

St. Paul's United Methodist Church Child Protection Training

Policy adopted and revised by St. Paul's United Methodist Church Administrative Council states that all adults and youth, employed and volunteer, who work with minors within any program of St. Paul's United Methodist Church must receive training on the Child Protection Guidelines of the church, including reporting and response procedures.

Overview of child protection: The church must be a safe place for children! Too often in our society, we hear stories of children who have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused by persons of authority who have been assumed to be trustworthy, but who are not. Since the church tends to carry with it a high degree of trust and integrity amongst the general public, we must do all we can to insure that persons in the church entrusted with the care of children are screened, supervised, trained and instructed in procedures of reporting and responding to allegations of abuse.

Screening: Persons who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of children or those who have a history of inappropriate contact with children will not be employed and will not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors.

Supervision: Employees and volunteers who work with children and youth will observe the “two-person rule” or the “open door policy” at all times. The “two-person rule” requires that employees, volunteers and supervisors will make every effort to avoid situations where an employee or volunteer worker is alone with children or youth without a partner. The “open door policy” requires the door to be open at all times. **The “two-person rule” will be mandatory for all employees and volunteers with nursery and kindergarten age children.**

Reporting: Indiana law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities. In the case of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, reporting will be done first to the pastor and then to the chairperson of the Board of Trustees.. The pastor or chairperson of the Board of Trustees will then contact the appropriate Rush County authorities.

Physical signs of abuse may include lacerations, bruises or broken bones, or in the case of sexual abuse, irritation, pain or injury to the genital area, difficulty with urination, discomfort when sitting or torn or bloody underclothing.

Behavioral signs of abuse may include nightmares, anxiety when approaching the church building or area, nervous or hostile behavior toward adults, sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior, and withdrawal from church activities and friends.

Response: The official spokesperson for St. Paul's United Methodist Church will be the pastor, or in the Pastor's absence, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees. No other person is to release any information regarding any alleged child abuse without the approval of the official spokesperson. The care and safety of the victim will be our first priority. We will not confront the accused person or persons without the approval of the child protection services or law enforcement officials. We will treat the accused person or persons with respect. If they are employed by the church, they will immediately be relieved of their church duties with pay until the allegations are cleared or until charges are filed. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of abuse will be documented by the pastor, or in the pastor's absence, by the chairperson of the Board of Trustees.