

Camping Ministry
Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Purpose

Our purpose in establishing a policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth. This policy applies to all of our children and youth, from birth up to 18 years of age.

Context

God calls us to make our camps safe places, protecting children from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

The Discipleship Ministry Team of the Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church strongly encourages safe sanctuary policies for its congregations and camps.

We recognize that children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Our Covenant to Protect the Families of Our Camp Community – A Safe Sanctuary

As a Christian community of faith and a Cumberland Presbyterian Camp, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that work to help ensure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our vulnerable visitors, as well as all of the staff and volunteers who work with them.

In working to provide an environment that protects our children and youth from emotional, physical, and sexual exploitation, neglect, and abuse, we will:

- Follow reasonable safety measure in the selection and recruitment of staff and volunteers
- Implement prudent operational procedures in our programs and events
- Educate all staff and volunteers who work with children regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods
- Have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse
- Inform the presbyteries, congregations, and specifically parents of our policies and procedures.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, _____ is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each of them will be "surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal

Procedures Supporting the Safe Sanctuary Policy

The guidelines and procedures discussed herein are those adopted and followed by our camp staff, including volunteers, and which directly or indirectly relate to the issue of our Safe Sanctuary Policy (hereafter "SSP"). By adhering to these guidelines/procedures, _____ Presbytery staff and volunteers support the successful operation of a safe sanctuary. The guidelines/procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse to the children or youth and to protect staff/volunteers from unwarranted accusations.

Providing adequate supervision during all gatherings and activities is essential to insure that all are cared for and that supervision will continue if an emergency arises. The following policies are in place to protect our children, youth, paid staff members, and volunteers.

I. General Guidelines/Procedures/Rules

The following rules/requirements shall apply to all children and youth camping activities. They apply as appropriate to children and youth who are protected by our Safe Sanctuary Policy and, as needed, to the staff and volunteers who work with them.

Opening and Closing Day Procedures: Drop-Off and Pick-Up

On opening day, all counselors and the director are to be present when the campers and parents arrive. During check-in, the parents or guardians are to identify themselves with a valid form of identification and names recorded. Names of other parents or guardians who may be picking up the camper(s) are to be recorded, as well. During the check-in time, the parent or guardian will also give to the staff all medications for the child.

Facility Safety

Exposure reduces the risk of abuse. Doors to rooms where windows do not provide external visibility and children and youth are present should remain open whenever feasible and practical. When open doors are not practical, the risk will be reduced by additional supervision.

Fire escape routes will be published in each cabin/room or common areas joining rooms throughout the campgrounds. SSP reporting procedures will be kept by each telephone on the campgrounds.

Safe Sanctuary Awareness

We will conduct safe sanctuary awareness training for our staff during staff training week. All Staff must sign and have on file in the camp office a Participation Covenant and acknowledgement of having received the safe sanctuary policies and procedures.

Two Adult Rule

Supervision and accountability are important to reduce the risk of abuse and injury. During all activities and events one adult will not be alone with a child or youth, except where specifically authorized within this SSP. For small group activities where one adult supervises one group, two or more groups are to meet in sight of each other. The two-adult rule requires that no matter the size of the group, there will always be at least two adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves to and from activities. All adults must have training in safe sanctuary policies and procedures. Spouses may not act as "two adults" except where specifically authorized within this SSP.

One-on-One Counseling

All counseling sessions must be conducted in designated camp area. Any time an adult (ideally the Pastor of the Week) meets with a child or youth on a one-on-one basis, this type of contact should be held when others are nearby, though not within listening distance. This may take place in the dining hall, a pavilion or in other similar locations throughout the camp at the discretion of the pastor of the week or camp director.

"Four/Five Years Older" Rule

This rule will apply at all events. Persons supervising youth or children will be at least 4 or 5 years older than the oldest youth participant. Youth under the age of 18 may serve as staff/volunteer activity leaders, provided they serve under the supervision of two or more trained and screened adults. Persons under the age of 18 will not have authority over children or youth. Some events may require that the supervising adult be 22 years of age or older, and if so, those requirements will be communicated to all adults prior to the beginning of the event.

Cabin Accommodations

There will be separate sleeping areas for males and females at all camps, except where specifically authorized within this SSP. There are to be two adults to each cabin.

Shared Shower/Bathing Conditions

In the event of open showers, separate shower times for children/youth and for adults shall be designated to prevent youth and adults showering together. Instances may occur where swimsuits may be needed as the primary means of complying with this rule.

Adult/Youth Ratios

Activity directors should work to ensure that the ratio of adults to youth should be at least 2:24 at all gatherings.

Water Activities

When the campers are participating in water activities (i.e., swimming or canoeing), at least two lifeguards must be present at a minimum ratio of 2:24. Counselors swimming or canoeing with campers will act as supervisors during these times, as well. Lifeguards at the lake will have a watercraft available for emergency use at all times.

Bonfires

Minimum adult to camper ratio shall be 2:24 during bonfires or in the presence of fires.

Walking along trails

When counselors and campers are walking or hiking on the trails, the two counselor rule applies.

Small Groups

For children and youth small group experiences, two adults in each group is preferred. When that is not possible, each group must meet within sight of one another so that adequate supervision is maintained. If appropriate, counselors may also combine their groups.

Gender Composition

When a group of children or youth consists of both genders, the accompanying adults shall also be of both genders whenever possible.

Medical Release and Parental Permission Forms

All children and youth shall have a completed medical release form and completed parental/guardian permission forms on file with the camp office prior to participating in camp sponsored events or activities. These may be event or activity specific, or general in scope.

First Aid and CPR

All staff are encouraged to be trained and certified in first response crisis procedures. All volunteers are encouraged to take such training and to obtain their certifications as appropriate. Training opportunities for First Aid Provision and CPR will be made available to staff members. These training opportunities may be provided through third party activities not directly affiliated with the camp

Camp Nurse

A camp nurse will be designated on staff. He or she is responsible for all medications and their distribution to the appropriate campers. All medications must be turned in to the camp nurse. A

record of all medicines dispensed will be kept in the daily medical log, as well as any treatment given to any person visiting the nurse, children, youth, or adult.

For times away from the main camp, the camp nurse will orient a staff member to provide routine health care for participants and to handle emergencies.

Transportation in the Event of an Emergency

If a camper becomes ill or an extreme emergency takes place, the counselor is to notify the director or assistant director who may call for an ambulance to come take the camper to the hospital. If the emergency is not life threatening, the director may deem it appropriate to transport the camper to the hospital using his or her personal vehicle. In this case a second screened adult will accompany. All counselors will have small first-aid kits with them for 'first response' supplies. If they need additional first-aid supplies, they will be able to find them in the camp office. In all cases, the camp director is to be notified.

Evacuation Procedures

In the event of an emergency, all counselors and campers are to be evacuated to the designated area. At the beginning of every week, these procedures will be reviewed with the campers by the counselors. An emergency drill may be used if the director feels that it is necessary for that week; he or she is to use discretion in this area.

II. Participation Covenants

All staff persons, volunteers, and activity/mission participants who can understand the covenant shall sign a participation covenant. In a situation that has continuous care, this covenant can be in the form of clear, posted rules that are explained to the participants at the outset of the program. Additionally, the camp director or designated representative shall keep copies of all covenants on file in the camp office.

III. Training – Supporting Education on SSP and Procedures/Forms

Training on safe sanctuaries is a requirement for all camp staff persons, and all volunteers in charge of children and youth activities. Training of staff will include information about the problem of child abuse (including child sexual abuse), recognition of signs of abuse, familiarity with measures to reduce risk, and familiarization with specific procedures related to the site and contained in this chapter of the Administrative Handbook. The training requirement for volunteers may be met by reviewing this chapter of the Administrative Handbook and participation in an abbreviated session led by the director or assistant director to cover key points for safety. Both staff and volunteers will document their training by signing the attendant certification that the individual has read and understands the material, agrees to comply with the policy, procedures, and rules; and, has signed a Participation Covenant. Training for all counselors will be offered during the staff training week before camping begins.

IV. Employment Candidates/Hiring and Volunteer Screening

Careful screening is one way to reduce the risk of abuse of children and youth. It can be time consuming and expensive, but well worth the effort in peace of mind that the most reliable, committed, and experienced staff and volunteers are in place for every program that involves children and youth.

The following guidelines will be applied when reviewing and selecting staff for camping ministry:

- All applicants will complete the approved _____ Registration Form

- A person selected must have a completed background check and document the results for the personnel files of the camp. This will include criminal background investigation and reference check.
- Staff training, covering all policies and procedures related to children and/or youth, must be provided at least once a year. All staff must attend this training every year.

V. Reporting

Once an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. The first response will be to insure the safety of the child and remove the alleged offender. The person who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported must immediately report the incident to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. He/she shall also report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the related activity, and to the Director. In the event the Director is directly the subject of an allegation, the report should be made to other director, the Board(s) of Christian Education, and the Stated Clerk(s).

Upon receiving such information, the Director or Directors will speak to the alleged victim and his/her parents immediately. The Director or Directors will take appropriate steps to insure that proper reports have been made to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services and will notify the Board(s) of Christian Education or Stated Clerk (s). This provision notwithstanding, any person defined as a "mandatory reporter" under Tennessee State law must comply with reporting requirements set forth in TCA 37-1-401 et seq. (2001)

Persons who are the objects of the report will be required to refrain from all children's/youth activities until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any children's/youth activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

VI. Response to Allegations of Abuse

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's or youth activity, all volunteers or staff involved in that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

A designee of both presbyteries is/are the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media.

If the allegation concerns activities or persons outside any relationship to a camp related event or activity, it is the responsibility of the person in charge of that event or activity to inform the Director (s).

If allegations are made against the Director, the other director, Board(s) of Christian Education, and Stated Clerk(s) shall be contacted immediately and care for the responsibilities assigned to the Director in this policy.

VII. Administration – Procedures for Maintaining the SSP

A review of this policy should be made once a year with necessary changes being made and approved by both presbyteries.

APPENDIX A - DEFINITIONS

“Adult” means a person 18 years of age or older.

“Child” means any person under the age of 18.

“Children’s Activities” means any activity or program in which children are under supervision of persons (staff or volunteers) in charge of these activities.

“Camp” means _____ Presbyterian Camp.

“Staff” or “Staff person” means any person working a camp for Columbia and Murfreesboro Presbytery.

“Persons required to report child abuse” “According to Tennessee law, all persons (including counselors, teachers, doctors, mental health professionals, child care providers, dentists, family members and friends) must report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Failure to report child abuse or neglect is a violation of the law.”

<http://www.tennessee.gov/youth/childsafety/whoshouldreport.htm> (insert child protection laws for your state)

According to the Tennessee Code Annotated 37-1-403 regarding the reporting of brutality, abuse, neglect or child sexual abuse; notification to parents of abuse on school grounds or under school supervision, and confidentiality of records:

(1) Any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect.

(2) Any such person with knowledge of the type of harm described in this subsection (a) shall report it, by telephone or otherwise, to the:

- (a) Judge having juvenile jurisdiction over the child;
- (b) Department, in a manner specified by the department, either by contacting a local representative of the department or by utilizing the department's centralized intake procedure, where applicable;
- (c) Sheriff of the county where the child resides; or
- (d) Chief law enforcement official of the municipality where the child resides.

(3) If any such person knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused, the person shall report such information in accordance with § 37-1-605, relative to the sexual abuse of children, regardless of whether such person knows or believes that the child has sustained any apparent injury as a result of such abuse.

- (a) The report shall include, to the extent known by the reporter, the name, address, and age of the child, the name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, and the facts requiring the report. The report may include any other pertinent information.

“Person in charge of a children’s/youth activity” means the adult camp volunteer or employed staff person responsible for the conduct of this activity, such as but not limited to a counselor, activity coordinator, or music leader.

“We” means the presbytery.

“Child Abuse/Neglect” as defined under Tennessee law is:

Abuse exists when a person under age 18 is suffering from, has sustained, or may be in immediate danger of suffering from or sustaining a wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, neglect, or other actions or inactions of a parent, relative, guardian, or caretaker.

Severe child abuse means:

- The knowing exposure of a child to or the knowing failure to protect a child from abuse or neglect that is likely to cause great bodily harm or death, and the knowing use of force on a child that is likely to cause great bodily harm
- Specific brutality, abuse, or neglect towards a child that in the opinion of qualified experts has caused or will reasonably be expected to produce severe psychosis, severe neurotic disorder, severe depression, severe developmental delay or retardation, or severe impairment of the child's ability to function adequately in the child's environment, and the knowing failure to protect a child from such conduct
- The knowing failure to protect the child from the commission of any such act towards the child
- Knowingly allowing a child to be present within a structure where the act of creating methamphetamine is occurring

Neglect/Neglected child means a child:

- Who is under unlawful or improper care, supervision, custody, or restraint by any person, corporation, agency, association, institution, society, or other organization, or who is unlawfully kept out of school
- Whose parent, guardian, or custodian neglects or refuses to provide necessary medical, surgical, institutional, or hospital care for the child
- Who, because of lack of proper supervision, is found in any public place the existence of which is in violation of the law
- Who is in such condition of want or suffering or is under such improper guardianship or control as to injure or endanger the morals or health of the child or others.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse means the commission of any act involving the unlawful sexual abuse, molestation, fondling, or carnal knowledge of a child under age 13 that on or after November 1, 1989, constituted the criminal offense of:

- Aggravated rape, sexual battery, or sexual exploitation of a minor
- Criminal attempt for any of the offenses listed above
- Especially aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor
- Incest
- Rape, sexual battery, or sexual exploitation of a minor child sexual abuse also means one or more of the following acts:
 - Any penetration, however slight, of the vagina or anal opening of one person by the penis of another person, whether or not there is the emission of semen

- Any contact between the genitals or anal opening of one person and the mouth or tongue of another person
- Any intrusion by one person into the genitals or anal opening of another person, including the use of any object for this purpose
- The intentional touching of the genitals or intimate parts, including the breasts, genital area, groin, inner thighs, and buttocks, or the clothing covering them, of either the child or the perpetrator
- The intentional exposure of the perpetrator's genitals in the presence of a child, or any other sexual act intentionally perpetrated in the presence of a child, if such exposure or sexual act is for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification, aggression, degradation, or other similar purpose
- The sexual exploitation of a child, which includes allowing, encouraging, or forcing a child to solicit for or engage in prostitution or engage in sexual exploitation of a minor

Emotional abuse means

Mental injury means an injury to the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by a discernible and substantial impairment in the child's ability to function within the child's normal range of performance and behavior, with due regard to the child's culture.

Note: For the purposes of this Policy, this definition includes vulnerable adults.

APPENDIX B: SUPPORTING FORMS AND CHECKLISTS

The forms in this section are those commonly used and which are related directly or indirectly with the SSP as implemented by _____ Presbyterial Camp.

Where applicable, they are required to be used. They are available in the camp office and may be requested at any time.

We recommend the following forms:

- Participation Covenant*
- Accident Report Form*
- Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check*
- Staff Application or Registration/Form for Reference Check*
- Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse*

Other emergency guidelines of the campground or facility must be used in the event of an emergency.