

Park Hill UMC, Denver CO

CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Requirements and Guidelines



Child and Youth Protection Policy

**Park Hill United Methodist Church
Denver, CO**

Introduction

A central tenet of the Christian faith is the inherent value and worth of all children, youth, and adults. Children, youth and vulnerable adults are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The Park Hill 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 is a recognition that our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to those entrusted to our care and supervision. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church states that “. . . *children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.*” ¶162C

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 and to protect children and other vulnerable persons from abuse.

These policies and procedures at Park Hill UMC are essential, not only for the protection and safety of our children and youth, but also for our volunteers and staff working with youth.

“The Gospel calls us to be engaged in ministry with children and youth. We should not allow risks of exploitation or abuse to undermine or stop our ministry. Rather, we must:

- Acknowledge the risks and develop a practical plan to address these issues.
- Take steps to prevent harm to our children.
- Continue to answer the Gospel’s imperative to be in ministry with children, thus making a difference in their lives.” *(Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth).*

I. Definitions

A. “Infant” and “Toddler”

Infant and Toddler are considered sub-definitions of “Child” for the purposes of these policies, procedures, and guidelines. The designation of infant is anyone aged from birth to two years of age. A toddler is anyone between the age of 2 and 6 years of age, or matriculation into Kindergarten—whichever comes first.

B. “Child,” “Youth,” and “Adult”

For the purposes of this policy, a “child” is anyone age of 11 or under. A “youth” is anyone not a “child” and under the age of 18. An adult is anyone 18 years of age or older *and has finished high school.*

C. “Paid Staff Person,” “Adult Volunteer,” and “Screened Adult”

For the purposes of this policy, a “Paid Staff Person” is someone paid by the church, overseen by Staff Parish or a staff supervisor and who has had a background check. An “Adult Volunteer” is someone who has not been screened. A Screened Adult has gone through the screening process and has signed on to the Child/Youth Protection Policy of Park Hill UMC, hereinafter referred to as “PHUMC.” They can work in a room with a Screened Adult or paid staff person. A Screened Adult is a volunteer who has gone through the screening process. These persons may or may not be members, but they must be regular attendees and active in church activities for at least six months or has been vetted and approved by the Lead Pastor.

D. Youth Helpers

Youth below the age of 18 years assisting with child or youth activities. They can assist with activities but should not be considered an Adult Volunteer and may not be left alone with children. There shall at all times be an age difference of 5 years between the oldest volunteer and the oldest youth or child being supervised in any church activity. No youth under the age of 18 may be allowed to supervise or chaperone other youth at Park Hill UMC church activities. All Youth Helpers must be accompanied by a Screened Adult or Paid Staff Person if they are assisting with child activities.

E. “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 attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

F. Grooming

Child grooming refers to an act of deliberately establishing an emotional connection with a child to prepare the child for child abuse. Child grooming is undertaken usually to carry out sexual abuse and other child exploitation like trafficking of children, child prostitution or the production of child pornography. Grooming behaviors with the intent of abusing children frequently occurs online. In the U.S., child grooming is considered a federal offense pursuant to 18 USCS § 2422. The provision of the section defines grooming behaviors:

“(a) Whoever knowingly persuades, induces, entices, or coerces any individual to travel in interstate or foreign commerce, or in any Territory or Possession of the United States, to engage in prostitution, or in any sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense, or attempts to do so, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 20 years, or both.

(b) Whoever, using the mail or any facility or means of interstate or foreign commerce, or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States knowingly persuades, induces, entices, or coerces any individual who has not attained the age of 18 years, to engage in prostitution or any sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense, or attempts to do so, shall be fined under this title and imprisoned not less than 10 years or for life”.

II. 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-apointive church staff and adult volunteers. (¶ 258.12 2008 *Book of Discipline*)

- A. Adult Volunteers who regularly work with the Church’s children and youth and each church Paid Staff Person will be screened. Those who work regularly with children/youth will be trained on child protection issues prior to beginning their regular involvement with children and youth. The procedures for screening are as follows: Each person being considered to work regularly with children and/or youth, whether as a volunteer or paid staff person, shall fill out an application form (See Appendix I). This screening is good for 2 years after which time a re-screening will be necessary.
- B. Before placing the applicant in a position of responsibility with children or youth, a designated paid staff member or other person charged with specific responsibility will interview the applicant reviewing with them the written application.
- C. The person conducting this interview will contact the references provided on the application form and any

additional persons as the circumstances dictate. A written record of such contacts will be retained with the application form. (See Appendix III).

- D. Each person applying to work with children and/or youth shall authorize the church to conduct a criminal background check.
- E. At a minimum, the Church shall obtain a criminal background check from both the State and Federal Bureaus of Investigation and the Child Abuse Registry.
- F. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each Paid Staff Person and Adult Volunteer will sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Child and Youth Protection Policy. (See Appendix V – Participation Covenant)
- G. After the interview and background check have been accomplished, the decision will be made to accept or reject the applicant as a Paid Staff Person or Screened Adult who will work with youth and/or children.
- H. Where it has been determined that an applicant should **not** work with children or youth, those persons involved with the decision should handle it in a sensitive manner. The applicant should be informed in person by the Church. The specific reasons for the decision should be given, whenever possible.
- I. It is important that all records be kept in a locked cabinet in a designated location. There should be a system in place that gives those who need these records easy access and a safe place to be stored when they are not needed.
- J. Although not required to personally accomplish the above tasks, the Lead Pastor shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with sub-paragraphs (A) through (H) above.

III. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work with Children and Youth

The Pastor and Staff Parish Relations Committee shall ensure that regularly scheduled (i.e., at least annually) training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training shall be required of all Paid Staff Persons, Screened Adults and Adult Volunteers who work consistently with children and/or youth.

The training should include:

- A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- B. The definition and recognition of “grooming” behaviors.
- 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.

IV. Supervision of Children and Youth

A. General Rules

1. All activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least one Screened Adult or Paid Staff Person.
2. When reasonably feasible, each room set aside for children/youth should have a door with a window.
3. The “Two Person Rule” is defined as having at least two people in any classroom or setting, one of which must be a Screened Adult or Paid Staff Person.

B. Supervision of Classroom Activities

1. Infant/Toddler

At least one Screened Adult or Paid Staff Person will be present for all classroom activities involving infants, toddlers, and children in grades K-2. When feasible, there should be two Screened Adults or Paid Staff Persons present, and where the two adults are family members, it is preferable that a third be present. In addition, a designated person should periodically check each classroom. Two persons in the classroom is the expectation, at least one of them must be a Screened Adult or Paid Staff Person.

2. Grades 3-5

At least one Screened Adult or Paid Staff Person will be present for all classroom activities. Two Screened Adults or Paid Staff Persons are preferred. In addition, a designated person should periodically check each classroom. 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. Where two adults are not available to supervise, the classroom doors are to remain open.

3. Grades 6-12

At least one Screened Adult will be present for all classroom activities. Two Screened Adults or Paid Staff Persons would be ideal. A designated person should periodically check all classrooms.

C. Open Door Policy

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

D. Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

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 second grade should sign their child in and out of Sunday School and other children's activities. Picking-up children by non-authorized adults is forbidden.

E. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

At least two Screened Adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and/or youth. Any meetings held in an individual's home will be supervised by at least two adults who are not members of the same family. Meetings held in an individual's home must be pre-approved by the child's/youth's parent or guardian.

F. Pastoral Care of Youth and Children.

In instances of pastoral care with youth or children, where circumstances dictate that care would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate church paid staff person may meet individually with a youth with the knowledge of at least one other paid staff member. At any pastoral care 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 pastoral care occurs, the session should be moved to in a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

NOTE 1: Pastoral care sessions should be limited to no more than three sessions. Referral to a licensed professional counselor should be considered.

G. Time Following Group Events

Following child/youth group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's transportation arrive after all other participants have departed. In those circumstances, a child/youth may unavoidably be supervised by one screened adult or paid staff member. Under these circumstances, the general rule requiring the presence of two Screened Adults or Paid Staff Persons is suspended and the Screened Adult or Paid Staff Person is responsible for exercising his/her/their best judgment for the participant's well-being

V. Transportation - See approved transportation policy

VI. Trip and Retreat Supervision

Trip and Retreat settings can call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are Requirements and Guidelines of this Policy. The Requirements shall always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., some or all of the Guidelines should be implemented. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both Requirements and Guidelines.

A. Requirements

1. There will be at least two Screened Adults or Paid Staff Persons 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 will be at least one Screened Adult or Paid Staff Persons for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two Screened Adults or Paid Staff Persons present shall be of the same gender as the child/youth.
3. The person in charge of youth/children for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry parental permission slips including permission for emergency medical care. (See Appendix VI)

B. Guidelines

In a hotel type setting, rooms should be assigned as follows:

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

VII. On-line Safety code of conduct to be written soon

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. The internet is a place where children and youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual predation. Individuals shall sign an online code of conduct in order to attend trips away from the church or be a Screened Adult or Paid Staff Persons who works with children/youth.

VIII. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

A mandatory reporter is defined as a professional who is obligated by law to report known or suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect. Mandatory reporters are part of the safety net that protects children and youth and have the ability to provide lifesaving help to child victims in our community. Any person specified in C.R.S. §19-3-304(2) is by law a mandatory reporter in Colorado. If a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observed the child

being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, the mandatory reporter shall immediately upon receiving such information report or cause a report to be made of such fact to the county department, the local law enforcement agency, or through the child abuse reporting hotline system.

While the Colorado statute quoted above is limited to mandatory reporters, the moral imperative to protect children extends to all people working with minors at PHUMC.

- 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 lead pastor or other designated persons should inform the accused that abuse has been reported.
- B. If abuse is observed by, disclosed by or to, or suspected by a Screened Adult and/or Paid Staff Member of the church, the observer shall report the incident immediately to the lead pastor. If the lead pastor or any other appointed clergy is not available, the matter should be reported to the Metro Area District Superintendent of the Mountain Sky Annual Conference, hereinafter referred to as "District Superintendent". If the accused is an appointed clergy person of Park Hill UMC, 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 current *United Methodist Book of Discipline* (hereinafter referred to as "Discipline") with respect to claims against a clergyperson. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident should be reported to the Bishop of the Mountain Sky Annual Conference (hereinafter referred to as "Bishop").
- C. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well being 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 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 lead pastor shall 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. The church shall designate a spokesperson who will relate any and all communication from the church to any entity outside of the congregation. Any inquiry made to the church about the reported abuse shall be referred to the designated spokesperson.

VIII. Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Staff Parish Relations Committee to implement this Policy, to design and conduct future training, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this Policy.

Adoption

This Child and Youth Protection Policy is adopted by action of the Staff Parish Relations Committee of the Park Hill United Methodist Church this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Lead Pastor

Chair, Staff Parish Relations Committee

APPENDIX I CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION WORKER APPLICATION

Full Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Previous Experience with Children/youth: _____

Can You Make a One-Year Commitment? Yes or No

Do You Have Your Own Transportation? Yes or No

Do You Have a Valid Driver's License? Yes or No; If Yes Please Provide Your License Number:

Initial here that we have your permission to check and obtain a report of your driving record and to share that information with those persons who will act on this Application?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Initials _____ Date initialed: _____

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or plead guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, or other crimes of violence, theft or serious motor vehicle violations)? Yes or No

If "Yes" explain:

Have you ever had to deal with a child abuse situation in any way, including being abused, being accused of abuse, knowing someone who was abused, etc.? Yes or No

If Yes, please explain: _____

If Yes, what was your role: _____

References: Please list two personal references (i.e., people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone number for each.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Do we have your permission to contact these references as well as anyone else in order to obtain information about you for the purpose of considering you for a position of one who would work with children and / or youth?

_____ Yes No _____

Do we have your permission to share this information with those persons who will participate in acting on this Application? _____ Yes No _____

Date: _____

Signature of Applicant

APPENDIX III

REFERENCE CHECK

Applicant name: _____

Reference name: _____

What is your relationship to the applicant? _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

How well do you know the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children/youth?

How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities? _____

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults? _____

How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth?

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children or youth? If so, please describe. _____

Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been charged with or convicted of a crime? If so, please describe. _____

Please list the names of other people you feel it would be beneficial for us to contact before making a decision on whether or not the Applicant should work with children or youth and please indicate a means of contacting them.

Please list any other comments you would like to make:

Reference inquiry completed by: _____
Signature Date

Thank you very much for your response!
You may return this form to:

APPENDIX IV

AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

I, _____, HEREBY AUTHORIZE the _____ United Methodist Church to request any local, state or federal law enforcement department or agency to release information regarding any record of any investigations, charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed, against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by local, state and federal law. I release any and all law enforcement departments, agencies, and their employees from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request. I also give my permission for this information to be shared with those persons who will participate in making decisions with respect to my application.

You are authorized to rely upon a photocopy or fax copy of this document.

Signature of Applicant Date

Print applicant's full name: _____

Print all other names that have been used by applicant (if any):

Date of birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

Social Security number : _____

Driver's license number: _____ State in which license was issued: _____

License expiration date: _____

Request sent to: _____
Name: _____

Address: _____
Phone: _____

APPENDIX V

PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of PHUMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statement 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 of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.

All adults involved with children or youth of our church must have been active participants of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment unless otherwise vetted and approved by the Lead Pastor.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall observe the Child Protection Policy at all times.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and laws regarding child abuse.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. Do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth?
_____ Yes No _____

I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Applicant

Date

APPENDIX VI

Park Hill United Methodist Church, Denver, CO

PARENTAL CONSENT AND MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION

Name of child/youth: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____
Street/Apt Number City Zip code

Daytime Phone Number: _____ Evening Phone Number: _____

As the parent (or legal guardian) of: _____
Child/Youth's Name

I understand that my child/youth will be participating in a number of activities for the calendar year _____, which carry with them a certain degree of risk. Some of the activities are swimming, boating, hiking, camping, field trips, sports and other activities which the church may offer. I consent for my child to participate in these activities.

Please indicate any restrictions on your child's/youth/s activities:

_____ I represent that my child/youth is physically fit and has the necessary skills to safely participate in these activities.

_____ I represent that my child/youth has restrictions on the following particular activities:

_____ I also understand and give consent for my child to travel to and from these events in transportation provided by volunteer drivers.

MEDICAL TREATMENT AUTHORIZATION

It is my understanding that the Church will attempt to notify me in care of a medical emergency involving my child/youth. If the church cannot reach me, then I authorize the church to hire a doctor or health-care professional, and I give my permission to the doctor or other health-care professional, to provide the medical services he or she may deem necessary. I will pay for any medical expenses so incurred.

I will notify the church if I feel there are any health considerations that would prevent my child/youth's participation in any of the activities listed above.

Allergies or other health considerations:

Insurance Company: _____ Policy/Group # _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____

APPENDIX VII

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: _____ Date: _____

Appendix VIII

Emergency Contact Information

Appointed clergy and supply pastors: _____

Chairperson of SPRC: _____

Director of Christian Education: _____

Director of Youth Ministries: _____

District Superintendent: _____

Town Police Department: _____

Town Sheriff's Department: _____

County Child Abuse Reporting: _____

Florida Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-960-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)