



## **Garden Street United Methodist Church**

### ***Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines --- Revised 9/18/14***

#### **SCOPE**

These guidelines and provisions shall apply to all paid and unpaid staff and volunteers, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with youth/children who participate in any Garden Street UMC activity or event. Safe behavior described in this document is not dependent on the medium whether online, in person, or in social media, etc.

#### **Rule of Three**

The Rule of Three is a practical guideline that means that three individuals shall be included together in all contexts to ensure the safety of all involved. For example one adult shall never be alone with one child, two youth should never be alone together, rather, three people should be involved in each situation. In person we use a “rule of 3” as a way to keep everyone safe. This can be extended to online behavior as well. A third person should be included in the conversation and copied or be a part of the dialogue whether using e-mail, texting, or on various social media.

#### **Affirmation**

Garden Street United Methodist Church sees all people as individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All people, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, race, ability, marital status, or sexual orientation are entitled to be protected against intimidation or abuse.

We respect the rights of all participants to self-identify their place in gender alignment and roles. Under certain circumstances, reasonable efforts to create appropriate accommodations should be made for the safety and comfort of all participants.

#### **Definition of Children’s Age**

For the purposes of this document, young children refer to those preschool and under, children are those in kindergarten through grade 5, junior high are grades 6 through 8, and senior high are grades 9 through 12. During the summer, the grade level of the child is defined as the grade that they will be entering in the fall.

#### **Guidelines for Screening Paid and Volunteer Staff:**

1. All volunteers and paid staff shall provide a National Background Check consent form
2. Prior to the beginning of each event/meeting, the relevant staff person shall:
  - a. Run the national background check form or
  - b. Check with Conference resources for prior reviews.
3. Ensure that the adult fits the appropriate age requirements.
4. Ensure that at least the minimum standards of supervision are followed.
5. Approval for adults to serve as paid or volunteer staff is at the sole discretion of the Director of Family Ministries and the Pastor. A criminal conviction for a sexual offense disqualifies an applicant from working with youth/children. Other automatic disqualifiers usually are convictions for incest, rape, assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, domestic violence to the other guardian and physical abuse.

**First Aid & Health**

There shall be a first aid kit on each floor of the church building and in the church nursery.

Every Garden Street UMC event hosting children shall have at least one person certified in first aid and CPR who can:

- administer minor first aid
- dispense medicine with parent's permission
- determine whether additional medical attention is necessary

**Immediate Response to Incidents Involving Physical Accidents:**

- Witnesses to the accident shall share this information with the event's leader or staff member.
- The First aid staff and/or the event coordinator is responsible for:
  - Carefully documenting the incident.
  - Notifying guardians of those involved if needed
  - Forwarding the Report Form to the Pastor and/or appropriate Conference staff person and the insurance liaison in the Treasure's office.

**Driving Regulations**

Drivers during an event or on event business shall:

- a. Be 18 or older and if there are passengers involved shall be at least 23.
- b. Possess a valid driver's license and appropriate insurance.
- c. Drive a legally licensed and insured vehicle.

**Rules of general supervision for adults working with youth/children:**

1. Adults engaged in GSUMC events or activities with youth/children present should never engage in sexually suggestive behavior or inappropriate touching.
2. Any sexual or sexually suggestive or aggressive behavior by an adult toward any fellow worker or event participant at a GSUMC event where an imbalance of power exists between the acting adult and the other person constitutes an abuse of power. Consent is not a defense to an abuse of power.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance, physical or verbal demand, or sexually suggestive behavior which is perceived as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Prohibited behavior includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual or coercive overtones, including any written, verbal, physical, or visual contact.

3. The following guidelines for touching are to be carefully followed by anyone working with youth/children:
  - a. Touching should always be initiated by the youth/child. The adult should respond to the child's need for comfort and encouragement and not base touching on their own emotional needs. Appropriate touching by an adult is limited to holding hands as part of a group activity; touching only the head or shoulders, and/or a side-on hug of the shoulders.

- b. Touching between an adult and a youth/child shall only occur in the presence of other adults.
  - c. A youth's or child's preference not to be touched should be respected by adults and others. This includes youth to youth and child to child.
- 4. Anytime an adult thinks that their own or another adult's behavior towards a youth/child, either touching or verbal, may have been perceived as inappropriate, that adult shall report the behavior to Pastor.
- 5. Rule of Three: participants will remain in groups of three or more persons whenever possible. This is extended to online behavior as well. A third person should be included in the conversation and copied or be a part of the dialogue.
- 6. All adults shall avoid being alone, one-on-one, with youth/children. Whenever possible, interaction with youth/children shall be conducted within the sight/supervision of at least one other adult. In cases where it is impossible to directly avoid one-on-one interactions, the following guidelines shall be observed:
  - a. If an adult or leader is alone with youth/children, two or more youth/children shall be present with the adult or leader.
  - b. If interactions are being conducted in a classroom and there is only one adult available, there shall be a roamer on premises and the classroom door shall remain open.
  - c. When private consultation is needed between a youth/child and an adult, another adult shall be informed of the activity and of the location in which the activity is taking place. The monitoring adult shall strive to ensure that the consultation takes place in a public space within sight of others but not necessarily within hearing range.
- 7. Youth/children shall be supervised at all times by at least one adult who is at least four years older than the oldest youth/child who is attending the event as a participant.
- 8. When only two adults are required for supervision the second adult shall not be related to the first adult in any way.
- 9. **Ratios:** The following ratios will be in place for age-level Conference events
  - a. Younger Children (preschool & under) 1 adult to four children
  - b. Children (Kindergarten --- Grade 5) 1 adult to six children
  - c. Jr. High (Grade 6 --- Grade 8) 1 adult to six youth
  - d. Sr. High (Grade 9 --- Grade 12) 1 adult to eight youth
- 10. There will be absolutely no drinking of alcohol, use of marijuana or use of illegal drugs at or during GSUMC events. Any drinking of alcohol, marijuana use, or use of an unprescribed controlled substance will lead to immediate suspension and removal from the event.
- 11. Possession of firearms is forbidden.
- 12. All adults working with youth/children shall abide by all laws and regulations applicable to the location of the event.

### **Responding to Allegations of Abuse:**

- 1. All reports of abuse shall be treated with utmost seriousness and confidentiality.
- 2. The highest priority shall be placed on securing the safety of the victim.

3. In no case shall the accused be confronted until the safety of the victim is secured.
4. The person who receives the report of abuse shall immediately share this information with the Pastor or Director of Family Ministries who shall then:
  - a. Carefully document all aspects of the incident.
  - b. Forward the report immediately to the Pastor and/or the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping.
5. The person who first hears the allegation of abuse, in partnership with the Pastor, is responsible for reporting to the Child Protective Services or to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
6. The Pastor or Director of Family Ministries will notify the guardians when and if it is clear that it is safe to do so.
7. Any volunteer or hired staff person accused of abuse shall be immediately relieved of duties related to this or any GSUMC sponsored event and shall be isolated from further contact with participants, guests and others who may be negatively impacted by the individual's presence until the review process is completed. The accused may not return to duties until staff has completed a review. This applies whether or not the alleged act of abuse occurred during a GSUMC sponsored event.

### **Responding to Illegal Behavior**

Any volunteer or hired staff person accused of felonious activity shall be immediately relieved of duties related to this or any other GSUMC sponsored event and shall be isolated from further contact with participants, guests and others who may be negatively impacted by their presence until a review process is completed. If the felonious activity was not committed during a GSUMC sponsored event, then pastor shall have discretion as to whether immediate or remedial action is required. The accused may not return to duties until the pastor has completed a review.

### **Responding to Incidents Involving Physical Accidents**

The Pastor or Director of Family Ministries is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of the incident.

The Pastor shall make contact as needed with the church or Conference's insurance company, and the District Superintendent. They will determine whether an investigation or additional follow-up is necessary.