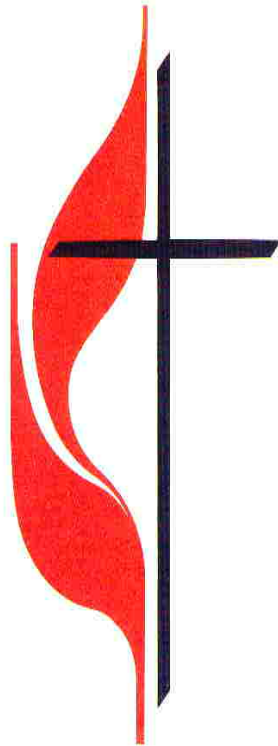


# Safe Sanctuary Policy



## Weston United Methodist Church 2004-2004

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## Program Overview

## A. Vision Statement

We are a Christ Centered Community of faith in ministry to all God's people; serving Christ by nurturing, encouraging and challenging all—through worship, prayer, fellowship, education, and service.

## B. Mission

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

## C. Introduction

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse ["ritual abuse" refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be] occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church—2000, pp. 180-181. Copyright © 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

## D. Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure of reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

## E. Education Program Description

The Christian Education Program is a vibrant and active part of the ministry of Weston United Methodist Church. We currently have four classes and plan to expand as attendance dictates. The young learner class welcomes those as young as three and as old as six. The early elementary class encompasses grades two through four. The older elementary class includes fifth- and sixth-graders, while the advanced learner class welcomes grades seven through high school.

The Weston United Methodist Church is currently using Cornerstones – a workshop rotation model for the Sunday School Program. This new, exciting, multi-intelligence approach to Christian Education was implemented in September, 2001. Classes rotate weekly through workshops, led by two-teacher teams, which engage the children in hands-on projects that accommodate a variety of learning styles. The workshops include nomadic and urban storytelling, puppetry, arts and crafts, drama, geography and cooking. In the future, we hope to include videography and computers to further enhance opportunities for learning.

Borne out of a yearly theme, Cornerstones' workshops change monthly and cover new topics based on stories and verses from the Bible, which mesh together to reinforce the yearly theme. Past themes include: The Messiah, The Covenant and The Witness to God's Presence. In the 2004-2005 school year, we will learn about The Quest for Identity: addressing the issues of living in a Christian Community. The implementation of this workshop model in the Fall of 2001 was enthusiastically embraced by both the youth and teachers, and continues to be a good fit for our Sunday School program

We have "Group Sundays" on occasion, usually on holiday weekends or for special projects. All members of the Christian Education program gather in the Parish Hall to participate in a special project or group learning workshop.

We have found this time of group learning to be very productive and enjoyable for children, both young and old. We use this time to prepare for special events such as the Christmas Pageant or Promotion Sunday conduct mission projects or to discuss topics that are best covered in a larger, more diverse group.

Each Sunday, children stay in the sanctuary with their families until the end of the Children's Story, then are accompanied by their teachers to classes until the end of service—approximately 45 minutes.

If you have questions, please contact Bonny Parlee, Education Committee Chair and Christian Education Director. We think you will find our program challenging and enjoyable for your children, and we look forward to seeing them soon.

## II. Policy and Procedures

### A. General Guidelines: Creating A Safe Environment

#### 1. Adequate Supervision

##### Of children by workers

Maintaining an adequate ratio of workers to children can prevent many accidents and incidents of abuse. The guidelines set these ratios.

##### Of workers by leaders/supervisors and staff

Each person working with children and youth in our church works in coordination with a program leader or staff person. Part of working together is awareness of unsafe practices or situations and a relationship of mutual supervision.

#### 2. Careful Selection of Workers

##### By development of relationship with church

Currently our workers with children and youth are selected through an informal process of developing a relationship with a program leader or staff person. If a program leader or staff person feels confident in the person and if a position that matches his or her gifts and graces is available, he or she is invited to work with our children or youth. These guidelines would standardize the process so that all volunteers are selected based on the same level of relationship. Each worker will be evaluated using three different steps:

- (a) Have established a relationship with our congregation for at least **six months** (However, if someone without a six-month relationship would like to be a children's or youth worker, they may submit three references, and upon their evaluation, the person would be matched to a church program.)
- (b) Have a confidential interview with a program leader or staff member.
- (c) Complete and sign a standard confidential application form with information about past church involvement and past work with children and youth.

Completing this form indicates an awareness and agreement with the child safety guidelines.

*By level of contact with children and youth.*

Obviously, not everyone who works with children and youth has the same level of contact or influence. Workers will be divided into primary and secondary workers depending on their level of contact. Primary workers will be those with a greater responsibility for supervision or a greater degree of unsupervised contact with children and youth. Primary workers would include our church staff, leaders of youth fellowship activities, and our primary nursery workers. Secondary workers include church schoolteachers, youth fellowship chaperones, and nursery assistants.

In addition to the basic selection and evaluation steps, primary workers will be screened through three additional steps:

- (a) Three references checked by church leaders with information kept confidential.
- (b) A Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check preformed by the State of Massachusetts. The state will return a confidential form that states that a person can or cannot work with children or youth, but it does not reveal specific information about an applicant's criminal history.
- (c) Acquisition and maintenance of CPR and basic First Aid training.

### 3. Intentional Education/Training of Workers and Church Community

*To recognize unsafe situations*

Workers with children and youth will receive regular training in how to recognize unsafe situations, including classroom safety, vehicle safety, and recognition of the signs and symptoms of child abuse.

*To respond to unsafe situations*

Workers with children and youth will receive regular training in how to respond to unsafe situations, including opportunities for CPR and first aid training, and response to suspicions of child abuse.

To care for victims of unsafe situations

As we deal with issues of child safety within our church community, we will work together to learn how we must care for survivors and victims of accidents and abuse. These can be traumatic events that affect people for many years. Our care and concern for them bears witness to our responsibility to love one another even as Christ loves us.

## B. Policy Details

### 1. Adequate Supervision during Christian Education Activities on the Church Site

Of children by workers

- TWO-ADULT RULE

#### ***Supervision of Classroom Activities***

An **adult** is an individual who is 18 years of age or older. Whenever possible, a minimum of two adults will be present in any room, except in the event of an emergency. This standard helps provide for a safe and loving classroom, and gives volunteers more encouragement, creativity, and flexibility. In addition, this arrangement allows for a gift-mix in each classroom that makes for a richer teaching environment. The arrangement may require that grade levels be combined.

When two adults are not available, the CED (Christian Education Director)—or designated person—will periodically check the rooms and be aware of the children's/youths' whereabouts if they leave the classroom area. Even when two adults per classroom are available, periodic classroom checks will occur.

#### ***Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities***

With the exception of the circumstances identified under Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities, at least two adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children/youth.

#### ***Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities***

Youth Counseling: In instances of youth counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling is most effective on a one-on-one basis, a church staff person or volunteer may meet individually with a child or youth with the awareness and previous consent of

that individual's parent or legal guardian. Exceptions to consent may be made for emergencies.

Dismissal from Group Events: In group events, it is inevitable that one child or youth's transportation following the event arrives after all other children's/youth's transportation has departed. In that circumstance, a child/youth may unavoidably be in the individual presence of one adult. The general rule which requires the presence of two adults will be suspended, and the adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the child or youth's well being.

- OPEN DOORS

Classrooms will have clear glass windows that allow for an easy view of the classroom activities without interrupting the teaching process. When it is necessary that only one adult teacher be in a classroom, the door of that room will remain open.

- VOLUNTEER AGE

Recognizing the important role of youth volunteers in children/youth ministries, all activities involving children and youth will be supervised by volunteers who are at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than those whom they are supervising.

Occasional situations may include volunteers between the ages of 12 and 18, but a teen will never care for children alone.

- REST ROOM VISITS/DIAPERING

When taking children to the rest room, workers will supervise children from the doorway area until the child is finished. Workers may enter to assist only when necessary and must keep the stall door open at all times.

Parents are requested to check and change diapers as needed *before* leaving their child with a caregiver. Diapers will be checked and changed by parents whenever possible. See Appendix A: Diaper Changing Procedure.

- SIGNING IN/OUT

All children in the Nursery will be signed in and out of the room by a parent or guardian. "Acceptable" guardians must be indicated by the parents in writing, when signing children into the Nursery.

- ACCIDENTS

Every effort will be made to provide a safe environment for all children. An accident is an unexpected and undesirable event, which may or may not result in bodily injury. Serious accidents will be immediately reported to the parent/guardian. Minor accidents will be reported to the parents when the child is picked up. A staff member in the room at the time of the accident will complete a written incident report form to be reviewed and signed by the parents with a copy turned into the CED.

- FIRST AID

First Aid kits are located in each classroom. Each kit is equipped with band-aids, sanitary wipes, gauze pads, and disposable gloves for handling accidents involving bodily fluids, i.e., vomit or blood. Primary workers will know its location and be qualified to administer basic first aid, including CPR.

- EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Posters with a clear evacuation plan will be posted in each classroom, and will be reviewed regularly with the children/youth. Practice evacuations will take place twice each year.

- ILLNESS

No child or staff with any symptom of an infectious illness may attend any class. No medications will be administered by a staff member or permitted in any classroom. See Appendix B: Guidelines for Attendance or Absence.

- HAND WASHING

Strict hand washing must be practiced by children and staff before eating or handling food, after going to the restroom or assisting in toileting or diapering, and after contact with body fluid (mucus, blood, vomit, etc.)

- RECOMMENDATION FOR DISMISSAL FROM CHURCH EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

School-age children will be met by parents in the parish hall after worship. Children attending nursery will be signed out by the parent or designated guardian. Parents will supervise their children after Sunday School dismissal.

**Classes are separated into the following groups:**

- Nursery (Ages 0 – 4)
- Preschool/Early Childhood (Ages 3 – 6)
- Lower Elementary (Ages 7 – 9)
- Upper Elementary (Ages 10 – 13)
- Youth (Ages 12 through Senior High)

**Workers will be expected to:**

- Prepare the classroom and materials
- Welcome the children
- Be familiar with and apply the safety guidelines for their particular age group
- Carry out educational activities for the day
- Be responsible for appropriate dismissal and/or evacuation procedures
- See Appendix A for specific, age-appropriate staff guidelines

Of workers by supervisors

- CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR OR DESIGNATED PERSON

The CED or designated person will make regular checks on classrooms to ensure rooms are properly staffed and that volunteers are functioning appropriately.

**2. Adequate Supervision during Trips, Overnight Retreats/ Events Away from the Church Site**

Church leaders will pre-approve all off-site activities and overnight events.

There will be at least two adults for every 10 children present for all trips, retreats, and other times children/youth gather for special events at or away from the church building. (Three adults are preferable so that in the event of an emergency, there will still be adequate supervision.) Every leader should have an assigned group of children for which he/she is responsible.

At **co-ed** overnight events a minimum of one adult of each gender will be present. If children/youth are divided into multiple single-gender rooms, there must be at least two adults of the matching gender in *each* room.

At **single gender** overnight events there will be a minimum of two adults of the matching gender present. If children/youth are dispersed to multiple rooms, at least two adults of the matching gender will be in *each* room.

If two adults are not available per room where children/youth are staying overnight, then no adult will stay alone in a specific room with the children/youth. When adults are *not* staying in the rooms with children/youth, special measures will be taken to assure the children's/youths' safety and supervision, such as: adult hall monitors, "tapping" on doors, and periodic room checks by an adult of the same gender as those being checked. Parents will be made aware of housing accommodations.

Parental consent and medical release forms, including permission for emergency medical care, are required for each child/youth participating, and will be carried by the person in charge of each trip and/or retreat (See Appendix C: Forms).

**Rules for providing transportation for church events:**

- Driver must be known to the designated leader of the event
- Driver must be at least 21 years old
- Driver must have a valid state driver's license for the vehicle being operated
- Driver must have proof of insurance
- Driver must be accompanied by at least two children or youth
- The number of occupants in the vehicle shall not exceed the number of seat belts
- Seat belts must be worn by all occupants of the vehicle; and appropriate car seats must be used for children
- Driver must have read and signed an acknowledgement form indicating that the policy has been read and will be followed (See Appendix C: Forms).

Consult with the Christian Education Director that the churches insurance policy (Fred C. Church) /or agent (patti) that liability coverage includes the off-site activity.

### Careful Selection of Workers

The following guidelines will be used as Weston United Methodist Church reviews applicants for positions in children's or youth ministry:

**Minimum Age** — All workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but they may not take the place of adult workers.

**Confidential Interviews** -- All applicants must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the leader of the program in which the applicant will work or by other persons designated by the Christian Education Director. Church policy and guidelines should be discussed during the interview.

**Six-Month Guideline** — Volunteer primary and secondary applicants must be a regular attendee of The Weston United Methodist Church for at least six months. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for youth work.

**Application Forms** -- Applicants must complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.

**Survivors of Child Abuse** -- Any applicant who is a survivor of childhood sexual or physical abuse needs the love and acceptance of Weston United Methodist Church. Applicants who are survivors of abuse should discuss this in confidence with the person who conducts the confidential interview. If an applicant is uncomfortable doing so, they may have the interview conducted by a pastor.

**Criminal Background Check** — A Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and Sexual Offender Record Information (SORI) forms are **Required** for primary and secondary worker positions, To maintain the strictest confidence **only** the Pastor or designated Staff person shall review the response to these forms.

**References** — Church leaders will check **three** references for each worker. The references will be done by phone, mail, or in person. Three references for new primary workers will be checked, and they

should include: one person who has known the applicant well for an extended period of time, a former supervising Pastor, and a member of the applicant's immediate family. For applicants for compensated positions, additional former supervisors may be checked.

**Auto Safety** -- Persons who will drive vehicles for transporting children/youth must complete an "Auto Safety" form (Refer to Appendix C: Forms). This rule is at the discretion of the appropriate ministry leader. It is not necessary for people who will not transport youth.

**First Aid Training** – Paid church staff **must** maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR. New workers must get this certification within 90 days of the start of their employment. All other child/youth workers are encouraged, but not required, to get training if they frequently accompany children on adventure activities: water sports, camping, home-building mission trips, etc.

### 3. Intentional Education/Training of Workers

#### *Child Safety Policy and Procedure Manual*

Before beginning their first year of service, all paid and volunteer child care workers, children's Sunday School teachers and youth workers and teachers will be required to read the church's child safety policy and sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it; anyone failing to do so will be contacted. If the teacher or worker does not sign after being contacted, that person will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed. .

Vacation Bible School teachers and workers will be required to read the policy and sign the acknowledgement form before the start of Vacation Bible School; any teacher failing to do so will be contacted. Anyone refusing to read the policy and sign the form after being contacted will not be permitted to serve. When Vacation Bible School is held at other churches, only teachers from Weston United Methodist Church will be asked to comply with this policy. Leaders of community groups of children/youth who use the church facilities will be required to read the policy and sign this acknowledgement form. Church facilities will not be available to groups whose leaders refuse to read and sign the policy

#### *Teacher/Volunteer Training Days*

First year teachers or workers will also be required to attend one training session related to the church's child safety policy during the course of their first year of service. These training sessions—which

will include CPR and Emergency First Aid training—will be conducted by the Pastor, Christian Education Director, or designated instructor, and will be offered in the Spring and Fall, excepting the first year of policy implementation. In this case, training will be offered in the Fall within the first 90 days of the commencement of the Sunday School term.

If a teacher/worker begins service mid-year, they will be required to read the church's child safety policy and sign the acknowledgement form. By signing the form, the teacher/worker agrees to attend the next available training session. If the teacher/worker fails to attend the next available training session, he or she will be contacted, and will not be permitted to serve until training is completed.

### Classroom Posters

- Posters of the following child safety procedures will be located in every classroom where appropriate:
- Diaper Changing Procedure
- Emergency Evacuation Procedure/Map
- First Aid for Choking
- First Aid for Burns
- Emergency CPR

### CPR/Emergency First Aid Classes

CPR/Emergency First Aid training will be offered in conjunction with policy training. Teachers/Workers must re-take the CPR/Emergency First Aid portion of the training annually to maintain certification.

### Policy Supervision/Evaluation/Revision

The Christian Education Director will supervise the child safety program. This program shall govern all church activities that involve custody of children and teens less than 18 years of age.

### **Annual Review of Child Safety Program**

The Christian Education Director will review compliance with safety guidelines and potential risks annually in a brief written report that will be given to the Church Council. The reports should include the following:

- A listing of any new programs or program changes and the additional risks these changes may incur.
- A summary of policy violations and the Christian Education Director's response to these violations. Any patterns of violations that suggest policy changes are needed should be identified.

The Christian Education Director will submit an overall report annually to the Church Council.

#### 4. Child Abuse Detection and Reporting

##### What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is injury of a child by an adult or older child that might not be intentional but is not accidental. It is usually classified as physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse. Harm caused by withholding life's necessities — food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education — is called neglect.

##### **Definition of Abuse and Neglect**

According to Massachusetts law and Department of Social Services regulations (110CMR, section 400):

ABUSE includes:

the non-accidental commission of any act by a caregiver which causes or creates a substantial risk of harm to a child's well-being

AND/OR

the commission of a sex offense against a child as defined by the criminal laws of the Commonwealth.

NEGLECT includes:

failure by caregiver, either deliberately or through negligence, to take actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision or other essential care; and

Physical dependence of a child upon an addictive drug at birth.

##### How Child Abuse Happens

Four Key conditions must be met before anyone can abuse or mistreat a child:

- (a) An individual with a tendency to abuse or neglect has access to children.
- (b) The individual must overcome his or her own inhibitions.
- (c) The individual must overcome external barriers in place to protect children.
- (d) The individual must overcome the child's resistance to being abused.

(Adopted in part from *A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse* by David Finkelhor)

Effective prevention means combating these four conditions consistently!

### How Can I Tell If A Child Is Being Abused?

Each child reacts to abuse differently. In *physical abuse*, injuries to the child might be evident, but with any kind of abuse, children often give only behavioral clues. They may also verbally disclose abuse or neglect to a trusted adult. Individuals working with children or youth should be alert to changes in the child's behavior. Any abrupt change in behavior, that is maintained for a week or longer, is a sign that a child is experiencing stress that could stem from a variety of causes—including child abuse. If workers notice this kind of change in behavior they should consider seeking help for the child. Some of the specific signs for each kind of abuse are listed below:

### **Physical Abuse**

A child who has been physically abused might exhibit suspicious injuries. These injuries are different from those normally associated with childhood "wear and tear."

- **Burns** that might indicate a child has been abused include cigarette or cigar burns, other burns associated with abuse are friction or tether burns. Wet burns on the hands that appear to be glove like. Dry burns leave a distinctive mark in the shape of the instrument used to inflict them.
- **Bruises** of different colors, indicating infliction at different times and in different stages of healing, often indicate abuse.
- **Lacerations and abrasions** - Children often have scraped knees, shins, or elbows, - predictable injuries. However when

children have lacerations and abrasions in soft tissue areas, it is a strong indicator of physical abuse.

- **Fractures** - Unexplained fractures are cause for concern.

Children who have been physically abused also are likely to show signs of childhood stress.

Childhood stress can result from any upsetting situation in the child's environment such as family disruption, death of a pet, or move to a new neighborhood. It can also be a result of child abuse. If a child abruptly changes his/her behavior for more than a few days in a manner that a caregiver feels is inappropriate, he or she might want to ask the child if something is wrong or if he or she can help. Caregivers will not immediately jump to the conclusion that the child has been abused.

### **Emotional Abuse**

The nonverbal indicators of emotional abuse are hard to detect. Some visible signs are lagging physical development and habit disorders such as thumb sucking or rocking.

### **Neglect**

As with emotional abuse, the nonverbal signs of neglect are usually very subtle and hard to detect. A neglected child might show up inappropriately dressed, lacking in personal hygiene, and consistently hungry.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is sexual involvement imposed upon a child by an individual who has greater "power, knowledge, and resources."

Church workers should be alert to the physical signs of abuse, neglect and molestation, as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a child may exhibit. Some of the more common signs are summarized below (adapted from Sloan 1983):

**Other signs of abuse and/or neglect may include but are not limited to:**

- (a) difficulty walking
- (b) nightmares
- (c) irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- (d) difficulty with urination
- (e) discomfort when sitting
- (f) evident malnutrition
- (g) unattended physical or medical problems
- (h) inappropriate clothing
- (i) distinctively shaped injuries suggesting an object (such as belt buckle or rope) or human bite marks
- (j) pressure bruises around neck, ankles or wrists

**Behavioral signs may include:**

- (a) anxious, nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- (b) excessive fear of being approached to touched by persons of the opposite sex
- (c) sexual self-consciousness
- (d) sexual behaviors or references that are bizarre, unusual or too sophisticated for the child's age
- (e) behavior that is withdrawn, infantile or filled with fantasy
- (f) fear of going home

**Verbal signs may include the following statements:**

- (a) “ \_\_\_\_\_ does things to me when we’re alone.”
- (b) “I don’t like to be alone with \_\_\_\_\_.”
- (c) “ \_\_\_\_\_ fooled around with me.”
- (d) “I’m afraid of \_\_\_\_\_.”

*What Should I Do if I Notice Any of These Signs?*

First, caregivers should not jump to any conclusions. The signs of child abuse are often ambiguous; they can mean something other than child abuse. Consider stating your observations to the child's parents. For example, caregivers could say, "For the past two weeks we've noticed Johnny has been disruptive in class and this is not his usual behavior, I hope everything is okay." Caregivers should not make any accusations to the parents that the child is being abused.

*What Should I Do If I Suspect That a Child Is Being Abused?*

If caregivers suspect or hear that a child is being abused, caregivers should contact the Christian Education Director or Pastor.

**MANDATED REPORTERS of CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT**

Massachusetts’ law requires an individual who is a mandated reporter to immediately report any allegation of serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services by oral communication. A written report must then be completed within 48 hours. *All church volunteers and employees working with children clearly fall within the guidelines defining mandated reporters.* Physicians, nurses, teachers, day care workers and foster parents are also mandated reporters. *When suspected abuse is reported to the person in charge of an institution or school, then the person in charge, and not the staff member, is required to make the report.*

**PROCEDURES for REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE or NEGLECT**

Any signs of possible physical abuse or neglect will be reported immediately to the Christian Education Director.

Any overt sexual behavior or mimicking of such behavior or use of sexually explicit language will be reported immediately to the Christian Education Director.

If only behavioral and/or nonverbal indicators are observed, the childcare worker should **not** interview the child regarding possible abuse or neglect. Also, the possibility of abuse or neglect should **not** be discussed with other volunteers or parents.

If an older child begins to verbally disclose something that may be considered abuse or neglect, every effort will be made for the first adult to ask another adult to be part of the conversation. The purpose is not to question the child intensively, but to simply have a second adult present as a witness to the child's disclosure.

The childcare worker reporting the suspected abuse will complete a written report and submit it to the Christian Education Director within 24 hours. The information given will not be discussed with other members of the church or community.

The Christian Education Director will consult with the Pastor regarding the filing of the report with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services or the Weston Police Department.

### **ADDITIONAL REPORTING PROCEDURES for Christian Education Leadership**

The Christian Education Director will promptly notify the Pastor of any reports of abuse or neglect.

The Christian Education Director, Pastor and other involved staff person will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child involved.

If the Christian Education Director and the Pastor find reasonable cause to believe that abuse and/or neglect has occurred, the Massachusetts Department of Social Services or the Weston Police Department will be notified.

Current social service and police information (names and phone numbers) are listed in **Appendix D**.

### III. Appendices

#### A. Appendix A: Age-appropriate Staff Guidelines

##### 1. Diaper Changing Procedure (Post at all changing stations)

- NEVER leave child unattended on the changing table!
- Wash your hands.
- Put on gloves.
- Place new paper towel on changing pad.
- Place baby on changing pad.
- Remove soiled diaper and place in plastic bag.
- Clean diaper area with wipes.
- Put wipes in plastic bag.
- Follow parents' instructions regarding care of diaper area (powder, ointment, etc.)
- Put clean diaper on baby.
- Remove gloves without touching the exterior surfaces and put in plastic bag.
- Remove baby from changing area.
- Put paper towel in plastic bag.
- Dispose of plastic bag in trash.
- Wash changing pad with wipe and spray with disinfectant.
- Wash your hands.

*NOTE: Each diaper change requires a new pair of gloves.*

##### 2. NURSERY Staff Guidelines

###### BEFORE CHILDREN ARRIVE:

- Put away all personal items. Wash hands. Wear nametag.

- Check room temperature and ventilation.
- Remove all toys with loose or broken parts.
- Arrange equipment and toys for easy, **safe** use.
- Soft music on a tape player makes a nice welcome.
- Keep any hot liquids out of children's reach.

WELCOME CHILDREN:

- Be sure each parent completes the sign-in sheet. (Parents should complete registration forms when new to our care.)
- Speak warmly and softly to each child, stooping to child's level.
- Be alert for symptoms of illness. Do not admit any child showing obvious signs of common cold or other illness.
- Keep "traffic" to a minimum. Parents and siblings need to stay outside the door during class time. First time visitors may come in to look over the room. Parents may stay inside to enable a child to initially adjust. If a mother needs to nurse a child, help her to find a chair in a quiet area of the room.

CHANGING DIAPERS:

- Parents should check their child's diaper and change if necessary before leaving them with a staff member.
- Take all needed materials, including diaper bag to the changing area. Follow all diaper changing posted procedures.
- WASH HANDS after each diapering.

FEEDING, ETC:

- Bottles: If not labeled with baby's name place a label on it when removed from diaper bag.
- Feed baby in semi-upright position and keeping bottle angled so nipple is full of milk.
- Crying child: try "bundling", walking, and "strolling" (in stroller). Notify parent if she has requested you to do so, or if baby is distressed for more than 10 minutes.
- Intervene to protect older babies from each other. Never punish children (i.e. spank, slap hands, bite back, or shake).

### SNACK TIME:

- Check for any food allergies (Look on information sheet on bulletin board).
- WASH children's and your hands. (Use "wet ones" in rooms without sinks).
- Pray with and talk to children.

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN:

- Talk and sing softly to children as they play.
- Provide a similar or duplicate toy in case of conflict.
- Show books and pictures, encouraging conversation.
- Help as needed in working puzzles, block building, and the use of rolling/rocking/climbing toys.
- Comfort a crying child. Try to distract the child with a toy or activity.
- Redirect a child's negative behavior. Never punish (i.e. spank, slap hands, bite back, or shake). Be sure to consult with the Christian Education Director about any child who bites or shows aggressive behavior.

### AS CHILDREN LEAVE:

- Release child only to parents or designated guardian. Parents should also be in the habit of signing out.
- Describe the child's morning, as time allows. Share in positive "achievements". Report and detail any bumps or scratches. If any incident involving the child is noted in the incident log, a photocopy of the incident note should be given to the parent.
- Put all toys that were used in containers provided.
- Teachers sign into Sunday School log book indicating who taught which groups. If any incidents are reported in the log, separate incident reports must be filled out.

### 3. PRESCHOOL/ELEMENTARY Staff Guidelines

#### BEFORE CHILDREN ARRIVE:

- Put away all personal items. Wash hands. Wear nametag.
- Check room temperature and ventilation.
- Arrange equipment and toys for easy, **safe** use.
- Soft music on the tape player makes a nice welcome.
- Keep any hot liquids out of the reach of children.

#### WELCOMING CHILDREN:

- Speak warmly and softly to each child, stooping to child's level.
- Be alert for symptoms of illness. Do not admit any child showing obvious signs of common cold or other illness.
- Keep "traffic" to a minimum. Parents and siblings need to stay outside the door during class time. Parents may stay inside to enable a child to initially adjust. First time visitors may come in to look over the room.

#### TOILETING and CHANGING DIAPERS:

- When taking children to the rest room, workers should supervise children from the doorway area until the child is finished. Staff may enter to assist only when necessary and must keep the stall area and door open at all times.
- Parents should check their child's diaper and change if necessary before leaving them with a staff member.
- Take all needed materials, including diaper bag to the changing area. Follow all diaper changing posted procedures.
- WASH HANDS after each restroom visit and after each diapering.

#### LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN:

- Talk and sing softly to children as they play.
- Provide a similar or duplicate toy in case of conflict.
- Show books and pictures, encouraging conversation.

- Comfort a crying child. Try to distract the child with a toy or activity.
- Reinforce a child's positive behavior through praise.
- Redirect a child's negative behavior. At church we never punish (i.e. spank, slap hands, bite back, or shake). Be sure to consult with the Christian Education Director about any child who bites.

SNACK TIME:

- Check for any food allergies (Look on information sheet on bulletin board).
- WASH children's and your hands. (Use "wet ones" in rooms without sinks).
- Pray with and talk to children.

AS CHILDREN LEAVE:

- Assemble children in parish hall to be released to parents or designated guardian.
- Describe the child's morning, as time allows. Share in positive "achievements". Report and detail any bumps or scratches. If any incident involving the child is noted in the incident log, a photocopy of the incident note should be given to the parent.
- Put all equipment/toys that were used in containers provided.
- Teachers sign into Sunday School log book indicating who taught which groups. If any incidents are reported in the log, separate incident reports must be filled out.

#### 4. PROPER DISPLAY OF AFFECTION

Physical touch is an important element in the communication of love and care. It is an essential part of the nurturing process that should be characteristic of our ministry with students. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the special and differing needs and preferences of each individual child. Physical contact should be age and developmentally appropriate.

Appropriate Touch

The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:

- Meet the child at eye level by bending down or sitting.
- Listen to him/her with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold the child's hand while listening or speaking to them or walking to an activity.
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed.
- Pat a child's head, shoulder, or back when encouraging.
- Gently hold the shoulders or chin of a child when redirecting the child's behavior. This helps the child focus on what you are saying and is helpful with Attention Deficit Disorder children.
- Hold a preschool child who is crying.

### *Inappropriate Touch*

The following types of touch must be avoided:

- Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you.
- Extended hugging and tickling.
- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (exception: properly assisting a child in the restroom).
- Carrying an older child or sitting them on your lap.
- Being alone with a child.
- Giving a full contact, body-to-body hug.

## 5. DISCIPLINE POLICY

A classroom discipline policy should be developed so that caregivers are able to deal with behavior difficulties in a caring and consistent manner. A hands-off approach is a must. Caregivers should be trained in using the discipline policy so they understand the importance of its proper use and are prepared to use it. Proper discipline includes both preventative care and corrective action, and it helps create a healthy learning environment.

- **Reward** good behavior. Immediate praise and recognition for positive actions are effective ways to encourage more of the same. Inform parents when a child does well or shows improvement.

- **show examples of good behavior**

When inappropriate or disruptive behavior occurs:

- **Remind** the child of proper behavior. Remind him/her of the classroom rules and what is expected.
- **Redirect** the child. Move him/her to a different situation or area. Separate the child from others when he/she is having difficulty behaving.
- **Remove** the child to a quiet area of the room and ask questions like, "What seems to be the problem?" This will provide the child an opportunity to regain control or permits the caregiver to have a better understanding of the situation. When the child is settled, encourage him/her to rejoin the group.
- **Return** the child to a parent. If all previous steps fail to change behavior, the child will be taken to a parent for the remainder of the class. After class, the teacher will explain the situation to the parents and reassure the child that he/she is welcome to join the class text time. The teacher will report the action to the CED.

## 6. SUGGESTED CLASSROOM MANNERS

All children/youth attending Sunday School will observe the following behaviors. These guidelines will be posted in each classroom and will be reviewed with children/youth at the beginning of each school year, and on an as-needed basis.

- Be kind to one another.
- Pay attention and listen.
- Follow instructions
- Talk one-at-a-time.
- Keep hands and feet to yourself.
- share
- Use polite language.

## B. Appendix B: Guidelines for Attendance or Absence in Sunday School

### **Temperature**

A child may be sent home if he/she has a temperature. Children should stay home until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours. Activity level, irritability, appetite and ability to participate should also be considered before bringing a child back to class.

### **Diarrhea**

A child, who has watery stools more than once in a short period of time, will be returned to his or her parent or guardian. Children may return to class once the diarrhea is under control (suggested time of 24 hours). If your child has an allergy or condition, which regularly causes diarrhea, the parent or guardian has the responsibility to alert the staff.

### **Vomiting**

A child who is vomiting will be returned to his or her parent or guardian and should remain home until the vomiting has stopped (suggested time of 24 hours). A child who vomits in the night should remain at home until he/she has eaten and digested at least one meal.

### **Strep Throat**

Strep Throat is usually accompanied by a fever, swollen glands, and a red throat. Scarlet Fever is Strep Throat with a rash. These conditions require antibiotics. A child with Strep Throat may attend Sunday School after he/she has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.

### **Ear Infections**

Ear infections are extremely common for some children. They should be monitored, particularly in children developing language.

### **Impetigo**

This is a highly contagious skin infection which should be treated with antibiotics. A child may attend Sunday School after he or she has been on antibiotics for 24 hours, and has a cover over the infected area.

### **Coxsackie's A**

This is a viral infection characterized by sore throat, fever, and often tiny blisters on palms and soles. Your child should remain home if febrile and/or uncomfortable.

### **Allergies**

Parents must notify the CED, in writing, of their child's allergies; ideally on the Sunday School/Nursery Registration Form. Parents must convey symptoms of the allergy and expected treatment. We post life-threatening information about allergies in each child's classroom and, in the case of food allergies, plan to eliminate serving that food when possible. It is extremely important that we have written permission and instructions to administer antihistamines and/or Epi-Pen if necessary.

### **Head Lice**

Incidence of head lice has become common in schools. If nits are found on a child, we will return him or her to his or her parent or guardian. We or your pediatrician can recommend one of the special shampoos on the market for the treatment of head lice. Children may return to Sunday School when they are nit free.

### **Conjunctivitis**

This is an infection of the eye characterized by a yellow discharge and tearing which is sometimes contagious. Often, eyes are crusty in the morning. A child with this infection should be treated with antibiotics for a period of 24 hours before they may attend Sunday School.

### **Contagious Diseases**

Contagious diseases should be reported to the CED, in writing, immediately. By law, the entire Sunday School must be notified. As well, please keep your child home for three days following the onset of a cold. The CED and caregivers reserve the right to return a child to his or her parent or guardian if, in their opinion, a child is not feeling well or has a communicable illness.

### **Chicken Pox**

The CED should be notified if there is Chicken Pox in a family, even if the case is not the child attending church school/nursery. With the increase of asthmatic children in school settings and with our knowledge that asthmatic children tend to suffer severe symptoms should they have Chicken Pox, it would be our goal to notify our school community of the presence of the disease as soon as we are aware that it is present in our extended church school community.

## C.Appendix C: Forms

### **POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORMS**

#### **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

#### **AUTO SAFETY POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**Acknowledgement by persons designated to provide transportation to or from church events for Weston United Methodist Church:**

Are you at least 21 years old? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License State and Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

As required by Weston United Methodist Church Child Protection Policy and Procedures, I acknowledge that I have read the policy will abide by said policy.

Signature of driver \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print the following:

Full name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers \_\_\_\_\_

# SUNDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION & RELEASE FORM

## Weston United Methodist Church Health History and Emergency Contact Details

All Information is strictly confidential

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Grade in the Fall \_\_\_\_\_

School /Town \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Guardians Names \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different from above) \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Place of Employment \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Place of Employment \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact if neither parent can be reached during class

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Any Allergies? Please be specific – including food allergies

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of last Tetanus shot \_\_\_\_\_

Is the student currently on any medication? If so what? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any additional medical/physical/emotional conditions of which the staff should be aware

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Weston United Methodist Church Release Form

I, the parent/guardian of the registrant, a minor, agree that the registrant and I will abide by the rules of the Weston United Methodist Church. Recognizing the possibility of physical injury associated with the Sunday School program, I hereby release, discharge and/or otherwise indemnify the Weston United Methodist Church, Inc., Board of Directors, Staff and Associated Personnel, including the owners of the facilities utilized for the Sunday School program, against any claim by or on behalf of the registrant as a result of the registrant's participation in the Sunday School.

Registrant's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print)

Parent/Legal Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Photo Release

Permission is/is not granted for the use of photos of activities in which the registrant might appear.

Parent/Legal Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# INCIDENT REPORT FORM FOR WESTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

This form is to be completed by the adult supervisor whenever an incident (for example: injury, accident, etc.) occurs. A copy is then to be given to the child/youth's parent/guardian and the pastor. The church must also keep a copy of the completed form.

Name of class or activity Adult supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of injured child/youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth/Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address Home Phone  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Description of incident (use the back of page if necessary):

1. Describe the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where in the facility did it happen? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What area of the child/youth's body was injured? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What was the child/youth doing when the incident happened? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How did the incident happen? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Give the names of adults supervising the child/youth at the time of the incident:  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Give the name(s) of any other witnesses to the incident:  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. How did the child/youth respond after the incident?  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Was first aid given or some other action taken? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
If yes, by whom? Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Who notified the parent/guardian and when?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person completing form: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# CHILD ABUSE REPORTING FORM

**Weston United Methodist Church  
Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse**

Name of person (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of abuse:

---

Victim's name, age and date of birth

---

Date/location of initial conversation with or report from victim:

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Victim's statement (please give your detailed summary):

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Notification of pastor (include pastor's name, date, time and summary of report)

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Notification of victim's parent/guardian (include date, time, name of parent/guardian contacted, and summary of report)

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*(Page one of two page report)*

Call to Children Services Board or County Human Services Department exercising children services function  
(include date, time, name of person contacted, and summary)

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Call to local law enforcement agency (include date, time, name of person contacted and summary)

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Other contacts (include date, time, name of person contacted and summary)

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Signature of person making this report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Page two of two page report)*

# PARENTAL CONSENT FORM (INCLUDES MEDICAL RELEASE)

## Weston United Methodist Church Event Permission Slip

To Whom It May Concern:

\_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to go with the

*(Name of child/youth)*

\_\_\_\_\_ on the following event \_\_\_\_\_

*(Name of group)*

*(Event)*

at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

*(Location of event)*

*(Date of event)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Parent/Guardian Signature and date signed)*

Phone number in case of emergency: \_\_\_\_\_

Where parent(s)/guardian may be reached during the event: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate contact in case parent(s)/guardian cannot be reached: \_\_\_\_\_

### Medical/Health Information

Allergies, medication, hay fever, insect bites, asthma, food, other:

Other pertinent health history information:

Does your child/youth have any conditions that would prevent him/her from fully participating in this program? If yes, please explain: (specific activities/foods to avoid)

List any medication to be taken during the event which will be kept by the leaders during the

Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Dentist \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Eye Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Hospital \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*(Page 1 of 2 page form)*

**EMERGENCY MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION**

I give my consent for emergency medical treatment by a certified first aider. In the event that additional treatment is needed, the staff of the Emergency Room of the hospital listed above, or one closest to the event location, has my permission to treat my child/youth.

---

*Parent/Guardian Signature (Date)*

---

*Parent/Guardian Name (print)/ Address*

---

*Phone (home)*

*Phone (Work)*

---

*Hospitalization Plan and Group #*

*(Page 2 of 2 page form)*

# NURSERY SIGN-IN SHEET

Name of Child      Age      Parent/Guardian      Time in      Time out

## **RS – 203 – CLERGY BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY**

(Adopted by NEUMC at Annual Conference 2003)

1. A National Criminal Background Check will be required of all clergy entering the New England Annual Conference in or after June 2003 in any of these categories:
  - a. Election to probationary membership on either the elder or deacon track
  - b. Returning to active ministry from any non-pastoral status
  - c. As a new local pastor
  - d. As a supply pastor
  - e. Transfer from another annual conference
  - f. Cross-Conference appointment under provisions of 337.1 of the 2002 Book of Discipline
  - g. As an elder from another denomination
2. A current National Criminal Background Check will be required of all clergy (elder, deacon, local pastor, or supply) serving churches and all clergy in extension ministry no later than July 1, 2004.
3. A National Criminal Background Check shall be deemed to be current for 7 years. Therefore an updated National Criminal Background Check will be required every 7 years.
4. The BOM Registrar will be responsible for notifying individuals that a National Criminal Background Check is required.
5. The cost of the investigation will be borne by the individual clergy.
6. Clergy will apply for a background check by submitting the required form along with payment of \$ 75.00 to the Registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry.
7. Copies of the investigative report will be retained by the Episcopal Office and the Registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry.
8. Appointments will not take effect until the investigative report has been received by the BOM Registrar.
9. Any irregularities in the investigative report will be reviewed by the BOM Registrar and the Assistant to the Bishop together with the clergyperson to determine referral or further action.
10. Failure to complete the National Criminal Background Check will jeopardize the individual's appointment.

## **RS-204 – LAY STAFF BACKGROUND CHECK GUIDELINES**

(Adopted by NEUMC at Annual Conference 2003)

### **Purpose**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a means of obtaining criminal background checks, and a means of handling the information thus obtained in local churches for hired lay staff, especially those working with youth and children. It is strongly recommended to local churches that criminal background checks are completed on **all** hired lay staff- not just those working with youth and children. Many staff come into contact with youth and children, but there are other reasons to have a background check completed for the safety of the church, such as crimes of embezzlement, theft, and violent crime.

### **Description**

A criminal background check consists of supplying certain standard identifying information to the appropriate state or local law enforcement authorities on a standard form provided for this purpose. A search is then performed of available state and federal databases for any records pertaining to the individual, similar to the same type of check that is currently done for all teachers and volunteers in the public schools.

### **Information obtained**

The information arising from a background check will be reviewed and kept by the Senior Pastor. If the information disclosed, in the opinion of the Senior Pastor, raises no cause for concern, the Senior Pastor may communicate approval to the person(s) in charge of the appropriate program area and to the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee.

If, in the opinion of the Senior Pastor, the information disclosed raises any cause for concern about the suitability of the individual for work in the program area contemplated, the Senior Pastor will review the information privately with the chairperson of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee (or head of the department involved). If concern still exists, the individual shall be afforded the opportunity to meet privately with the Senior Pastor and the chairperson of PSPR (or the head of the department involved) for the purpose of discussion, review, and/or clarification, before any final decision is made regarding approval of the individual's participation in the area of ministry proposed. If, following such a meeting, the Senior Pastor and the chairperson of PSPR (or head of the department involved) are in consensus that there is no cause for concern, the Senior Pastor shall communicate approval as above. If the Senior Pastor and the chairperson of PSPR (or the head of the department involved) are agreed that the concern is legitimate, or if they are unable to achieve consensus, the individual will be assisted in finding another, more suitable, opportunity for ministry.

### **Confidentiality**

All information arising from a background check is to be held in confidence by the Senior Pastor (and the chairperson of PSPR or head of department if the information is reviewed with him or her). All records of such information will be kept under lock and key in a secure location. Records, notes, and information arising from a meeting with the individual as outlined above will be considered to be part of the background check and will be subject to the same provision of confidentiality.

### **Frequency and record retention**

Results of a background check will be kept on file for a period of seven years, at which point they will be destroyed. If the individual continues to work in program areas for which a background check is required, a new background check will be required after seven

years. If there is a break in employment for a period of 90 days or more, and the employee desires to resume work in a program area that a background check is necessary, a new background check will be required.

### **Compliance**

It will be the responsibility Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee to make sure all hired laypersons comply. After persons have submitted all paperwork, they may be hired contingent on the results of the background check. Upon review, employee is retained or released.

### **Financial considerations**

The person applying for the position will pay for the initial check. Subsequent checks will be at the employer's expense. For part-time positions, the local church administrative board or church council will determine who bears any financial cost.

## Form for Reference Check

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

On a separate paper, please indicate the answers to the following questions.

1. What is your relationship to the applicant?
2. How long have you known the applicant?
3. How well do you know the applicant?
4. How would you describe the applicant?
5. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?
6. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?
7. How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities?
8. How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth?
9. Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.
10. Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.
11. Please list any other comments you would like to make:

Reference inquiry completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*The applicant has applied for a position as \_\_\_\_\_ (name position) at Weston United Methodist Church. The New England Conference guidelines requires a background check for all applicants to such a position. The applicant has authorized release of the information sought by the Reference Check. The addressee's name was provided by the applicant as a possible source of information for this express purpose and any information disclosed by the addressee will be retained by the local church under lock and key, and will be disclosed only to the Senior Pastor and/or the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee for the sole and limited purpose of evaluating the applicant for the position sought.*

## **RS – 205 – LOCAL CHURCH VOLUNTEER BACKGROUND CHECK GUIDELINES**

(Adopted by NEUMC at Annual Conference 2003)

### **Purpose**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a means of obtaining criminal background checks, and a means of handling the information thus obtained in local churches for volunteers, especially those working with youth and children.

### **Scope**

These guidelines applies to any volunteer layperson in ministry or program area\*\* in the local church, especially those working frequently with children or youth. This is understood to include, at least, any of the following:

- Expected contact with children or youth four or more times per year;
- Any person accompanying youth on an overnight trip or event;
- Volunteers whose work is primarily focused on children and youth. Such as: Director of Christian Education, the Sunday School Superintendent, the Youth Coordinator, Nursery positions, and others as determined necessary by the local church.
- Any leadership position in a ministry or program area, whose work involves supervision of others who work with children and youth, and who is responsible for insuring compliance with the provisions of this background check guidelines.

As additional leadership positions are contemplated, the determination of the applicable background check requirements will be considered to be a part of the task of drafting the position description. Additional criteria may be indicated by the policies and procedures of a given ministry or program area.

\*\*Ministry or program area is defined by all programming areas of the local church such as Sunday School, Youth Ministry, Children's Ministry, Elder Care, Nursing Home Ministry, and others that may be in the life of the local church.

### **Description**

A criminal background check consists of supplying certain standard identifying information to the appropriate state or local law enforcement authorities on a standard form provided for this purpose. A search is then performed of available state, county, and federal databases for any records pertaining to the individual, similar to the same type of check that is currently done for all teachers and volunteers in the public schools.

### **Information obtained**

The information arising from a background check will be reviewed and kept by the Senior Pastor. If the information disclosed, in the opinion of the Senior Pastor, raises no cause for concern, the Senior Pastor may communicate approval to the person(s) in charge of the appropriate ministry or program area.

If, in the opinion of the Senior Pastor, the information disclosed raises any cause for concern about the suitability of the individual for work in the ministry or program area contemplated, the Senior Pastor will review the information privately with the chairperson of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee (or head of the department involved). If concern still exists, the individual shall be afforded the opportunity to meet privately with the Senior Pastor and the chairperson of PSPR (or the head of the department involved) for the purpose of discussion, review, and/or clarification, before any final decision is made regarding approval of the individual's participation in the area of ministry proposed.

If, following such a meeting, the Senior Pastor and the chairperson of PSPR (or head of the department involved) are in consensus that there is no cause for concern, the Senior Pastor shall communicate approval as above. If the Senior Pastor and the chairperson of PSPR (or the head of the department involved) are agreed that the concern is legitimate, or if they are unable to achieve consensus, the individual will be assisted in finding another, more suitable, opportunity for ministry.

### **Confidentiality**

All information arising from a background check is to be held in confidence by the Senior Pastor (and the chairperson of PSPR or head of department if the information is reviewed with him or her). All records of such information will be kept under lock and key in a secure location. Records, notes, and information arising from a meeting with the individual as outlined above will be considered to be part of the background check and will be subject to the same provision of confidentiality.

### **Frequency and record retention**

Results of a background check will be kept on file for a period of seven years, at which point they will be destroyed. If the individual continues to work in the ministry or program area for which a background check is required, a new background check will be required after seven years. If the individual is absent from active participation in the church for a period of one year or more, and desires to resume work in a ministry or program area that a background check is necessary, a new background check will be required.

An initial background check required for key leadership positions will be conducted either at the time that the individual is considered for the position or at the time the guidelines goes into effect (in the case of current leaders). Thereafter, these individuals will be subject to the routine background check at seven-year intervals as outlined above.

### **Compliance**

It is strongly recommended to local churches that all persons working with youth or children have their background checks done first. It will be the responsibility of the leader of each ministry or program area, if their work involves children or youth, to insure that the persons working in that ministry or program area are in compliance with these guidelines. It will also be the responsibility of all persons working with children or youth to report promptly, to the head of the ministry or program area in which they work, any new developments which might bear on the advisability of their continued participation in the ministry or program area.

Background checks are encouraged for volunteers in other areas including (but not limited to): people dealing with money, janitorial, those involved in nursing home ministry and elder care. After persons have submitted all paperwork, they may assume their position contingent on the results of the background check. Upon review, volunteer is retained or released.

### **Financial considerations**

No payment necessary for the initial background check.

# Application Form for Volunteers and RELEASE

The information obtained on this form is for internal use by this local church only.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Business phone \_\_\_\_\_

Departments in which I may serve (please check any or all):

children \_\_\_\_\_; youth \_\_\_\_\_; music \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation, current employer, and business address:

Time at this employment: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

List churches (name and address), other than this one, that you have attended regularly the past five years.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name/address/phone number of pastor, employer, and personal references that may be contacted:

1. Pastor at other church: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Employer: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Personal Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your background working with the program and/or age group requested.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Circle Yes or No.

Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense? Yes No

Have you ever been charged with child neglect or abuse? Yes No

Have any complaints or allegations of misconduct involving children or youth ever been made against you? Yes No

Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs? Yes No

Within the last 30 days, have you abused alcohol, legal, or illegal drugs? Yes No

Have you been convicted or plead guilty to a traffic offense within the last 5 years? Yes No

Current drivers license number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain fully any YES answers to the above questions.

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In addition to the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of young people? (Explain on a separate sheet of paper)

The information that I have provided may be verified by contacting persons or organizations that may have information concerning me. I hereby RELEASE and agree to hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information, and this RELEASE may be sent to any reference. I also agree to RELEASE and agree to hold harmless this local church its Senior Pastor/Pastor, its officers, employees, volunteers, staff, and its Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee from any and all liability arising in any way from any use, review, disclosure or discussion of the information disclosed in this Application. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf.

I certify the information I have provided is true and correct; if it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for dismissal.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **RS – 206 – VOLUNTEERS AND PAID STAFF BACKGROUND CHECK GUIDELINES**

*In the camp setting and District and/or Conference Events*

(Adopted by NEUMC at Annual Conference 2003)

### **Purpose**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a means of obtaining criminal background checks. It is also a means of handling the information thus obtained from volunteers at the campsites of the New England Conference camps and retreat center (Aldersgate, Mechuwana, Wanakee, and Rolling Ridge.) These guidelines would also include those working with youth and children on the District and Conference levels within the New England Conference.

### **Scope**

These guidelines applies to any volunteer or paid staff working at events at any of the New England Conference camps/retreat center, and events/retreats/and overnights for those working with youth and children on the District and/or Conference levels. This is understood to include, at least the following:

- Summer camps and all overnight retreats
- Any person accompanying youth on an overnight trip or event or to events/retreats sponsored by the New England Conference.

### **Description**

A criminal background check consists of supplying certain standard identifying information to the appropriate state or local law enforcement authorities on a standard form provided for this purpose. A search is then performed of available state, county, and federal databases for any records pertaining to the individual, similar to the same type of check that is currently done for teachers and volunteers in the public schools.

### **Information obtained**

The information arising from a background check will be reviewed and kept by the Camp Director (for camps) and the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (for District/Conference events). If the information disclosed, in the opinion of the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, raises no cause for concern, the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry may communicate approval to the person(s) in charge of the appropriate camp, retreat, or overnight event.

If, in the opinion of the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, the information disclosed raises any cause for concern about the suitability of the individual for work at the event contemplated, the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry will review the information privately with the person in charge of the event.

If concern still exists, the individual shall be afforded the opportunity to meet privately with the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the person in charge of the event for the purpose of discussion, review, and/or clarification, before any final decision is made regarding approval of the individual's participation in the area of ministry proposed. If, following such a meeting the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the person in charge of the event are in consensus that there is no cause for concern, the Camp Director or Director of Youth and

Young Adult Ministry shall communicate approval as above. If the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the person in charge of the event are

agreed that the concern is legitimate, or if they are unable to achieve consensus, the individual will be assisted in finding another, more suitable, opportunity for ministry.

### **Confidentiality**

All information arising from a background check is to be held in confidence by the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (and the person in charge of the event if the information is reviewed with him or her). All records of such information will be kept under lock and key in a secure location. Records, notes, and information arising from a meeting with the individual as outlined above will be considered to be part of the background check and will be subject to the same provision of confidentiality.

### **Frequency and record retention**

Results of a background check will be kept for seven years, at which point they will be destroyed. Camp volunteers will be checked on a yearly basis, unless the volunteer is employed in a ministry area where a background check guidelines is already in place. For camp volunteer applicants who also serve continuously in a ministry area where a background check is already in place, the New England Conference Background Check Guidelines for the local church will apply (that is, the requirement for a check every seven years). If the applicant has a current background check on file with their local church, and if the applicant is also currently employed continuously in a ministry area, the applicants local church (district or conference office) may submit the background check on their behalf with a letter from the applicant asking for their background check to be released. For purposes of these guidelines, the term "Ministry area" is defined by all programming areas of the local church such as Sunday School, Youth Ministry, Children's Ministry, Elder Care, Nursing Home Ministry, and others that may be in the life of the local church where the local church has required a background check Information of background checks on file with an applicants local church, may be shared with the Directors of each of the camps/retreat center and the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the New England Conference office. This will avoid multiple background checks being done on the same person within one year.

For paid staff at any of the camps, and on the district or conference levels (i.e., District Youth Leaders, Conference Youth Leaders, adult members of the Conference Council on Youth Ministries, and the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry), results of a background check will be kept on file for a period of seven years, at which point they will be destroyed. If the individual continues to work in program areas for which a background check is required, a new background check will be required after seven years. If there is a break in employment for a period of 90 days or more, and the employee desires to resume work in a program area where a background check is necessary, a new background check will be required.

### **Compliance**

It will be the responsibility of the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry to be sure all New England Conference sponsored camps/events are in compliance with these guidelines. It will also be the responsibility of **all** persons working with children or youth to report promptly, to the Camp Director or Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, any new developments which might bear on the advisability of a volunteer's or staff person's continued participation in the camp, retreat, or event.

After persons have submitted all paperwork, they may assume their position contingent on the results of the background check. Upon review, volunteer or staff person is retained or released.

**Financial considerations**

D.No payment necessary for initial background check.

## D.Law Enforcement/Social Services/Emergency Contacts

NAME OF CHURCH: Weston United Methodist Church

STREET ADDRESS: 377 North Avenue, Weston, MA 02493

PHONE NUMBER: (781) 893-9595 or (781) 893-5858

EMAIL: [wumc@attbi.com](mailto:wumc@attbi.com)

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS:

Pastor in charge, Rev. Steven Melius (781) 891-1199

Others

NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE OF LOCAL CHURCH ATTORNEY:

None

NAME & PHONE NUMBER OF DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT:

Ronald Wilson (508) 853-1895

NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE:

(978) 682-7555

NAME OF LOCAL CHURCH INSURER:

Fred C. Church (800) 225-1865

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES PHONE NUMBER:

(800) 792-5200

WESTON POLICE DEPARTMENT PHONE NUMBER:

(781) 893-4803

WESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT PHONE NUMBER:

(781) 893-2372

DESIGNATED MEDIA SPOKESPERSON:

Pastor

(Information last updated on 10/23/04)

## E. Sources

The Weston United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Committee wishes to acknowledge and to thank the following resources for the valuable information provided to compile this policy document:

First United Methodist Church of Westborough, ed. *Child Safety Guidelines*.

Westborough: First United Methodist Church of Westborough.

[http://www.eocumc.com/child/childprotect\\_sample.pdf](http://www.eocumc.com/child/childprotect_sample.pdf)

[http://www.neumc.org/CrossCurrents\\_Vol\\_6/AC2003.pdf](http://www.neumc.org/CrossCurrents_Vol_6/AC2003.pdf)

Melton, Joy Thornburg. *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998.

North Avenue Nursery School, ed. *Parent Teacher Handbook*. Weston: North Avenue Nursery School.

Wayland United Methodist Church, ed. *Safe Sanctuary Policy*. Wayland: Wayland United Methodist Church.

This policy was originally developed by Bob Hout, Bonny Parlee, Heather Lussier, Sally Hicks, Ann and Dave Gehrenbeck-Shim for implementation of the school year 2003-2004.