



Hayes Barton United Methodist Church Safer Sanctuaries Policy

Policy and Procedures for Reducing the Risk of Abuse

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Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The following is a reflection on the adopted resolution. (Book of Resolutions, 2016 ¶3084)

A central tenet of the Christian faith is the inherent value and worth of all people. Children, Youth, and other Vulnerable Persons are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly susceptible to abuse and neglect. The United Methodist Church is eager to do all it can to protect the Youth, Children, and Vulnerable Persons who participate in the life of this congregation.

Abuse prevention and ministry protection policies and procedures are essential for congregations, not only for the protection and safety of our Children, Youth, and other Vulnerable Persons, but also for our volunteers and staff working with them.

We should not allow possible risks to undermine or stop our ministry. Together, we must:

- Acknowledge the risks and develop a practical plan to address these issues
- Take steps to prevent harm to our Children, Youth, and other Vulnerable Persons
- Continue to answer the Gospel's imperative to be in ministry with Children, Youth, and other Vulnerable persons.

Safer Sanctuaries policies and implementation of practices that reflect those policies seek to fulfill this call for our church. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this Policy for the general safety of our Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons and for the prevention of abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Policy is to confirm our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons (as defined in the "Definitions" section below). Our church, as a holy place of sanctuary, must continue to be a place where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, and service, with the assurance that they are safe and secure within the community of faith.

Our three-fold goal is to:

1. Protect Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons in our care from abuse of any kind by Staff or Volunteers in this church
2. Avoid the appearance of impropriety and reduce the potential risk to Staff and Volunteers of false accusations
3. Reducing the risk of legal liability to our church.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Staff and Volunteers who have direct contact with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons participating in any activities or events formally sponsored by HBUMC, whether on-campus, off-campus, or virtually. In addition, all individuals and organizations (Outside Parties) leasing,

renting, or otherwise using all or any portion of the property owned by HBUMC are required to follow this Safer Sanctuaries Policy in connection with the use of the real property. This Policy, however, does not supersede or countermand any requirements that apply to Staff or Volunteers by reason of applicable law or regulation.

Definitions

- A. **HBUMC:** Hayes Barton United Methodist Church
- B. **Child:** a person who is a newborn through the 5th grade
- C. **Youth:** a person who is enrolled in 6th grade through 12th grade
- D. **Adult:** a person over the age of 18
- E. **Volunteer:** An active member or attendee, who without pay gives their time, talents, or energy to support the church's mission and community.
- F. **Vulnerable Person:** A person aged 18 or older who is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect due to physical, mental, or emotional impairments.
- G. **Types of Abuse:**
 - a. **Digital:** abuse in which there is inappropriate or exploitative use of digital communication or media that targets Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons.
 - b. **Emotional:** abuse in which a person exposes a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Examples include but are not limited to attacks on self-worth through rejection, intimidation, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.
 - c. **Grooming:** The preparatory stage of sexual abuse that offenders use to gain the trust and compliance of a child, youth, or vulnerable person and those around them to establish secrecy and silence to avoid disclosure. Examples include overstepping physical boundaries, especially unwanted hugs, back rubs, playful tickling or "accidental" touching.
 - d. **Neglect:** abuse in which a person endangers a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. As an example, this abuse can occur when a person with responsibility for a Child, Youth, or other Vulnerable Person fails to care for that individual's physical and/or emotional needs.
 - e. **Physical:** abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person. This includes, but is not limited to, violent, non-accidental contact that results in injury, striking, biting, or shaking. Some common injuries can include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.
 - f. **Ritual:** abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violation of a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person is inflicted intentionally and in a stylized way as part of ceremonies or rites by a person or persons responsible for the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person's welfare.
 - g. **Sexual:** abuse in which sexual contact between a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person and an Adult occurs. This abuse includes any form of sexual activity or inappropriate contact with a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person. The abuser may be an adult, another child, or a youth.
- H. **Ministry:** on-campus, or church-sponsored off-campus, activities or programs involving Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons, including but not limited to those related to childcare, preschool, District and Conference Youth events, mission trips, and United Methodist Youth Fellowship.
- I. **Screened Adult:** an adult who has received the required background check and annual training provided by HBUMC in accordance with the Staff and Volunteer Screening and Training sections of this policy.
- J. **Trained Adult:** an adult who has received annual training provided by HBUMC in accordance with the Training section in this policy.

- K. **Roamer:** a Trained or Screened Adult who meets the minimum age requirements as defined in this policy and moves throughout the facility to provide additional oversight and supervision during activities.
- L. **Unscreened Adult:** an adult who has not been screened or trained. The individual may work in a room with a Screened Adult; they should never be alone with Children, Youth, or other Vulnerable People. Unscreened Adults may or may not be church members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church for at least six months. The use of unscreened adults should be an exception rather than the standard practice. *Limited exceptions may be made in special situations, in consultation with the pastor in charge of the ministry or event.*
- M. **Staff:** an adult paid by HBUMC, overseen by the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, and screened according to the church's Safer Sanctuary policy and any additional required personnel screening. This also includes preschool (HBUMP) employees.
- N. **Youth Helper:** a person under the age of eighteen who assists with Child or Youth activities. They can help with activities, but should always be supervised. Youth Helpers must be at least three years older than the Children or Youth they are helping. A Youth Helper will generally be considered "unscreened."
- O. **Mandated Reporter:** any person (including all HBUMC staff and volunteers) legally required to report suspected abuse or neglect under NC law.
- P. **One-on-One Interaction:** any setting, including virtual, in which one adult is alone with a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person.

Safer Sanctuaries Team

The HBUMC Safer Sanctuaries Team will be nominated by the Committee on Lay Leadership ("Committee"). The Safer Sanctuaries Team comprises the Executive Director, the Director of Youth Ministry, the Director of Children and Family Ministries, Pastor(s), and lay members nominated by the Committee. The Safer Sanctuaries Team shall report to the Trustees and have two principal areas of responsibility: regulatory and educational.

- A. The Safer Sanctuaries Team shall, at least annually, review and, when necessary, recommend revisions of the HBUMC Safer Sanctuaries policy to the Trustees. The Safer Sanctuaries Team shall submit an annual report to the Trustees with the following information:
 - a. That the Policy has been reviewed
 - b. Recommended adjustments to the Policy, if any
 - c. Other pertinent information.
- B. The Safer Sanctuaries Team will advise the congregation at large of the existence and application of this Policy.
- C. The Safer Sanctuaries Team is responsible for addressing emerging safety issues that may arise.

Staff and Volunteer Screening

- A. All Staff and Volunteers who work with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons shall complete the appropriate online application form(s) and background checks in accordance with their defined role (see definitions). By completing the online application and providing an electronic signature, the applicant grants the staff person in charge permission to contact references, conduct any necessary investigations, and complete the review of the application. *This policy does not apply to clergy. The Conference policy on "Professional Sexual Misconduct" applies to "church professionals," which, for the purposes of the policy, includes a clergy person or local pastor appointed by the Bishop.*

- B. All Volunteers and Staff who work with Children, Youth, and other Vulnerable Persons at the church will be:
 - a. At least 18 years old. Exceptions apply for approved Youth Helpers.
 - b. At least five years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising (except for Youth Helpers, who must be three years older).
 - c. A regular attendee at HBUMC for at least six months.

*Limited exceptions may be made in special situations, in consultation with the pastor in charge of the ministry/event.
- C. All Volunteers and Staff (including clergy) who work with Children, Youth, and other Vulnerable Persons at HBUMC will:
 - a. Complete an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.
 - b. Provide the names and contact information of three personal references not related to the applicant.
 - c. Undergo a background check if they have leadership responsibility for Children, Youth, or other Vulnerable People. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect will not be allowed to work in any church-sponsored activity or program for Children, Youth, or other Vulnerable Persons. All HBUMC employees are required to receive a background check.
- D. Volunteers serving on a one-time or very infrequent basis and who have not been screened or trained will be able to serve under the supervision of a Staff member, Screened Adult, or Trained Adult.
- E. Reference checks for Staff will be handled by a Staff member designated by the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee.
- F. Reference checks for Volunteers will be handled by a Staff member designated by the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee.
- G. All people who are subject to this policy shall be rescreened every two (2) years.
- H. In the event that HBUMC Staff gives notice that the Volunteer must cease managing, leading, or working directly with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons as part of any HBUMC ministries, the Volunteer will immediately stop serving as a Volunteer, and will cease communications to any or all Children, Youth, Vulnerable Persons, and their parents and/or guardians, except for communications expressly authorized in writing by HBUMC Staff.

Training

Before working in Youth or Children's ministries, or any ministry involving Vulnerable Persons, Staff and Adult Volunteers must undergo training yearly. This training is offered at least once a year.

- A. All Volunteers and Staff who work with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons will be required to complete Safer Sanctuaries training, be given a written copy of this Policy, and be required to sign an acknowledgment to that effect.
- B. Information on recognition, disclosure, reporting, and prevention of abuse shall be provided to Screened Volunteers and Staff working with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons.
- C. It is the responsibility of Outside Parties to provide such training to their volunteers, employees, agents, and contractors consistent with this Safer Sanctuaries Policy.

Procedures

- A. Two Unrelated Adults Rule. At least two unrelated adults (including at least one Screened Adult) must always be present during any church-sponsored program, event, or Ministry

involving Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons, including in-person activities, transportation, home visits, and virtual programming.

1. There must be a minimum of a five-year age differential between Children and Youth and their adult leaders.
2. In the event one-on-one interactions between Staff or Volunteers and a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person is unavoidable, the interaction should occur in an area that is visible to others and with the knowledge of another adult.
3. No Volunteers under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility, nor be alone with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons.
4. If the two unrelated adults rule cannot be observed, a Roamer (see definition) will regularly check on groups with two related adults or only one adult, and the door of the meeting room will remain open.

B. One-on-One Interactions: Interactions with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons should always be done with an open door and in view of others. All interactions must take place in a setting visible to other adults. A Staff member must be present in the building and aware of the Volunteer or Staff member's location and who they are meeting with. Children, Youth, and other Vulnerable Persons in individual counseling shall be told that they can discuss any part of the counseling process with a parent or another adult, especially if they feel uncomfortable about anything that happens during counseling. Any suspected incidents of abuse or neglect disclosed during the session will be reported following the outlined process in the "Incident Reporting" section below.

C. Transportation. Whenever HBUMC transports Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons away from the church, HBUMC will ensure:

1. There is at least the:
 - i. Driver,
 - ii. Two Children, or a Youth, or a Vulnerable Person,
 - iii. At least one additional, unrelated adult, except for unusual or unavoidable situations.
2. Adults shall avoid situations in which they are alone with a non-family Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person in the car.
3. No Youth should drive other unrelated Youth to/from off-site events. Youth driving to/from off-site events must have prior written permission from parents and provide that to the Staff or Volunteer Leader organizing the off-site event.
4. All drivers must be 25+ years old, have a valid driver's license, and current insurance. All drivers understand and agree to releasing and having their driving record reviewed.

D. Lodging and Overnight Activities: When HBUMC ministries include overnight lodging or events that extend overnight and include Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons, the following policies and procedures will be observed:

1. For overnight events at the church and church-sponsored off-premises activities, two or more Screened Adults of the same gender as the Youth attending must be present and must include at least one male and one female if the group is mixed-gender.
 - i. If lodging arrangements require Children, Youth, and Adults to share sleeping quarters (such as bunk rooms, classrooms used as lodging, or large open spaces like gyms, etc.), a minimum of two Adults of the same gender must be assigned to the room with Youth of the same gender.

1. If HBUMC is unable to provide an adequate number of Screened Adults for this arrangement:
 - a. An Adult from a different group attending the same overnight event who can provide proof that their group's screening policies meet or exceed HBUMC's guidelines for a Screened Adult can serve as the additional required Adult.
 - b. If in a combined age group of middle and high school Youth, one Adult for every eight students of the same gender must be present.
2. At no time will an Adult stay in a room with only one Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person unless they are related.
3. Adults, Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons will not sleep in the same bed with anyone to whom they are unrelated.
4. Adults, Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons will be separated by gender for overnight accommodations. We will work to make accommodations for transgender individuals or individuals who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.
5. When large common sleeping areas are used, Adults will remain in the immediate vicinity, positioned near the exits.
6. All participants should have privacy for showering/bathing. If there is a common shower, arrangements should be made to schedule showers separately for Children, Youth, Vulnerable Persons, and Adults. If open showers are the only facilities available, separate shower times for Youth and Adults shall be designated, and there shall be shower monitors. Swimsuits may be required for showers in some instances.
7. Adults should be sensitive to the privacy rights of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons, including dressing and undressing in public places.
8. The trip organizers will obtain the rules and policies of the hosting organization in advance so that a modification plan can be put in place should there be a need to adjust these guidelines to fit the host site.
9. Written documentation from a legal parent or guardian regarding medication and dosage must be provided ahead of any event where prescribed or over-the-counter medication will be brought with the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person, and/or consumed while participating. Medical Forms on file with HBUMC must be kept up to date by the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person and the responsible parent or legal guardian.
10. Written documentation regarding medication and dosage may be provided ahead of any event where prescribed medication brought with the Screened Adult, Unscreened Adult, or Trained Adult, and/or consumed while participating. Medical Forms on file with HBUMC must be kept up to date by the participating adult.
11. During independent activities (e.g., skiing, beach), Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons must stay in groups of three or more, checking in with an Adult in a public place at designated times.

- E. Mission and Service Trips: On all mission and service trips where one or more Child or Youth are present, the following procedures will be observed:
1. All adult team members should be Screened Adults.
 2. When a single Youth is part of the group, the Youth should either have a room of their own or have two unrelated adults in the room.
 3. If open showers are the only facilities available, separate shower times for Youth and Adults shall be designated. Youth and Adults shall not shower together, and there shall be shower monitors. Swimsuits may be required for showers in some instances.
 4. Adults should be sensitive to the privacy rights of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons, including dressing and undressing in public places.
 5. Two adults should always be present at each work site.

6. No youth will be allowed to be alone with an adult from the host community, including pastors, congregation members, homeowners, etc.
 7. Mission team members are not to be alone with a youth from the host community.
 8. Chaperones must be assigned based on the needs of the group, ensuring that all participants feel comfortable and supported. Adult chaperones are responsible for supervising all participants, regardless of gender, and should ensure that interactions remain respectful and appropriate.
 9. The same boundary guidelines apply to young persons from host teams, consistent with those for the mission team members.
 10. The team should be intentional about researching cultural differences regarding boundaries and touching norms, to be sensitive and respectful to heritage and traditions in the host community. Appropriate guidelines should be established for the variety of settings the team may experience.
- F. Substance Use: It is expected that all participants in HBUMC-sponsored ministries and events comply with local, state, and federal laws regarding substance use and consumption, including but not limited to tobacco, alcohol, prescription drugs, and any other illegal substances.
1. No Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons are permitted to be under the influence of alcohol, prescription drugs, or any other illegal substances while participating in HBUMC-sponsored events.
 2. Written documentation from a legal parent or guardian regarding medication and dosage must be provided ahead of any event where prescribed or over-the-counter medication will be brought with the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person, and/or consumed while participating.
 3. Adults will not consume or be under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, prescription drugs, or any illegal substances during HBUMC-sponsored Children and Youth events. Discretion should be used at all other HBUMC-sponsored events where Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons are present.
 - i. Should prescribed medications impair the cognitive function and driving ability of an adult, the trip leader must be notified to make alternative arrangements for the safety of all participants.
- G. Communication and Digital Safety. The use of electronics or media communications can be a helpful tool in supporting ministries with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons. However, in such circumstances, the following requirements must be adhered to:
1. Parent and Guardian Permission: Staff and Adult Volunteers may communicate electronically with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons only for ministry-related purposes and through communication methods approved or commonly used by the ministry. Parents or guardians should be informed of the communication methods used by the ministry and may request that their Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person not be contacted by certain methods.
 2. Communications with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons:
 - i. Staff and Adult Volunteers should use appropriate, transparent, and ministry-related communication when contacting Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons. Communications should include a parent/guardian, another Staff member, another Adult Volunteer, or other participants and occur through an established ministry group communication channel. One-to-one communication should be avoided.
 - ii. Staff and Adult Volunteers should avoid secretive, inappropriate, or disappearing-message communications. If a communication raises concern, becomes personal or sensitive, or involves a disclosure of abuse, neglect, self-harm, or threat to

safety, it must promptly be reported according to the Incident Reporting section of this Policy.

3. Information Sharing Online:

- i. No adult shall post easily identifiable personal information online regarding a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person. Easily identifiable personal information includes, but is not limited to, address, telephone number, email address, social security number, or other identifiers.
- ii. Regarding email communication, particularly with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons, Staff and Adult Volunteers should use "BCC" (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only their address when a message is received.
- iii. Staff and Volunteers will be cautious when transmitting information like event dates, times, locations, or participant names, to avoid publicly disclosing an event that is intended to be limited to only a disclosed group of participants.
- iv. All Staff and Volunteers will limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing anyone on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names.

4. Online Photos/Videos Sharing

- i. All Staff and Adult Volunteers shall inform participants when photos and videos may be taken and invite participants to opt out. Staff and Adult Volunteers shall maintain a list of participants who have opted out and shall reference such list to prevent posting photos or videos of individuals who have opted out of such posts.
- ii. When posting photos and videos, Staff and Adult Volunteers should refrain from using names. They shall never use last names or identifiable information unless given permission by a parent or guardian of the respective Child or Youth or the guardian (if applicable) of the Vulnerable Person.
- iii. When sharing photos and videos of Children, Youth, or Vulnerable People, Staff and Adult Volunteers shall only share photos and videos that are aligned with HBUMC's mission and values.
- iv. When HBUMC creates a shared folder for uploading photos from an event, Staff and Adult Volunteers will only share with the attendees and their parents or guardians.

5. Church "Admin" on Ministry Accounts

- i. Where there is no real-time interaction between viewers (e.g., a video posted but not broadcast live), the "two adult rule" applies. The rule requires that there shall always be two unrelated adults with administrator rights on any account that is posting official ministry content.
- ii. Digital/online church media accounts will be set up as ministry accounts and have two unrelated adults as administrators.

6. Personal Use of Social Networking Sites

- i. When an adult joins the church's social network, the social networking profile is an extension of HBUMC's ministry. Adults will be mindful of the privacy settings on personal social networking profiles.
- ii. Adults will consider restricting who can be a social media friend and who can follow their page. Adults will use judgment in accepting requests from Children and Youth. Adults will not initiate friend requests with Children or Youth and will not follow a Child's or Youth's social media account (such as Instagram, Facebook, etc.) unless the Child or Youth has requested it.
- iii. Adults will use higher-level security features even if they already have a restricted profile (such as requiring approval of all comments posted to the page or account).

- iv. Adults are expected to use discretion when posting on social networking sites or blogs, avoiding content that would be inappropriate to include on a resume or in the church bulletin or newsletter.
 - v. Adults will remove inappropriate comments, photos, etc. Adults will encourage Children and Youth to follow these same guidelines.
7. Digital Meeting Platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime, etc.)
- i. Two unrelated adults should be present in a digital meeting and arrive on the call before Children and Youth. Adult cameras should be turned off until both adults are present.
 - ii. If more than one adult cannot be present at the same time, allow another adult to have administrative privileges to monitor accounts regularly. This helps meet the “window in a door” or “open door” policies familiar with in-person meetings. Also, consider having another adult, such as a parent, on the Child/Youth side of the digital meeting to acknowledge their awareness of the conversation.
 - iii. If an adult and a Child or Youth need to have a one-on-one digital meeting, the adult must make another adult or the Child or Youth’s parent aware of the meeting.
 - iv. Adults shall be mindful of privacy measures available on digital meeting platforms, as well as how passwords are shared to protect the meeting space.

H. Visibility and Accessibility:

- 1. Activities with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons should be accessible. Anyone responsible for the care of Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons has the ability to visit and observe the Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons’ activities, classrooms, or church- sponsored programs at any time. Exceptions to this right may be issued at the discretion of church leadership.
- 2. All classroom and office doors must have a window or means of visibility from the hallway, or they should remain open while occupied.
- 3. Windows will be kept free from adornment.
- 4. Classrooms or child-care rooms may be visited without prior notice by Staff and parents.

I. Restroom Procedure and Physical Assistance Protocol. When assisting Children or Vulnerable Persons with toileting or physical needs, use the following guidelines.

- 1. At least two unrelated adults should be present in a supervisory capacity.
- 2. Always maintain transparency and visibility during bathroom-related tasks. Avoid isolated one-on-one bathroom situations behind closed doors.
- 3. Use bathrooms inside the preschool area when possible. Do not leave groups unattended to take a child to the bathroom.
- 4. Provide Developmentally Appropriate Help: Children at different ages need different levels of assistance.
 - i. Infant (age 0-1): Diapering should be done in the Nursery by a parent/legal guardian or a Staff member.
 - 1. Diapering
 - a. Done in a designated diapering area.
 - b. Adults must wear gloves.
 - c. Always follow handwashing for both children and adults.
 - d. Must be conducted within the eyesight of another adult or in an open-door space.
 - ii. Toddlers (age 1-3): These children often wear diapers or are in the early stages of potty training.

1. Diapering
 - a. Done in a designated diapering area.
 - b. Adults must wear gloves.
 - c. Always follow handwashing for both children and adults.
 - d. Must be conducted within the eyesight of another adult or in an open-door space.
2. Toileting
 - a. One adult may assist if needed, with the bathroom door open.
 - b. NEVER alone behind a closed door.
 - c. Keep assistance limited to helping with clothing and hygiene.
3. Preschoolers (ages 3-4): Children are often potty-trained but may still need assistance.
 - a. Allow independent use of the bathroom when possible.
 - b. Adults should wait outside the bathroom door, giving verbal reminders and support.
 - c. If assistance is needed (e.g., with clothing or accidents), an adult may help with the door ajar and inform another adult.
 - d. Encourage independence but monitor time away from the group.
4. Pre-Kindergarten (age 4–5): Most children are independent, but supervision is still needed.
 - a. Children should use bathrooms individually or in small groups with adults nearby.
 - b. Adults should not enter the stall or close the door unless it's an emergency.
 - c. If assistance is required, follow the same “door ajar, second adult aware” principle.
5. Children over the age of five years old, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons are expected to go and come from restrooms on their own, or a parent, guardian, or caregiver will provide assistance.

J. Drop-Off/Pick-Up Procedure. The church nursery requires a parent, legal guardian, or authorized adult to sign in the Child for all events, in accordance with the church nursery policy. When dropping off a Child at the nursery for any church activity, a designated Staff member or Adult volunteer will oversee the sign-in process by the parent, guardian, or authorized adult. Children in the nursery will receive an ID sticker, which will serve as identification for Staff and Adult volunteers when the Child is picked up. For special events, parents, legal guardians, or authorized adults will sign in their children following the sign-in policy specific to that event.

1. Two adults (Staff or Volunteer) must be present until the last Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person is picked up. Staff and Adult Volunteers cannot be released from their role until two adults have been identified to remain until pick-up is completed.
2. If an adult finds themselves alone with a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person before or after an event, the adult shall wait with the person outside the home or building. In bad weather, when meeting off-site, the adult may leave the main entry or front door open and remain inside with the person in the front room or entryway. A parent/guardian and Staff member need to be notified if this occurred, for purposes of transparency and protection of the adult as well as the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person.

K. Outside Groups: Groups using the church facility will follow our Safer Sanctuaries policies and procedures.

Reporting a Concern or Incident

HBUMC uses Red Flag Reporting, an independent, confidential reporting system, to receive reports of suspected misconduct, policy violations, or other safety concerns.

To file a report:

1. Visit www.hbumc.org and select the "File a Report" link.
2. You will be directed to the secure Red Flag Reporting portal.
3. Complete the online report, providing as much information as possible about your concern. You may upload supporting documents if available.
4. You may choose to identify yourself or remain anonymous, where permitted by law.
5. After submitting your report, you will receive a report key or case number that allows you to return to the system to review messages, provide additional information, or respond to questions from the investigator while maintaining confidentiality if you reported anonymously. The system also supports secure, anonymous communication between the reporter and those reviewing the report.

All known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse on church property or at church-sponsored activities are to be reported using the Red Flag Reporting system. HBUMC will report abuse in accordance with North Carolina law, including North Carolina General Statutes §7B-301 et seq. This does not mean that individual Staff members or Adult volunteers cannot independently report suspected abuse.

Filing a Red Flag report does not replace any individual's legal obligation to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Any person who has cause to suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or is dependent must promptly make a report to the Department of Social Services in the county where the child resides or is found. Reporting the concern through Red Flag Reporting does not replace the individual's legal reporting obligation. Call 911 when a child faces immediate danger or requires emergency assistance.

Reports submitted through Red Flag Reporting will be reviewed by designated HBUMC leadership and the Safer Sanctuaries Committee for determining appropriate follow-up. Reports involving suspected abuse or neglect will also be reported to the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, as appropriate. When a report involves suspected abuse, neglect, or immediate safety concerns, HBUMC will coordinate with the appropriate civil authorities and will not take actions that could interfere with an official investigation. Internal review may include gathering relevant information, taking appropriate steps to protect Children, Youth, Vulnerable Persons, Staff, and Volunteers, and determining any necessary ministry, staffing, or volunteer restrictions during the review.

Mandatory Reporting

Because of our commitment to care for all God's children and protect the vulnerable, HBUMC-sponsored activities fully comply with the definitions offered by the North Carolina Department of Social Services governing Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons. The following statutes are excerpts and not all-inclusive.

Child and adult protection programs are mandated by statute. The State of North Carolina's current child abuse reporting statute was first enacted in 1975. Section 7B-301 states that "any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the Department of Social Services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it, including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker, the age of the juvenile, the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile, if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might help establish the need for protective services or court intervention." The statute is comprehensive, requiring the reporting of numerous types of maltreatment. The law applies to any child under 18 years of age when a parent or any person responsible for the child's care:

- Causes or threatens to cause non-accidental physical or mental injury;
- Has a child present during the manufacture or attempted manufacture of a controlled substance or during the sale of such substance, where such activity would constitute a felony violation;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care;
- Abandons the child;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate supervision for the child's age and level of development;
- Knowingly leaves a child alone in the same dwelling with a person, not related by blood or marriage, who has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender; or
- Commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

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 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 an 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.

Disabled adults of any age are protected in North Carolina under State law (N. C. General Statute 108A-102), which mandates that "any person having reasonable cause to believe that a disabled adult is in need shall report such information." Disabled/vulnerable adults are defined as people over the age of 18 who are mentally or physically challenged, either temporarily or long-term, and who are unable to fully care for themselves.

The following definitions were taken from North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 108A, Article 6, the NC Adult Protective Services Statute:

- Abuse: means the willful infliction of physical pain, injury, or mental anguish, unreasonable confinement, or the willful deprivation by a caretaker of services, which are necessary to maintain mental and physical health.
- Exploitation: means the illegal or improper use of a disabled adult or his resources for another's profit or advantage.
- Neglect: refers to a disabled adult who is either living alone and not able to provide for themselves, the services which are necessary to maintain their mental or physical health, or is not receiving services from their caretaker.

Within these three areas fall categories of abuse, such as:

- Abandonment—the desertion of an older adult by an individual who has assumed responsibility for providing care or by a person with physical custody of the older adult.
- Emotional or psychological abuse—the infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts.
- Financial or material exploitation—the illegal or improper use of an older adult's funds, property, or assets.
- Misuse of restraints—chemical or physical control of an older adult long-term care facility resident beyond what their physician has ordered.
- Neglect—the refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an older adult.
- Physical abuse—the use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment.
- Self-neglect—characterized as the behavior of an older adult that threatens their health or safety without the understanding the consequences of their decisions.
- Sexual abuse—non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with an older adult and/or sexual contact with any person incapable of giving consent.

Statement of Covenant

Hayes Barton United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and nurturing community of faith, in which our Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons can experience God's love and grow in their Christian faith. As members of the Body of Christ, we all share in this responsibility to care for and protect one another, and we further commit to embody the love of Jesus Christ in all ministries. To this end, anyone who is concerned about the physical or emotional safety of a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Person in our congregation is encouraged to report the incident so that we may fulfill our commitment to maintaining a Safer Sanctuary.

We will conduct training on this policy and its procedures to ensure that adults involved in activities with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons are aware of these standards and will abide by them.

Conclusion

In all our ministries, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that all persons 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).