

**First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**Safe Sanctuary Policy**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:** First Congregational Church United Church of Christ aspires to be a God centered community. Here, all can seek a closer relationship with God in a trusting, nurturing place. As part of this mission, one of our goals is to provide a safe environment for the children and youth who are entrusted to our care as they participate in our programs and use our facilities. We want our congregation to be a haven, free of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or harassment. To help reach these goals, we have adopted the following policies, procedures, and educational programs to reduce the possibility of child sexual or physical abuse, or any type of sexual misconduct or harassment from occurring in our congregation. The educational aspect will make us aware of potential problems and the implementation of prudent policies will help safeguard our children, youth, and members. These policies express our keen interest in protecting our children and youth, while maintaining a trusting atmosphere for the entire congregation, adults and children alike.

**SECTION ONE: RECRUITING CONGREGATION WORKERS:** Our congregation welcomes staff and volunteers active in our congregation to become involved with the Educational and Youth Programs at various levels of commitment. The Senior Minister or Director of Family Ministries shall be responsible for screening applicants for such volunteer positions. Screening for staff positions will be completed by the Senior Minister. There are two levels of screening: primary and secondary. All paid staff, teachers, and volunteers are required to undergo a screening procedure.

1. **PRIMARY SCREENING PROCEDURE:** All current and future paid staff, and volunteers who have frequent contact with children and youth will undergo primary screening. This screening will include: review of this policy, completion of application and Criminal Records Background Check. The Criminal Records Background Check will be updated at least every five years.

The Senior Minister or Director of Family Ministries will review the submitted forms and conduct a personal interview if deemed necessary. The Senior Minister will arrange for a Criminal Records Background Check and Driving Record Check, when applicable. Once all the information is compiled, the Senior Minister, in consultation with the Director of Family Ministries or Personnel Committee will confirm the applicant's suitability to serve.

2. **SECONDARY SCREENING PROCEDURE:** Applicants who will have limited contact with children or youth over the course of a year, such as the occasional nursery assistant or youth group driver will review a copy of this policy and acknowledge in writing of such a review. Authorization for a Criminal Records Background Check and Driving Record Check will be given to the Senior Minister or Director of Family Ministries if requested.

Any person known to have committed previous acts of sexual abuse with children or youth shall be strictly prohibited from serving our children and youth.

All persons will have read and agreed to abide by all Policies and Procedures herein. Signature upon the appropriate primary application or secondary acknowledgement form denotes a willingness to remain in compliance with this policy.

**SECTION TWO: EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** The Senior Minister and the Director of Family Ministries will be responsible for the implementation of procedures designed to educate volunteers, staff and congregation members regarding these policies and procedures. As part of the orientation of new employees of the church, each employee will review these policies, procedures and code of behavior. The Senior Minister and Director of Family Ministries will insure that the Board of Christian Education defines and implements procedures designed to further the intent of these policies, and educate volunteers and staff on these procedures through regular training programs. The Building and Grounds Committee will design and maintain procedures related to building uses which uphold the intent of this policy. Annual training programs will teach staff and volunteers how and when to report a possible sexual, physical or emotional abuse incident and how to discuss questionable behavior with the Senior Minister, Director of Family Ministries, or Personnel Committee. A Code of Behavior, Response Plan, Volunteer Application, and Acknowledgement Form are included in this Policy and are subject to annual review.

**SECTION THREE: MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS:** Records of all actions required by this policy and any material pertinent to it, including reports, workers' surveys, and application and acknowledgment forms, shall be kept for a legally appropriate time in a secure and confidential place, the location and security measures to be determined by the Senior Minister and the Personnel Committee.

**SECTION FOUR: ADVOCACY PANEL:** The Personnel Committee of our church shall function as an Advocacy Panel, established for two purposes. In the event that a volunteer, congregation member or staff member is uncomfortable reporting an allegation of sexual, physical or emotional abuse to the Senior Minister or Director of Family Ministries, that person may take the allegation or concern to the Personnel Committee. The Advocacy Panel will also serve to support staff members charged with confirming the suitability of volunteers and carrying out the Response Plan. All members of The Advocacy Panel shall maintain a strict code of confidentiality.

**SECTION FIVE: RESPONSE PLAN:**

- If a report of abuse is made, the Senior Minister and the Director of Family Ministries will collaboratively determine if it needs to be reported to the authorities.
- If necessary to report to the authorities, the Senior Minister or the Director of Family Ministries will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency and/or Social Services and the church's insurance company.
- The safety of the child or youth will be paramount.
- Confidentiality of all involved will be respected.
- The original reporter of the abuse will receive appropriate feedback as needed.
- The Senior Minister and the Director of Family Ministries will consult with the Personnel Committee about how to proceed with any public information or communication with the congregation if deemed necessary.
- Preliminary counsel will be provided to those involved and as appropriate, referrals for counseling will be made.
- If the report involves the Senior Minister or Director of Family Ministries, the Personnel Committee will also contact the Northwest Association Minister and the Conference Minister.

## A CODE OF BEHAVIOR

This code will be part of an initial and on-going training program.  
This Code of Behavior will be attached as an Appendix to the policies and posted.

Volunteers who have taken an active part in the life of the congregation may be invited to become involved with the Educational and Youth Programs at various levels of commitment. During this time, those planning to be directly involved in the life of the congregation shall receive training and accept the following code of behavior. New employees, having satisfied the Primary Screening Process, employed to work with children and youth, may assume his/her position immediately.

- **Adult Supervision:** No teacher, advisor, aide or anyone else working with our children or youth should place themselves in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or with children out-of-sight of other teachers, advisors, aides, or parents. The children in the educational program of our congregation shall be under the care and supervision of two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide. An exception in the education department would exist if classes are so constructed as to provide constant visual access and frequent observation by the Director of Family Ministries or their designee. Finally, no teacher, advisor, or aide shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of clean-up from craft or art projects, or care of illness or injury. There is no church-sanctioned event in our ministry that permits one adult to be alone with one child or youth.
- **Specific Guidelines for Adult Supervision:**  
Adult leaders for a youth ministry activity function as representatives of the church and as such are held to different standards than when acting as a parent or adult in their own family. The rules and guidelines of the church must be followed by all leaders at all events, thereby providing appropriate supervision for the youth. Supervision must be consistent, reasonable and prudent.  
  
Adults are encouraged to remember that they will be providing both supervision and modeling adult Christian behavior for the youth in their care, and should endeavor to see that the example they set is consistent with the value and expectations of the church community.
- **Five Year Separation Rule:** When utilizing high school and young adults as primary leaders in the Educational Department, Youth Programs and Off-site Activities they shall be at least five years older than any of the children or youth they supervise.
- **Regarding Bathroom Supervision of Educational Department Children:** Normally teachers, advisors, or aides who accompany a child to the bathroom, should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with zipping, buttoning, buckling, clean-up, wiping, etc., two adults need to be present, one of whom may be a high school aide. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, a note describing the help given and persons present should be written and handed to the Director of Family Ministries or designee at the close of educational program day. If, for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, the teacher in the nearest or neighboring classroom should be so informed.
- **There will be two nursery staff.** One may be a High School student (grades 9 through 12.) Diapering of infants and toddlers may be done in the nursery if two people are present, one of whom is an adult.

- **Parental Consent:** Written parental or guardian consent is required when children or youth are involved in church sponsored activities away from the church facility.
- **Discipline:** The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of religious responsibility, respect and cooperation. No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult or shouting. Teachers, advisors and aides and others helping in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs or give alternate choices. If a child is disruptive, a teacher or shepherd from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the Director of Family Ministries or her/his designee. If the Director of Family Ministries or designee is not readily available, the child's parent should be contacted and brought to the room.
- **Overnight Rule:** Any and all adult chaperones supervising overnight stays at our facilities or on congregational sponsored trips shall have been cleared to do so by the Director of Family Ministries or Senior Minister. A minimum of one adult male will dorm with boys and one adult female with girls; and should these adults be husband and wife, a third adult advisor is to be present. In those situations where there is only one child per room, a second adult must be present. Further, a signed written consent form is required.
- **Youth Group Activities:** Physical contact such as wrestling or other inappropriate high contact games are not acceptable recreational activity. No adult leader, staff or volunteer, should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the chaperone. The Youth Program is a group ministry. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in congregation publications.
- **Leaving and Locking:** Situations where one adult and one youth or child are left at the facility's door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an activity are not allowed. Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times.
- **Key Assignment:** Only church staff members have keys.
- **Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol:** The use of any drugs, tobacco or alcoholic products on church property or in the church facility is not permitted during church sponsored children and youth activities.
- **Transportation:** Transportation for field trips is provided to and from our church building only, unless we have written parental permission for a different pick up or drop off point.
- **Parental Guidelines:** We strongly encourage parents, when on the premises with their children, to know at all times where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing. It is strongly encouraged that children 10 or under do not play in unsupervised areas.
- **Visitors On-site:** Visitors are welcome at First Congregational Church United Church of Christ. The staff or volunteers serving our congregation shall be aware of who is visiting our facilities. Visitors are welcomed and shall be accompanied on their visit to the areas frequented by our youth and

children by a member of our staff.

- **Reporting Responsibilities:** Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or youth shall be promptly reported to the Senior Minister, the Director of Family Ministries, or a member of the Personnel Committee.
- **If You Suspect a Violation of the Code:** If a suspected case of abuse has either been reported to you or is suspected by you to have occurred at a congregational-related function or program, immediately contact the Senior Minister or the Director of Family Ministries. In the case where this person cannot be reached, contact the Personnel Committee Chairperson. If the alleged abuser is the Senior Minister or the Director of Family Ministries, report the allegation to the chairperson of the Personnel Committee.

**Abuse can include, but is not limited to:**

Sexual remarks  
Inappropriate kissing  
Fondling  
Touching parts of the body which would be covered by a swimsuit.  
Watching any sexual activity  
Intercourse  
Showing pornography  
Hitting  
Spanking  
Bullying

If you are unsure whether or not your particular situation falls under this definition, it is strongly recommended that you err to the side of caution and report your suspicion immediately.

# VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

In covenant with the Board of Christian Education, who is responsible for the children and youth programming in the church, I agree to the following:

- To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.
- To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially and spiritually.
- To continue to grow and nurture my own personal faith.
- To work in partnership with the professional staff, volunteers, and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.
- To authorize, by way of signature on this page, the Senior Minister to complete a criminal background check and driver record check concerning me.
- Acknowledge, by way of signature on this page, that I have read the Safe Sanctuary Policy of this church.
- To comply with the Safe Sanctuary policy of this church.
- To attend periodic Safe Sanctuary training provided by the church.

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Signature of Applicant

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Date

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Address of Applicant

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Print Full Legal Name

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Date of Birth

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Previous Name(s) / Maiden Name

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Social Security Number

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State / Driver License Number

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Place of Birth

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Signature of Parent if Applicant is under 18 years of age

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Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

I acknowledge I have received, reviewed, and agree to comply with the Safe Sanctuary Policy of the First Congregational Church United Church of Christ.

If requested by the Senior Minister or Director of Family Ministries, I agree to provide information authorizing the Senior Minister to complete a Criminal Background Check or Driving Record Check concerning me.

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Signature

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Date

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Signature of Parent if Applicant is under 18 years of age

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Date