

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

St. Stephen United Methodist Church
Western North Carolina Conference



“But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.’
Matthew 19:14

Revised April 2022

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Definitions	1
“Child” and “Youth” and “Adult”	1
Church Personnel	1
“Regularly Work with or Around Children/Youth”	2
“Child/Youth Abuse”	2
Screening and Selection of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers	3
Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work Regularly or Occasionally With Children and Youth	4
Supervision of Children and Youth	4
General Rules	4
Supervision of Classroom Activities	4
Open Door Policy	5
Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure	5
Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities	5
Mentoring Programs	5
Counseling of Youth and Children	6
Time Following Group Events	6
Bathroom and Diapering Guidelines	6
Diapering Procedures	7
Toileting Assistance for Preschool Children	7
Bathroom Procedures for Children (Grades K-5)	7
Bathroom Procedures for Youth (Grades 6-12)	8
Appropriate Touch Guidelines	9
Transportation	9
General Rules	9
Requirements	9
Recommended Guidelines	10
Safety and Health of Children and Youth	10
Illness	10
Medications Policy	11
Injuries	11
Minor Injury	11
Serious Injury	11
Life Threatening Injury	11

Trip and Retreat Supervision	12
A. Requirements	12
B. Guidelines	12
Use of Church Facilities by Outside Groups	13
Online Safety	13
Bullying Policy	14
What Is Bullying?	14
Bullying Policy Overview	15
Purpose	15
Scriptural Basis	15
Definition of Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation (BHI)	15
Our Position on Rights and Responsibilities	15
Summary of Rules Concerning BHI	16
Guidelines for Responding to the Bullied and the Bully	16
Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse	16
Implementation	17
Application	18
APPENDICES	19
Appendix I: Social Media, Technology and Internet Use	20
APPENDIX II: Participation Covenant Statement	22
APPENDIX III: Child/Youth Protection Incident Report Form	24
Appendix IV: Emergency Contact Information	25
WHERE TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE	25
Appendix V: Photo Permission	26
Appendix VI: Consent for Electronic Communications with Children/Youth	27
Appendix VII: Disqualifying Convictions/Arrests	28

Safe Sanctuary Policy

St. Stephen United Methodist Church Charlotte, North Carolina

I. Introduction

A central tenet of the Christian faith is the inherent value and worth of all children, youth, and adults. Children and youth are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The St. Stephen United Methodist Church is desirous of doing what it can to protect the youth and children who participate in the life of this congregation.

We believe implementing a policy and adopting procedures to protect our children recognizes that:

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the Children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church states that ". . . children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse." Tragically, Churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, and exploitation. . . occur in Churches, both, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. . . . God calls us to make our Churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse. (Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth).

Since 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church has mandated that each local congregation have a child/youth protection policy ("CYPP").

Accordingly, St. Stephen United Methodist Church adopts the following policies for the protection and safety of the children and youth participating in the life of the church.

The policies set forth below apply to all persons who provide supervision over or have care and custody of children/youth or who come into contact with children/youth in church facilities or church-sponsored activities.

II. Definitions

A. "Child" and "Youth" and "Adult"

A "child" is under the age of 12 years. A "youth" is anyone at least 12 years of age but not yet 18 years old or anyone 18 years old or older who is still attending high school. An "adult" is anyone 18 years of age or older who has finished high school.

B. Church Personnel

For purposes of this CYPP, “**Church Personnel**” are defined to include the following:

1. “**Paid Staff Person**” is anyone employed by the church, including all appointed or supply clergy and all other staff on the payroll of the church or contracted by the church.
2. “**Adult Volunteer**” is any adult not paid by the church who serves in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors, including but not limited to volunteers in the nursery, preschool, Sunday School, VBS, drivers, and chaperones. Adult volunteers who are not screened must be supervised by a screened adult or screened adult paid staff person.
3. “**Screened Adult**” is a volunteer or paid staff person who has undergone the church’s screening process. A screened adult does not need to be a church member but must have been Safe Sanctuary approved and notified by the church of that approval prior to any contact with children or youth.
4. “**Youth Helpers**” or “**Youth Staff.**” Youth helpers and/or ‘youth staff’ (below the age of 18 or 18 or older and still in high school) may assist in activities involving children/youth but must be supervised by at least one screened adult at all times. Youth helpers and youth staff are required to (1) read and be familiar with the St. Stephen Safe Sanctuary Policy; (2) satisfactorily complete Child Safety training; and (3) complete and sign a Safe Sanctuary Participation Covenant Statement.

C. “Regularly Work with or Around Children/Youth”

For purposes of this Policy, the following are included in the definition of church personnel who “**Regularly Work with or Around Children/Youth:**”

1. All clergy whether appointed or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid staff persons, except those whose duties are performed entirely when children/youth are not present.
3. All paid staff persons whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church or related entity.
4. Adult volunteers whose service regularly takes them throughout the church facility or grounds or who **have keys to church buildings.**
5. Adult volunteers who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs, or activities.
6. Adult volunteers who transport children/youth without other adults in a vehicle
7. Adult volunteers who participate in overnight activities with children/youth.
8. Adult volunteers who assist in the nursery.

9. Youth helpers who assist in the nursery.
10. Youth helpers who assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs, or activities.

D. “Child/Youth Abuse”

For purposes of this Policy, **child/youth abuse** includes any of the following:

1. **Physical Abuse:** Violent non-accidental contact which results in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.
2. **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth, whether at the Church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.
3. **Emotional Abuse:** A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child’s/youth’s spirit or attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.
4. **Neglect:** Failure to provide for a child’s/youth’s basic needs or failure to protect a child/youth from harm.

III. Screening and Selection of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers

The Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee are charged with the responsibility of developing, implementing and evaluating the process for recruiting, screening, selecting, training and supervising of non-appointive church staff. (2016 Book of Discipline, ¶ 258.12). The Pastor and the Paid Staff Person(s) or Screened Volunteer(s) in charge of Children’s/Youth ministries at the church are charged with the responsibility of developing, implementing and evaluating the process for recruiting, screening, selecting, training and supervising adult volunteers.

- A. All church personnel who regularly work with the children/youth shall comply with the following Screening and Selection Requirements prior to beginning their regular involvement with children/youth:
 1. Complete an application form with 3 reference checks;
 2. Complete a background check consent form;
 3. Receive appropriate clearances from all reference checks and North Carolina or national background check, as appropriate;
 4. Undergo personal interview in conjunction with hiring process
 5. Attend training on current issues of child protection and the church’s child/youth protection policies at least once per year;
 6. Sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Safe Sanctuary Policy (See Appendix II—Participation Covenant);
 7. Undergo a Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be transporting children/youth; and
 8. Undergo a background check and training renewal every 4 years.

B. Related Screening and Selection Procedures for the Church:

1. A designated paid Staff Member or Member of the SPRC shall contact the applicant's references.
2. A designated Paid Staff Member or Member of the SPRC shall ensure that an applicant submits a background check consent and that an appropriate criminal background check is performed and/or motor vehicle background check, if applicable. The application, background check, consent, documentation of reference checks, background check reports, motor vehicle screening (if applicable), and signed participation covenant shall be maintained electronically as *confidential* files in a secure location. Paper files are stored in a locked cabinet where other church records are kept. Access to such files shall be limited to those charged or involved with supervising Church Personnel or involved in determining whether an applicant should be approved to work regularly with children/youth.
3. Information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with the Pastor, SPRC, or Director of Children and/or Youth ministries, as appropriate.
4. Anyone whose background check indicates a conviction or plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* for any offense listed in Appendix VII shall not be approved for working with children/youth. Anyone whose background check indicates a pending arrest for any offense listed in Appendix VII shall not be approved to work with children/youth unless and until the arrest has been resolved in such a way that does not result in a conviction or plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*.

IV. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work Regularly or Occasionally With Children and Youth

The Pastor and Minister to Children and Families shall ensure that training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Training will be available to all paid staff persons, screened adult volunteers, and non-screened adult volunteers who work with children and/or youth.

The training should include at a minimum:

- A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- B. Current child protection issues.
- C. The Church's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
- D. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
- E. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
- F. Abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- G. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

V. Supervision of Children and Youth

A. General Rules

1. Two Adult Rule: Two adults must be present at all programs or activities involving children/youth, one of whom must be a screened adult.
2. Three-Year Rule: All screened adults supervising children/youth must be at least 3 years older than the age group they are supervising. Adults who do not meet this criteria must be under the direction of a screened adult who is at least 3 years older than the age group.
3. Windows/Open Doors: Each room set aside for children/youth must have a door or wall with a window, half doors, or open doors. Windows in doors tend to remove the opportunities for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks. Half doors should be considered for toddler to second grade children to keep them from wandering outside the classroom.
4. Discipline: St. Stephen UMC does not under any circumstances administer corporal punishment.

B. Supervision of Classroom Activities

1. Crib/Toddler to Second Grade

Two adults must be present for all classroom activities involving infants, toddlers, and children in grades K-2, one of whom must be a screened adult. When feasible, there should be two screened adults present, and where the two adults are related, it is preferable that a third adult be present. In addition, a designated floating adult should periodically check all classrooms. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the supervising adults or by a designated floating person. Whenever two adults are not available to supervise, the classroom doors must remain open.

2. Grades 3-5

At least one screened adult must be present for all classroom activities. Two screened adults are preferred. In addition, a designated floating adult should periodically check all classrooms. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the supervising adults or by a designated floating person who checks on all classrooms. Whenever two adults are not available to supervise, the classroom doors must remain open.

3. Grades 6-12

At least one screened adult must be present for all classroom activities. A designated floating adult should periodically check all classrooms.

Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the supervising adults or by a designated floating person who checks on all classrooms. Whenever two adults are not available to supervise, the classroom doors must remain open.

C. Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers or staff of the church should be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

D. Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children in Grades K-2 must have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or guardians or those designated by them. Adults responsible for children who are infant through toddler should sign-in their child and indicate the names of the authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed-out. Adults responsible for children age 2 through Grade 2 may be asked to sign their child in and out of children's activities and provide names of authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed out. Picking-up children by unauthorized adults is forbidden.

E. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

At least two unrelated, screened adults must be present for all non classroom activities involving children and/or youth. Permission from the child's/youth's parent or guardian must be obtained prior to a child's/youth's attendance at a meeting held in an individual's home.

F. Mentoring Programs

Although mentoring programs inherently promote the development of a one-to-one relationship between an adult mentor and a child/youth, such programs should be conducted in a group setting in compliance with the other requirements of this policy, including that at least two adults be present at all times, one of whom must be a screened adult; screening of all mentors who serve on a regular basis; and that the open-door policy is observed.

Mentors may not give gifts to individual children/youth without the knowledge of their parent/guardian. Gift giving should be done on a group basis or for special occasions only (such as birthday, Christmas, confirmation, graduation). Gifts should be modest and appropriate for the occasion. Mentors must never serve as a financial resource.

The general prohibition on one-to-one communications between church personnel/screened volunteers and children/youth is relaxed in the context of mentoring relationships; however, mentors must obtain permission

from the parent/guardian regarding the forms of communication a mentor may use in communicating with a mentee. (See Appendix V).

G. Counseling of Youth and Children

In instances where circumstances dictate that counseling of a child/youth would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate Screened Adult may meet individually with a child/youth with the knowledge of at least one Paid Staff Member. At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, unless there is glass in the door or wall which gives a clear view into the room. If another adult is not in the building when the counseling occurs, the session should be moved to a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

NOTE 1: At the initial meeting, the counselor should first determine if they are qualified to address the child's/youth's needs effectively. Counseling should be limited to no more than three sessions. Referral to another more qualified counselor should be considered.

NOTE 2: This policy is not intended to govern a licensed professional counselor in a paid counseling relationship with a child or youth.

H. Time Following Group Events

Following child/youth group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's transportation arrives after all other participants have departed. In those circumstances, a child/youth may be supervised by one screened adult. Under those circumstances, the general rule requiring the presence of two screened adults is suspended, and the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well being. In an emergency, and only with the express permission of the parent/guardian, a screened adult may transport a child/youth home, provided that the transportation complies with the requirements set forth below.

I. Bathroom and Diapering Guidelines

No child, regardless of age, should ever use a restroom alone. Adult volunteers/employees should assess restroom areas for safety before a child enters, and monitor the area while children are using these spaces. These procedures allow privacy for the children and protection for the employees (not being alone with a child). St. Stephen expects parents to handle bathroom duties for their children. In the instance that a parent is not available to assist, the following procedures will be applicable. This policy and procedures are to be made clear to parents, volunteers, and employees; be communicated frequently; and be **enforced at all times**.

1. Diapering Procedures

- a. All babies/toddlers should be checked for a diaper change at least once each hour.
- b. Diapers must be changed on changing tables only. Make sure you have all necessary supplies (gloves, clean diaper, wipes) within reach before you begin.
- c. Never leave a child unattended on the changing table or turn away from a child while they are on the table.
- d. An additional volunteer must be present at the time of diaper change.
- e. Wear a new pair of disposable gloves with each diaper change.
- f. If a child has a bowel movement, the diaper must be changed as soon as possible. Remove stool from the child's skin wiping from front to back with a fresh wipe after each swipe.
- g. Dispose of the dirty diaper, wipes, and gloves in a plastic-lined, covered trash can.
- h. Soiled clothing should be placed in a sealed plastic bag to be sent home with the parents. Do not attempt to rinse the clothing in the toilet or sink as this increases the risk of contamination.
- i. Clean and disinfect the changing table before and after each diaper change.
- j. Wash your hands after each diaper change.
- k. Administer only creams or ointments provided by the parent and with **written permission** from the parent. If a child needs cream or ointment, parents can be paged to administer it, if they are available.

2. Toileting Assistance for Preschool Children

- a. If a young child needs assistance and a parent is not available, volunteers/staff may assist them with the stall door open and another adult present, as you explain to the child out loud what you are doing as you offer help.
- b. If young children have an accident or need help wiping, parents should be paged if at all possible. If the parents are not available, assistance may be provided by an adult volunteer or staff member. If possible, wear gloves and always wipe from front to back.
- b. Parents of babies and young children should be advised to provide a change of clothing (including underwear, socks, and shoes). If a child has an accident and doesn't have a change of clothes, parents should be called.

- c. If a child has special needs and requires more help, staff will provide diapering and work with the family to gather information.

3. Bathroom Procedures for Children (Grades K-5)

- a. Supervising adults will ensure the restroom is unoccupied before allowing children to use the facilities.
- b. In a multi-stall bathroom the adult volunteer/staff member should remain in the restroom outside the stalls the entire time children are inside. For older children/youth the volunteer/staff member may stand in the doorway so they at least have auditory supervision of the children.
- c. For one-stall bathrooms, walk the child to the restroom, and wait outside the door to ensure no one else enters. Allow children to enter and use the restroom one at a time.
- d. Volunteers/staff will strive to always take children to the bathroom in groups.
- e. Volunteers/staff will send the children into the bathroom in small groups, with no more children inside than the number of stalls or urinals.
- f. Make sure children wash hands immediately after using the bathroom.
- g. Frequent and irregular safety sweeps in bathrooms/locker areas should take place.

4. Bathroom Procedures for Youth (Grades 6-12)

a. For Youth Ministries-sponsored events held on the St. Stephen campus:

- i. Supervising adults should check the bathrooms for cleanliness and to make sure they are unoccupied prior to the start of the event.
- ii. Supervising adults are expected to check the bathrooms at irregular intervals throughout the event.
- iii. It is not necessary for adult supervisors to accompany youth to the bathroom unless:
 - o The bathrooms are also being used by participants in a non-Youth Ministries sponsored event at the same time as the youth event.
- iv. Supervising adults should check the bathrooms prior to leaving the facility to make sure everyone is out, water is turned off at all sinks, and lights are off. Pick up and dispose of litter left on the floor.

b. For Youth Ministries-sponsored events held at any location other than St. Stephen:

- i. Supervising adults should make sure the bathroom is unoccupied before allowing youth to enter.
- ii. For multi-stall bathrooms, a supervising adult should remain in the bathroom outside of the stalls OR in the bathroom doorway until the last youth leaves. No more youth than the number of stalls and sinks should be allowed inside the bathroom at a time.
- iii. For one-stall bathrooms, a supervising adult should remain outside the bathroom to prevent others from entering. Allow youth to enter the bathroom one at a time.

J. Appropriate Touch Guidelines

Children need love, and the church is a wonderful place to show that love. Adults can appropriately express this through physical touch, such as hugging, a pat on the back, an arm around the shoulder, or holding an infant or toddler.

1. Appropriate touch should be **a response to the child's need** for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based on the adult's emotional need.
2. Volunteer workers or employees **should not force affection** on any child. Physical contact should always be with the child's consent. For example, the approved adult might ask, "May I give you a hug?"
3. Physical touch should generally be **limited to hugs** and contact with the child's hand, shoulder, or upper back.
4. A child's verbal or nonverbal **"no" should always be respected**. If a child pulls away, even with another adult present, respect the child's wishes at all times.
5. When holding toddler or preschool-aged children on your lap, do not hold them up against your chest. If possible, have the child sit toward your knees so their buttocks are not in contact with your torso or sit sideways across your lap away from your torso.
6. Physical **touch should be appropriate for the age** of the child or youth. For example, while it is often appropriate to hold a toddler on your lap, it is inappropriate for a teenager to sit on the lap of an adult. For older youth, opt for a side hug, touching their hand, or other forms of affection that do not involve excessive body contact for extended periods of time.
7. At no time should a child or youth, even if fully clothed, be touched on or near the breasts, genitals, or buttocks.
8. If an approved adult or approved youth worker shows physical affection toward a child or youth, **it must occur with another adult present**. An

“approved adult” is anyone over 18 years of age who has satisfied the requirements of the church’s protection policy.

9. Anyone observing inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by any individual toward a minor should immediately begin the process for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

K. Transportation

1. General Rules

Transporting children and youth is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. This Policy includes both Requirements that must be followed and recommended Guidelines. Whenever feasible the recommended Guidelines should be followed, allowing for the use of discretion and good judgment depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating.

2. Requirements

- a. Drivers must be known to the designated adult leader of the event.
- b. When a child/youth is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child’s/youth’s parent/guardian, or a screened adult or an adult paid staff person who is at least 18 years old, or a professional, licensed transportation company or charter service. If a taxi or ride sharing company is used, the provision in V.B.3 and IV.A.1 must be followed.
- c. At least two children/youth must be in any vehicle driven from church to an offsite church activity.
- d. When a child/youth is transported in a church-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 21 years of age who has undergone a motor vehicle record search and has been found by the appointed clergy, designated supply pastor, or his/her designee to be satisfactory.
- e. Drivers must have a valid driver’s license for the vehicle being operated. For example, if driving a church bus, a commercial license is required. A copy of the driver’s license should be on file at the church.
- f. Drivers must require that seat belts or appropriate child safety seats be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts. Drivers should be advised of a designated route and should not deviate from it except in cases of emergency or road detours.
- g. Drivers are not permitted to use cell phones or mobile devices unless required for communication with other drivers and are not permitted to text message while driving. Hands-free GPS (Global Positioning System) may be used.
- h. Youth drivers are permitted to drive themselves and their sibling(s) from church to an off-site church activity with parent permission.
- i. When an off-campus trip or activity is planned drivers are to be listed on an “approved driver list” maintained in the church office.

- j. Persons who drive church owned vehicles are to be listed on an “approved driver list” maintained in the church office. In order to be listed on the “approved driver list” of drivers, a Motor Vehicle background check must be conducted.
- k. These Requirements apply to each driver of each vehicle used to transport children/youth to an offsite church activity, including when multiple vehicles are traveling to the same location in a caravan.
- l. Drivers should receive training for the church owned vehicle being operated.

3. Recommended Guidelines

- a. Drivers should be accompanied by at least one other adult.
- b. Youth who drive their own vehicles should be reminded regularly of the importance of vehicle safety and comply with 2.B in the Requirements section above.

VI. Safety and Health of Children and Youth

The church’s highest priority is to monitor the safety and well-being of children/youth in our care. The church maintains a system for monitoring the activities of children and youth while they participate in programs and events designed to nurture their spiritual growth. This includes church-sponsored programs and activities both on and off the church campus.

A. Illness

In general, children/youth with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off for any church related activities or classes.

- 1. Fever, diarrhea, vomiting within the last 24 hours.
- 2. Green or yellow runny noses
- 3. Eye or skin infections
- 4. Other symptoms of communicable diseases.

Children/youth who are observed by staff or volunteers to be ill will be separated from other children and a parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up as soon as possible.

Adult staff and volunteers should refrain from attending in person activities and events with the symptoms described above.

B. Medications Policy

Medications (prescription and non-prescription) will not be administered by church staff or volunteers to children/youth. Medications should be administered by a parent at home.*

Children/youth are not permitted to carry or self-administer medication (prescription or non-prescription) while participating in any church sponsored activity. When participating in an off campus activity or trip, parents will place

all medications in a Ziploc bag with specific instructions for administration and give them directly to the adult leader of the activity/trip. An accompanying adult will keep medications locked and will administer to children/youth as instructed.

*Exceptions to the medication policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions. In those situations, a signed permission form must be completed by the parent.

C. Injuries

In the case of an injury, the following steps will be taken.

1. Minor Injury

- a. Child will be treated appropriately.
- b. Parent will be notified by call or text immediately.
- c. An accident report form will be completed and signed by the supervising adult and a parent/guardian.

2. Serious Injury

- a. Child will be treated appropriately to the situation.
- b. Parent will be notified by call or text immediately.
- c. An accident report form will be completed and signed by the supervising adult and a parent/guardian.
- d. A copy will be given to the church's Financial Administrator.

3. Life Threatening Injury

- a. Call 911
- b. Parent will be notified by call or text immediately
- c. Child will be medically treated
- d. An accident report form will be completed and signed by
- e. the supervising adult and a parent/guardian.
- f. A copy will be given to the church's Financial Administrator.

VII. Trip and Retreat Supervision

Trip and retreat settings can call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are Requirements that must be followed and recommended Guidelines. Whenever feasible the recommended Guidelines should also be followed, allowing for the use of discretion and good judgment depending upon the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both Requirements and Guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

A. Requirements

1. There must be at least two unrelated, screened adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
2. There must be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present must be of the same gender as the child/youth.
3. Church personnel and screened adult volunteers are prohibited from sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bag, tent, or hotel room with children or youth, unless the child/youth is an immediate family member of the adult.
4. When children/youth are participating in an event held in one open space, such as the church gym or camp lodge, multiple adults may sleep in the same space, provided that at least two screened adults are present at all times.
5. The person in charge of youth/children for each overnight trip and/or retreat must carry parental permission slips, including permission for emergency medical care. (See Appendix VI).
6. When groups are away from the church campus, there must be access to a phone, cell phone, or mobile device.
7. If the outing involves a swimming pool or deep bodies of water, a certified lifeguard should be present onsite or accompany the group. If a certified lifeguard is not available, at least one adult who is certified in CPR must accompany the group.

B. Guidelines

1. In a hotel-type setting, rooms should be assigned as follows:
2. Separate rooms for adults and children/youth should be assigned with at least two children/youth per room.
3. Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children/youth rooms. Whenever not feasible, the adult room should be adjacent to the child/youth rooms.
4. Two adults of the same gender as those being checked should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night.
5. A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e., do not open to the outside).

VIII. Use of Church Facilities by Outside Groups

All outside groups that use church facilities, with or without a fee, must agree to operate in compliance with this Child/Youth Protection Policy and to ensure that

all of their employees or volunteers have been trained on and agree to comply with this Policy; demonstrate that they enforce screening, safety, and supervision procedures that are consistent with this Policy. Such outside groups must provide documentation agreeing to this requirement. Having the group leader/sponsor provide evidence of Safe Sanctuary approval or its equivalent for any adult volunteer accompanying the group. The Facilities Administrator in conjunction with other appropriate staff members should monitor compliance in connection with any agreement to allow outside groups to use church space or facilities. Documentation should be maintained with other church records.

IX. Online Safety

See also Appendix I: Social Media, Technology and Internet Use Policy

It is acknowledged that the use of computers and other electronic means of communications may be useful tools in supporting child and youth ministries. However, it should also be recognized that these forms of communication also potentially pose a unique risk.

- A. Church computers that are set up to permit guests or program participants to access the internet should be in high-traffic areas and be randomly monitored by staff or screened adults. Controls shall be in place to prevent access to inappropriate content.
- B. Church Personnel (as defined in Section I.B above) are prohibited from using the Internet, whether via church computers or personal devices, to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children/youth.
- C. Electronic communications with children/youth should be limited to information about program dates and activities and should be made only by group emails or on the church's official website or the church's public Facebook page, or other social media platforms, of which the parents are aware and have given consent or can access publicly. One-to-one communication with children/youth is generally prohibited unless a signed Consent Form for Electronic Communications with Children/Youth is on file. If there are extenuating circumstances that require one-to-one communication with a child/youth, the communication should be made via email or text and the parent or legal guardian must be copied. (See Consent Form for Electronic Communications with Children/Youth – Appendix V)
- D. No personally identifiable information of participating children/youth should be posted on line or on any social media site. Refrain from using names and do not post a last name, address, or phone number when posting photos.

X. **Bullying Policy**

A. **What Is Bullying?**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

1. **An Imbalance of Power:** Kids or adults who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
2. **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

There are three types of bullying:

1. **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
 - a. Teasing
 - b. Name-calling
 - c. Inappropriate sexual comments
 - d. Taunting
 - e. Threatening to cause harm
2. **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
 - a. Leaving someone out on purpose
 - b. Telling others not to be friends with someone
 - c. Spreading rumors about someone
 - d. Embarrassing someone in public
3. **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions.

Physical bullying includes:

- a. Hitting/kicking/pinching
- b. Spitting
- c. Tripping/pushing
- d. Taking or breaking someone's things
- e. Making mean or rude hand gestures

B. Bullying Policy Overview

1. Purpose

It is the purpose of St. Stephen United Methodist Church to promote positive relations among its community and especially to oppose bullying, harassment, and intimidation (BHI) in all of its forms by all members of the church community.

2. Scriptural Basis

Jesus taught the Greatest Commandment: first, love God with all of your heart, mind, and strength, and secondly, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. (Matthew 22:37, 39) Further, Jesus has given the Golden Rule as direction: "Treat others just as you want to be treated." (Luke 6:31)

3. Definition of Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation (BHI)

A conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror. It is not about anger, nor about conflict; it is about contempt - a powerful feeling of dislike toward someone considered to be worthless/inferior/undeserving of respect.

BHI always includes these three elements:

- a. **Imbalance of power** - the bully can be older, bigger, stronger, more verbal, higher on the social scale, a different race, the opposite sex, or a large number of kids banded together.
- b. **Intent to do harm** - the bully means to inflict emotional harm and/or physical pain, expects the action to hurt, and takes pleasure in witnessing **the hurt**.
- c. **Threat of further aggression** - both the bully and the bullied know that the bullying can and probably will occur again.

When bullying escalates unabated, a fourth element is added:

- d. **Terror** - systematic violence used to maintain dominance.

C. Our Position on Rights and Responsibilities

Based on our belief that all persons are of sacred worth, we declare that it is the right of all individuals of all ages to be free from victimization. It is the responsibility of those who witness victimization to stop it and/or to speak to a trusted adult/pastor. The leadership of the church will intentionally seek to prevent and deal with BHI through:

1. Setting rules concerning BHI behavior
2. Responding to incidents in a prompt manner
3. Seeing that both the bullied and the bully are dealt with in a responsible and caring manner
4. Overseeing training and education of staff and congregation concerning BHI

D. Summary of Rules Concerning BHI

The church will be a safe sanctuary for all. We prohibit acts of BHI as well as active or passive support of BHI. All staff and volunteers who work with children and youth will be expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior; treat others with civility, kindness, and respect; and refuse to tolerate BHI.

E. Guidelines for Responding to the Bullied and the Bully

The church will have specific written guidelines to respond to complaints of incidents of BHI, as well as dealing with the bully as a child of God.

XI. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

While the words “abuse” and “neglect” are often used interchangeably, each type of maltreatment is distinct. Abuse is the intentional maltreatment of a child and can be physical, sexual, or emotional in nature. Neglect, on the other hand, is the failure to give children the necessary care they need. The emotional scars of both types of maltreatment are often deep and no child deserves to be maltreated.

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, or if you think a child may have died from being mistreated, you must report what you know to the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (Report Abuse (Child Protective Services): 980-31-HELPS. This is the law (NC§ 7B-301). Do not be afraid to report. As long as you are acting in good faith, you cannot be held liable by law. <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services>

While the statute is limited to situations involving abuse by a parent, custodian, caregiver or other persons responsible for a child’s welfare, the moral imperative to protect children extends to other situations where abuse is suspected. Suspected abuse within the context of a church day school or preschool does fall within the description of the North Carolina Statute (NC§ 7B-301) and a report is required.

- A. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the appointed clergy or other designated persons may, if appropriate, inform the accused that abuse has been reported. **NOTE:** Follow the advice of the investigating authorities regarding whether the accused may be notified of the allegations.
- B. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by a volunteer and/or paid staff person of the church, the observer shall report the incident immediately to the appointed clergy or supply pastors for immediate report to the authorities as required by state law. If the appointed clergy or supply pastors are not available, the matter should be reported to the District Superintendent.

If the accused is the appointed clergy or supply pastor or a member of her/his family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the District Superintendent and immediately reported to the proper authorities as required by state or local law. The District Superintendent will take responsibility and act according to established rules of *The Book of Discipline* with respect to claims against a pastor. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.

- C. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and wellbeing of the child or youth until the parent(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.
- D. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the **first** priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
- E. The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.
- F. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the appointed clergy or supply pastors should report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.
- G. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the Church in response to the reported abuse. (See Appendix VII). The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place. It should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.

- H. Church Personnel are not to undertake an investigation of the incident. In all cases of reported or observed abuse, they should be at the service of the official investigating agency and law enforcement.
- I. Any contact with the media should be handled by a predetermined spokesperson selected by the appointed clergy and supply pastors. The church spokesperson should generally convey a spirit of concern for the spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing of all who are affected, and that the matter is being diligently and appropriately handled.

NOTE: A question that sometimes arises is: What about a “confidential communication” with a clergy person?

North Carolina law (FS 90.505) provides that some specific communications may be considered confidential if they occurred in the context of “seeking spiritual counsel or advice” from a clergy person. Thus, a clergy person may be confronted with the dilemma of discovering or suspecting abuse in the setting of a privileged conversation. While the church has historically placed a high value on clergy keeping such confidences, the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 341.5, provides an exception in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect.

In the process of implementing or interpreting this CYPP, err at all times on the side of protecting children/youth. The moral imperative is to do that which will best protect children/youth.

XII. Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Minister to Families and Children to implement this Policy, to ensure that training pursuant to this policy is conducted at time of renewal, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this Policy.

XIII. Application

All of those who participate in the life of this congregation and use its facilities (individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside this congregation) are expected to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.

Adoption

This Child and Youth Protection Policy is adopted by action of the Church Council of the St. Stephen United Methodist Church this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Senior Pastor

Chair, Church Council

APPENDICES

The information contained in the appendices are an important part of the Safe Sanctuary policy. As an adult staff member or volunteer, you are expected to be familiar with the information.

If you are applying electronically for Safe Sanctuary approval, it is not necessary to complete any form included as an appendix. All necessary forms are part of the electronic application process

Safe Sanctuary at St. Stephen UMC

Appendix I: Social Media, Technology and Internet Use

Version 8/12/2019

Under the auspices of the 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 United Methodist Books of Discipline, all United Methodist local churches are charged to create and employ church policies and procedures for the protection of children (birth -11 years), youth 12 -18 years) and vulnerable adults (18+ years old with any mental, physical, situational or age-related condition that renders them vulnerable to the decisions and care of others). These Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures are meant to reduce the risk of abuse to such persons within the community and the Church. Given the increased use of technology and social media in the life of the church and its individual members, churches and conferences have a responsibility to define social media policies that uphold the covenant to create Safe Sanctuary for children, youth and vulnerable adults. To this end, St. Stephen United Methodist Church (SSUMC) affirms the following:

We will utilize technology, the Internet and all social media tools to promote Christian community and the building up of authentic relationships.

- Facebook is a wonderful tool to use in Youth Ministry. It is highly recommended that ministry groups establish their own “page” in order to communicate with group members, as well as their parents/legal guardians.
- Blogs allow adults and youth alike a place to express ideas, thoughts and opinions, and to allow others the opportunity to engage them through response.
- YouTube and other video websites have proved useful for sharing video clips from any number of church-related events, sharing original video produced to promote an upcoming event or idea, or sharing video produced by another individual or group that might be used by your ministry for conversation, worship, or reflection.
- Texting and Tweeting have proven effective means of communication for getting a message out quickly to one individual or to an entire group.

We will protect the privacy and identity of all youth in online writings, postings and discussions.

- Adult employees and volunteers must not post photos or video that identify youth on any online site or printed publication without written consent from a parent or legal guardian.
- All Facebook groups and pages associated with the Youth Ministry area will be designated as “closed” groups, requiring all those who wish to gain access to be approved by the page administrators.
- All church-related Facebook groups and pages must have at least two administrators. If an administrator is no longer associated with the ministry, that individual's administrative status must be revoked.
- Photos of minors may only be published or posted after a photo release has been signed by their parent/guardian. Photos used in all media, such as social media sites, church newsletters, websites, blogs, Facebook, etc., must not include any identifying information of minors such as names.

- Photos may only be posted to the Facebook page by page administrators. Adults (staff, volunteers, parents, etc.) should not identify minors in photographs posted online or in print. Individuals (including minors) are welcome to identify (i.e. “tag”) themselves.
- When checking in on Foursquare, Facebook, or any location tagging social media, only “check in” yourself. Never check in minors. Be sensitive to tagging or revealing other participants’ location without their expressed permission. Rather, create a hashtag to facilitate conversation. (See the Best Practices section of this document for more information on the use of hashtags.)
- In the case of clergy and parishioner online connections, Friend Requests, Follow Requests, Circle Requests, etc. should be initiated by the parishioner, especially if the parishioner is a minor or vulnerable adult.

We will maintain appropriate relational boundaries with minors.

- No adult shall initiate Facebook contact with or “friend” a minor. An adult accepting the “friend” requests of minors is up to the discretion of the adult in charge of the ministry area, in consultation with the pastor. Regardless of the decision that is reached, this practice should be uniformly practiced by all adult staff and volunteers. Any conversations with minors or vulnerable adults shall occur in open channels.
- When emailing, texting, tweeting, or Facebook messaging a minor, adults should copy another adult (ideally a parent or guardian) on the message, or post it in a public venue (i.e. a Facebook wall as opposed to a private message). This will allow adults to maintain the “two adults present” Safe Sanctuary standard when using social media.
- Social media, even though it offers convenient and private channels, is not an appropriate medium for counseling - especially with minors. Begin or transition a pastoral conversation into an approved Safe Sanctuary model (i.e. office with windows, two adult rule abiding settings, etc.).

We shall not engage in the creation, viewing or distribution of pornography.

- Engaging in the above stated behavior is a violation of civil laws and church ethics and can lead to incarceration and the dismissal from leadership duties.

We shall not engage in, encourage or condone cyberbullying.

- Every youth ministry group and adult volunteer training session should include in its teaching and ministry Code of Conduct a session on the types and consequences of cyber-bullying, including how to identify it and how to report it. To learn more about cyberbullying, visit: <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org> or various other websites.

We shall educate youth in the effective ways of using social media and technology to live out their Christian witness in what they write, post, share, and view.

- We all must understand, and teach to youth, that once something is posted on the web, sent via email or sent via text, it is impossible to fully recover or erase it. There should be no expectation of privacy or reasonable expectation that the information stops with the person for whom it was intended.
- A good rule of thumb: If you do not want it posted on the church sign, website, or bulletin, do not text it or post it via social media.

APPENDIX II: Participation Covenant Statement

The congregation of St. Stephen UMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, employees, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Church. The following statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this Church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

No adult who has been convicted for, entered a guilty plea or a plea of nolo contendere/no contest to, or been the subject of deferred prosecution or prayer for judgment continued for, a crime (felony or misdemeanor) involving children under the age of 18 or child abuse or neglect (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer or otherwise be allowed to work with children or youth in any Church-sponsored activity.

Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to participate in some capacity to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our Church's ministers before accepting an assignment.

Your Safe Sanctuary application must be approved before beginning a volunteer or employment assignment. This includes the applicant having satisfactorily completed Safe Sanctuary training; the church having received all requested information, including satisfactory personal references, and a satisfactory background check report.

Adult volunteers and workers with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the Church to keep volunteers informed of Church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

Adult volunteers and employees shall immediately report to their supervisor, the Senior Pastor and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate, unless the concern involves one of such individuals, in which case known or suspected abuse must be reported to the other non-involved Church official and the Church Council Chair.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer or employee in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all Church policies and procedures regarding working in ministries with children and youth? Yes/No
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment with children and youth? Yes/No
3. As a volunteer or employee in this congregation, do you agree to undergo a criminal and other background check prior to serving in a supervisory capacity with children or youth? Yes/No
4. As a volunteer or employee in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the Church related to your assignment? Yes/No
5. As a volunteer or employee in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior as noted above? Yes/No

6. As a volunteer or employee in this congregation, do you agree to discuss with a minister of this congregation your experience, if any, as a survivor of child abuse? Yes/No/Not Applicable (Answering yes or no to this question does not automatically disqualify you from working with children or youth.)
7. Have you ever been convicted for, entered a guilty plea or a plea of nolo contendere/no contest to, or been the subject of deferred prosecution or prayer for judgment continued for, a crime (felony or misdemeanor) involving children under the age of 18 or child abuse or neglect (either sexual abuse, physical abuse or emotional abuse)? Yes/No

I have read this Participation Covenant and the Church's Children and Youth Safety and Abuse Prevention Policy and Operating Procedures, and I agree to observe and abide by such expectations.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Print Full Name

APPENDIX III: Child/Youth Protection Incident Report Form

Reason for report: _____

Date-of-incident: _____ Time: _____

Place of incident: _____

Name of reporter: _____ Title: _____

Name(s) of Child(ren)/Youth: _____ Age(s): _____

Briefly describe what happened:

Were there any witnesses? ___ Yes No ___ If Yes, list.

What action did you take?

Has the incident been resolved?: ___ Yes ___ No Explain:

Have the following people been notified?

Pastor ___ Bishop's Office ___ Parent ___ Police ___ SPRC Chairperson ___

Sheriff ___ District Superintendent ___

Other _____

Signature of reporter: _____ Date: _____

Report submitted to: _____

Appendix IV: Emergency Contact Information

Senior Pastor: _____

Chairperson of SPRC: _____

Director of Children's and Family Ministries: _____

Director of Youth Ministries: _____

District Superintendent: _____

Local Police Department: _____

Local Sheriff's Department: _____

WHERE TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE

Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services 980-31-HELPS
(980-314-3577)

[North Carolina Child Abuse](#) (Division of Health & Human Services) National Child Abuse

Hotline: 800-4-A-CHILD

[North Carolina UMC Conference – Safe Sanctuaries](#)

North Carolina Conference Communication Office: 800-849-4433 Ext. 298

Appendix V: Photo Permission

Photo Permission for Children, Youth, & Adults

**St. Stephen United Methodist Church
6800 Sardis Rd
Charlotte NC 28270**

Child/Youth Permission

Full Name of Child/Youth (please print): _____

I give permission for still or video pictures of my child to be used for promotional purposes.

I do not give permission for still or video pictures of my child to be used for promotional purposes.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian (if child/youth is under 18 years of age)

Printed Full Name of Parent/Legal Guardian

Today's Date

Adult Permission

I give permission for still or video pictures of myself to be used for promotional purposes.

I do not give permission for still or video pictures of myself to be used for promotional purposes.

Signature of Adult (18 years of age or older)

Printed Full Name of Parent/Legal Guardian

Today's Date

**Appendix VI: Consent for Electronic Communications with Children/Youth
St. Stephen United Methodist Church
6800 Sardis Rd
Charlotte NC 28270**

My child, named as "Participant", has my permission to receive communications from St. Stephen UMC's Staff and other designated and Safe Sanctuary approved leaders of specific children's/youth activities or programs. The information included and the communication preferences selected in the participant's St. Stephen CCB (Church Community Builder) profile will dictate how communications can and will be sent. I understand that such electronic communications may be made via telephone, cell phone, text messaging, e-mail, the Church's social media accounts, or by other electronic means.

Please note: The presence of an email address and/or mobile phone number in the St. Stephen CCB profile for a minor Participant will be interpreted as consent by the parent or guardian for electronic communication from church staff and Safe Sanctuary approved volunteers to the Participant in regards to any group activities in which the Participant participates.

I further understand that the SSUMC Children and Youth Ministries will use the Internet as an aid in teaching lessons during activities and/or events involving children and youth. St. Stephen Staff and volunteers will take appropriate care to monitor use of church equipment.

I understand it is my responsibility to update my family's contact information if it changes.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Parent/Guardian Cell Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian E-Mail: _____

Date: _____

Appendix VII: Disqualifying Convictions/Arrests

FS 435.04., which applies only to employment by a licensed child care facility, provides useful guidelines regarding the offenses which should disqualify a paid staff person or volunteer from working with children/youth in other non-licensed settings. The list of disqualifying offenses under FS 435.04 includes the following:

Any offenses listed in s. 943.0435 (1) (a) 1, relating to the registration of the individual as a sexual offender.

1. Section 393.135, relating to sexual misconduct with certain developmentally disabled clients and the reporting of such sexual misconduct.
2. Section 394.4593, relating to sexual misconduct with certain mental health patients and the reporting of such sexual misconduct.
3. Section 775.30, relating to terrorism.
4. Section 782.04, relating to murder.
5. Section 787.01, relating to kidnapping.
6. Any offense under Chapter 800, relating to lewdness and indecent exposure.
7. Section 826.04, relating to incest.
8. Section 827.03, relating to child abuse, aggravated child abuse, or neglect of a child.

Conviction or pleading guilty or *nolo contendere*, to any of the offenses listed above (or to similar offenses under the law of any other jurisdiction) shall disqualify an individual from a position involving working with children/youth. Conviction or pleading guilty or *nolo contendere* to any other felony offense or to criminal conduct involving minors under North Carolina law or any similar statute of another jurisdiction should be seriously considered as a factor that would disqualify an individual from employment or serving as a volunteer in a position involving work with children/youth.

Anyone whose background check indicates a pending arrest for any offense listed above shall not be approved to work with children/youth unless and until the arrest has been resolved in such a way that does not result in a conviction or plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*.