

The United Methodist Church  
Southwest Texas Conference  
Austin District

**Child, Youth, and Adult Safety Procedures**

These procedures are adopted by the Austin District and reviewed annually by the Austin District Council on Ministries. They will be used in all Austin District events beginning September 1, 2001. These procedures are in accordance with the Southwest Texas Conference Child, Youth, and Adult Safety Policy adopted by the Annual Conference in June 2000 (*items in italics are taken from that policy*). All churches participating in Austin District events will follow the conference policy, their local church procedure as filed in the Conference office, and these procedures.

- 1) Background checks on paid staff members (full or part time) shall be required. *Access to the information received from the background check shall be limited; but the information shall be held in confidence. The SWTX Conference will be the agency to obtain police or law enforcement background checks to the extent that any are requested. Only (a) the Episcopal Office, (b) Austin District Superintendent, or (c) the person in charge of the District event may request and be privy to the background check results. The Conference Office will report only relevant information as it pertains to the safety of children, youth, and adults to the requesting party.*
- 2) All volunteers working with children or youth at a District event must be involved in their local church. If the volunteer has been involved for less than six months, then a letter of recommendation from a staff person at their local church is required.
- 3) Any adult who is the subject of current judicial proceedings in which he or she is charged with child abuse, or who has been convicted of child abuse, will not be permitted to work with children or youth in any District sponsored activity.
- 4) *All drivers of vehicles for church or other sponsored events described herein must be at least twenty-one years of age and possess a current, valid driver's license, have proof of insurance at the State minimum limits, and not be otherwise disqualified from driving (i.e., under medication and the like). Prior written parental (or guardian) permission is required for events requiring transportation to and from the event location. There may be times when only one adult volunteer is in a vehicle. In this case, an effort will be made to inform the parents or guardians.*
- 5) There shall be a minimum of five years of age between the oldest child or youth and the on-site adult supervisor of the District sponsored event.
- 6) Plans will be made for a minimum of two unrelated adults to be present for children and youth activities. If, for some reason, only one adult is present, there will be visibility into the room at all times. *Coed overnight activities require unrelated male and female adult volunteers without exception.* There is value, in limited situations, of planned one-on-one ministry between adults and children or youth, but such ministry will not occur on a regular basis without the parents or guardians of the child or youth being informed of the ministry.
- 7) The District will provide materials and/or training to keep volunteers informed of church policy and state laws regarding child abuse.
- 8) A person who suspects abusive behavior at any District sponsored event shall report it in accordance with the "Austin District Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Abuse."

Adopted by the Austin District on May 20, 2001.

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Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Abuse

Texas State Law Obligation To Report

A person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person is obligated by Texas law to immediately make a report to a law enforcement agency or to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS) Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-252-5400). If the person is in doubt regarding whether a report should be made, he or she shall telephone the agency and discuss the situation with a counselor to determine whether a report should be made. This call may be made anonymously. A person shall make a written record of the name and title of the counselor with whom he or she spoke and the recommendation made by the counselor.

Notification to Austin District Event Leader/District Superintendent

A) Any person having cause to believe that a child or youth is subject to abuse in connection with any district event should immediately report the incident to the Event Leader. If the allegation is in relation to the Event Leader, the person is to contact the District Superintendent. If the allegation is in relation to the District Superintendent, the person is to contact the Bishop.

B) Should abuse allegations occur:

- 1) Respond to each allegation in a serious manner,
- 2) Treat each allegation with confidentiality and respect for the privacy of all involved persons;
- 3) Cooperate fully with civil authorities;
- 4) Extend genuine care to all victims of abuse.

Responding to the Report

When someone receives a report of an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse, he or she shall immediately take steps necessary to ensure the safety of the alleged victim.

A) The person reporting the suspected abuse and the Event Leader shall work together to complete a written incident report.

B) In the case of an allegation, these guidelines should be followed by the Event Leader:

- I) Document the incident or allegation.
- 2) Report the incident as required by state law, notify the church's legal counsel, and notify the insurance company.
- 3) Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously. If morally indicated, reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Treat the accused with dignity and support. The accused should be removed from his or her position as a worker with children or youth until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved. In the case of paid church workers, the District Superintendent, in consultation with the appropriate church body, shall determine the extent to which employment and compensation should be continued during the investigation.
- 4)

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