she has never been convicted of child abuse nor had such a conviction expunged. Also, the screening form will ask for the following: general information, criminal convictions, prior church membership, prior experience with children or youth, and personal references. At least one reference will be contacted. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement, will not be permitted to work with children or youth. Each worker shall also undergo a national criminal record check. If concerns are raised by references or the criminal record check, they will be taken to the Staff Parish Relations committee for a decision regarding the potential worker's work with children or youth. All information collected during the screening process will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Access to this information will be restricted to the pastoral and program staff of the church and the Staff Parish Relations committee. Within six (6) months of the adoption of this policy, all existing leaders and workers with children and youth will comply with this paragraph.

## **4. Training**

Before beginning their first year of service, all paid and volunteer workers with children and youth who are age 16 and older will be required to read the church's child and youth protection policy and sign a form indicating that they have read and that they understand the policy and agree to abide by it, and to attend a training session offered by the church on child protection. Workers will not be permitted to serve until they have completed these requirements. Within six (6) months of the adoption of this policy, all existing leaders and workers with children and youth will comply with this paragraph. Volunteers will renew their training each fall through an in-person or online option.

## **5. Two-Adult Rule**

Workers will be assigned in teams of two or more per room for all church-sponsored programs, events or ministries involving children or youth. At least one worker will be an adult age 18 or older and at least 5 years older than the children and youth they are with. The second worker may be an adult or a youth age 16 or older. If any group stays overnight at the church, or if a church-sponsored group leaves the premises for an overnight trip, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and one female not related by marriage, if the group is mixed in gender. Each adult staying with children or youth on an overnight trip must have his/her own bed unless sharing with his/her own child. In very limited circumstances, the facility being used may require an exception to this rule. In the case of youth staying in motel rooms, one adult may be assigned to each room, provided that more than one youth is also in the room. In a confined space such as the tutoring trailer, one adult may be assigned to each room, provided that doors remain open and adults are within easy earshot of one another. When a group of youth is staying in a private home, if at least one of the leaders staying in the room with the youth is not at least 5 years older than the youth, then doors must remain open and an adult at least 5 years older than the youth must be in the home.

## **6. Youth Volunteers**

Youth volunteers who are age 16 and older will be subject to the same screening and training requirements as adult volunteers, with the exception of the criminal record check, which will not be performed for volunteers under the age of 18. Youth volunteers age 16 and older may partner with an adult age 18 or older for the purpose of fulfilling the 2-adult rule.

## **7. Adequate Supervision**

Adequate supervision will be provided at all times:

- Two adults to six children, zero to twelve months of age.
- Two adults to eight children, ages twelve to twenty-four months
- Two adults to twelve children, ages twenty-four months to thirty-six months
- Two adults to sixteen children, ages three to eighteen years

The specific needs of individual children may require a change to these guidelines.

## **8. One-on-One Mentoring or Consultation**

Any one-on-one mentoring or consultation between an adult and a child or youth will be conducted in a room or area that is in plain view of others. We recognize that there will be occasions when church staff need to consult confidentially with children and youth. Church staff will take appropriate measures to ensure safety and accountability.

## **9. Classroom Discipline**

All leaders and workers with children and youth will use the following discipline measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the leader or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building." If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the parents or guardians may be asked to assume supervision of their child. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time. If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

## **10. Open Classrooms**

Classrooms or child care rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. Brief observations of child care rooms and classrooms of children or youth are conducted during all activities.

## **11. Transportation**

When transporting participants to off-site activities, no automobile will contain only one adult (driver) and one child or youth. Automobiles will contain either one driver and two or more participants or two adults and any number of children (within the seat belt limitations of the vehicle, whereas seatbelts are ALWAYS required). Use of child safety seats which meet federal standards is required for children under eight (8) years of age. No child under the age of twelve (12) may be allowed to ride in the front seat of any vehicle that is equipped with front seat airbags. When volunteers use their own vehicles, their personal insurance policy will be the primary policy for issues of liability. The church's insurance policy will provide secondary liability coverage up to \$1,000,000.

## **12. Pick-Up Procedures**

Each fall, parents of children in fifth grade and younger will fill out a form where they may list the names of people authorized to pick up their child from BUMC classes and events. Parents of children in fourth and fifth grade will have the option of giving permission for their children to leave the classroom independently at the end of Sunday School. Younger children will remain in their classrooms until they are picked up by a designated person.

## **13. Playground**

When a group of children is to be taken to the playground, one adult will check the playground in advance, closing the gates and verifying that no one is on the playground. If an unauthorized person is on the playground, s/he will be asked to leave the playground so that it may be used for a church group. If the person remains on the playground, the children will stay indoors. Before going outside, the children will take a bathroom break to minimize the number of return

trips to the building. The classroom first aid kit will be taken to the playground with the group. While the group is on the playground, signs will be hung on the gates indicating that the playground is in use.

## **14. Speakers, Short-Term Presenters, Facilitators, or Performers**

Individuals participating in the ministry to children or youth as speakers, short-term presenters, facilitators, or performers will not be subject to the six-month rule or the screening and training procedures set forth above. These individuals will not be left alone with any child or youth and will not be considered in meeting the two-adult rule.

## **15. Annual Review**

A committee comprised of members of the Children's Council and Youth Council shall annually review and propose any revisions to this Policy. Any revisions will be submitted to the Church Council for approval. All workers with children and youth are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

## **VI. Reporting Child Abuse**

Should there be an allegation of child abuse at Blacksburg United Methodist Church, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Treat any allegation of child abuse seriously.
2. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation.
3. Immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in the handling of the allegation.
4. Immediately notify the pastor (or the chair of the Staff Parish Relations committee if the allegations involve the pastor).
5. The pastor (or the chair of the Staff Parish Relations committee) will immediately notify the District Superintendent. According to the Virginia Annual Conference Policy on Sexual Misconduct, the District Superintendent will contact the Conference Response Team. The Response Team will send a representative to Blacksburg United Methodist Church within 24 hours to conduct an investigation.
6. The pastor (or the chair of the Staff Parish Relations committee) will immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services of the allegation.
7. The pastor (or the chair of the Staff Parish Relations committee) will immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge.
8. The pastor (or the chair of the Staff Parish Relations committee) will immediately notify the church's insurance company.

9. Do not confront the accused with the allegations unless and until advised by the Response Team to do so. If the accused has assigned duties within the church, that person must be temporarily relieved of their duties until the investigation is concluded.
10. The pastor should extend whatever care and resources necessary, but under **no** circumstances should the pastor or any church leader or member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor or church leader, should under **no** circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate the investigation. The pastor or church leader is not to assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.
11. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.
12. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the Response Team.
13. The pastor (or the chair of the Staff Parish Relations committee) will be the single spokesperson for the church.

## FAQs

### 1. **What should I do if my teaching partner is not here?**

- o Ask a parent to stay and help.
- o Combine your group with another class.
- o Go to the Families with Young Children (Room 104) or Family Matters (Room 107) Sunday School classes and ask for a helper.

### 2. **What should I do if we have two adults in the room, but one needs to leave to take a child to the restroom?**

- o Leave the classroom door open.
- o If possible, the remaining teacher should stand in the doorway.

### 3. **What should I do if it's the end of class, most kids have been picked up, and one of the teachers needs to leave?**

- o Ask a parent who comes to pick up their child to wait with you until the other children are picked up.
- o Stand in the doorway to supervise children who remain in the room.

### 4. **What should I do if I am waiting for youth to be picked up from the church and the other adult needs to leave?**

- o Ask a parent who comes to pick up their child to wait with you.
- o Walk to Starbucks with the youth and wait in a public place.

### 5. **Where can I find first aid supplies?**

There is a mini first aid kit in the cabinet in each children's Sunday School and Children's Church classroom. Complete first aid kits can be found in the supply closets in the Education Building (between the nurseries and beside Room 213) and in the kitchen in the Whisner Building. At the CLC, a first aid kit is located in the kitchen in a marked cabinet. At fun143, a first aid kit is located in the kitchen on top of the refrigerator.

### 6. **How can I be sure to follow the transportation guidelines?**

Unless you are certain that you will be picking up and dropping off two or more children at the same time and place, you will need to arrive to pick up the children with an additional person in your car. If your own child is traveling with you, this will satisfy the requirement, as s/he will ensure that you are not transporting one child by yourself. If this is not the case, you will need to arrange for a second adult to ride with you.

### 7. **What should I do if I suspect that a child or youth has been abused in a setting outside the ministries of BUMC?** Concerns should be reported to the Montgomery County Department of Social Services (382-6990). This report may be made anonymously and does not require proof of abuse; the social workers will take steps to determine whether the report is founded and to assist the family as needed. You may also share your concerns with a church staff member who can contact social services on your behalf.

**BLACKSBURG UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

After reviewing the foregoing Policy and Procedures, please sign, date, detach, and return this portion to indicate that you have read, understood, and accept the Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedures of Blacksburg United Methodist Church.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of church(es) you have attended regularly during the past five years:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been attending BUMC? \_\_\_\_\_

List all previous work involving children or youth:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty or no contest to child or spousal abuse or any sexual misconduct? (If yes, please explain.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any criminal offense of any kind? (If yes, please explain.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Personal References (Adults who are not former employers or relatives)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedures of Blacksburg United Methodist Church. I agree to abide by those policies and procedures. I have no convictions for child abuse or expungements of such convictions. I authorize and release any references or churches which I might provide to Blacksburg United Methodist Church to provide the church any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children and/or youth.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**BLACKSBURG UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
FORM FOR VOLUNTEERS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS**

After reviewing the foregoing Policy and Procedures, please sign, date, detach, and return this portion to indicate that you have read, understood, and accept the Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedures of Blacksburg United Methodist Church.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Organization You Are Volunteering Through \_\_\_\_\_

Adult Advisor for Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of church(es) you have attended regularly during the past five years:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List all previous work involving children or youth:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty or no contest to child or spousal abuse or any sexual misconduct? (If yes, please explain.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any criminal offense of any kind? (If yes, please explain.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Personal References (Adults who are not former employers or relatives)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedures of Blacksburg United Methodist Church. I agree to abide by those policies and procedures. I have no convictions for child abuse or expungements of such convictions. I authorize and release any references or churches which I might provide to Blacksburg United Methodist Church to provide the church any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children and/or youth.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Background Check Authorization Form

During the application process and at any time during the tenure of my employment/ service with Blacksburg United Methodist Church (BUMC), I hereby authorize ChoicePoint Services Inc., on behalf of BUMC to procure a consumer report (known as an investigative consumer report in California) which I understand may include information regarding my character, general reputation, or personal characteristics. This report may be compiled with information from courts record repositories, departments of motor vehicles, past or present employers and educational institutions, governmental occupational licensing or registration entities, business or personal references, and any other source required to verify information that I have voluntarily supplied. I understand that I may request a complete and accurate disclosure of the nature and scope of the background verification, to the extent such investigation includes information bearing on my character, general reputation, or personal characteristics.

I promise the information I provided on this form is true and correct. I understand that dishonesty will disqualify me from consideration for volunteer work and/or employment with Blacksburg United Methodist Church, or if I begin work as a volunteer and/or employee, that I may be dismissed.

I agree that a facsimile or photocopy of this form may be used in lieu of the original.

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

CA, MN & OK Residents please note: In connection with your application for employment/service, your consumer report may be obtained and reviewed. Under state law, you have a right to receive a free copy of your consumer report by checking the appropriate box below.

YES, I am a Minnesota resident and would like a free copy of my consumer report.

YES, I am an Oklahoma resident and would like a free copy of my consumer report.

YES, I am a California resident and would like a free copy of my investigative consumer report.

### B. Background Check Disclosure Form

This is used to inform you that a consumer report is being obtained from a consumer reporting agency for the purpose of evaluating you for employment, volunteer service or a contracted position, including retention as an employee, volunteer or independent contractor.

This report may contain information bearing on your character, general reputation, and personal characteristics from public or private record sources.

California Notice:

You have the right under Section 1786.22 of the California Civil Code to contact ChoicePoint during normal business hours to obtain your file for your review. You may obtain such information as follows:

1. In person at ChoicePoint's office. You will need to furnish proper identification prior to receiving your file. You may have someone accompany you and should inform such person that they will also have to present reasonable identification. If you want ChoicePoint to disclose to or discuss your information with this third party, you may be required to provide a written statement granting ChoicePoint permission to do so.
2. By certified mail, if you make a written request (and provide proper identification) to have your file sent to a specified addressee.
3. By telephone, if you have previously made a written request and provided proper identification.

ChoicePoint has trained personnel to explain any information that is furnished to you and to explain any information that is coded.

Employer please note: If consumer checks "YES" regarding the full consumer report, and consumer resides in California, you will need to provide the individual with a copy of their consumer report.

