

OVERVIEW

Oak Grove United Methodist Church is committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child and young person involved in its program ministry, and is further committed to insuring that its adult staff and volunteers are protected from unfounded accusations of abuse and neglect.

In response to an environment of growing public concern over the safety and welfare of young people, Oak Grove, like many other churches and institutions across the country, established in the summer of 2005, a task force to formulate an abuse prevention policy and guidelines to become effective as of October 15, 2005.

With this policy, Oak Grove affirms the right of children and youth to be protected from abuse and neglect, and equally important, the right of volunteers and staff to be protected from allegations of abuse and neglect. We believe that parents and workers prefer a church with an established, caring prevention program as opposed to a church with no policy in this area of vital concern.

In December 1993, the National Child Protection Act established levels of reasonable care which will be legally required of institutions caring for children and youth. The law encourages states to require that all child care providers be qualified by references, employment history and, if necessary, criminal reference checks.

After months of study, the task force of Oak Grove concluded that a well-balanced, proactive prevention policy is a necessity for any institution entrusted with the care of children and youth. The Policy applies to all those who work with children through Oak Grove-sponsored programs both on and off campus.

Oak Grove's Children, Youth, Volunteers and Staff Protection Policy includes the following: a Statement of Intent, Guidelines of Children/Youth/Disabled Employees and Volunteers, and selected forms.

At Oak Grove, we take seriously our moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and youth, as well as to support those who work with them, as we seek to proclaim our faith and follow in the ministry of Jesus Christ in our world.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Church Council, staff and members of Oak Grove United Methodist Church are committed to maintaining a safe environment in which children and youth are protected from abuse and neglect. Our goals are to protect children and youth in church programs, to educate workers and care givers concerning abuse issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the church as a whole, from potential allegations of abuse and neglect.

Implementation includes:

- Selection of staff, teachers, caregivers and others involved in activities with children and youth.
- Orientation of these individuals.
- Supervision of these individuals.
- Reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect.
- Responding to incidents or allegations of abuse or neglect.
- Monitoring the policy and procedures to insure compliance.

We recognize that children are entrusted to the care of adults in church programs and activities, both on and off the campus; they will be free to participate in these programs and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. This general policy is applicable to all persons whether compensated staff or volunteers, who conduct programs and activities, run by Oak Grove United Methodist Church.

Hereinafter, the use of the term 'minister' shall refer to persons ordained and lay staff persons, who are employed to work with specific work area ministries of OGUMC. 'Ministry' shall refer to specific work areas with children/youth/and/or disabled persons at OGUMC. 'Ministry Leader' shall refer to the staff person who has direct supervision of a particular work area or work area event.

**Guidelines for Employees and Volunteers
Who Direct or Control Children/Youth/Disabled Activities
at Oak Grove United Methodist Church**

1. Volunteer Screening Procedures --

- a. Prior to consideration for a position, any candidate who may be working with children, Youth or the disabled shall complete and return a Covenant Statement and Volunteer Application. (Form 1 attached).
- b. The Covenant and Application shall be carefully reviewed by the youth minister, children's minister or other ministry leader in the area that the applicant will be working.
- c. If the applicant appears to be appropriate for the ministry work, then at least two of the references may be checked to confirm the information provided on the application. (Form 3 attached).
- d. Should OGUMC have sufficient reason to believe that an applicant poses a threat to Children, youth or disabled person and/or has any prior history of physical or sexual Abuse directed against another person, then such applicant shall be immediately removed from consideration for a ministry position in this work area.
- e. A criminal background check may be performed through a state law enforcement agency with respect to any applicant.

2. Employee Screening Procedures --

- a. All persons applying for an employee position with children, youth, and/or disabled Persons will submit Forms 1 and 2, regardless of ministry position being considered.
- b. In addition, a criminal background check shall be performed through an appropriate agency, and such background check shall include at least a state law enforcement check.
- c. Should OGUMC have sufficient reasons to believe that an applicant poses a threat to children, youth or disabled persons and/or has any prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, then such applicant shall be immediately removed from consideration for employment with OGUMC.

3. Waiting Period --

- a. No volunteer worker will be considered for any lead ministry position involving contact with children, youth or the disabled until the candidate has been a member of OGUMC or is personally known to the ministry leader for at least six months and has met the screening criteria above.

4. Supervision -

- a. At least two adults (over 18) shall be present during children/youth/disabled activities, including events that require vehicle travel and program events off-campus. Exceptions

are permitted only with the approval of the parent and the ministry leader in emergency situations.

- b. During services/events, two adults shall be in each classroom. If two adults are not present in each classroom, then the door to the room will be left open. If the classroom has a Dutch door, then only the top portion may be left open. And one adult shall be available to roam in order to monitor activity inside and outside the room(s) where the service/event is held in order to satisfy this requirement.
- c. Volunteer workers are not to send children to find their parents, nor to release any child to await transportation. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the person.

5. Disciplinary problems –

Shall be reported to the workers' coordinator/supervisor.

Workers are not to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.

6. Injuries or Illness –

- a. A suitable approved substitute, who meets the criteria set forth above, shall be used to take the place of workers who are ill. If it is not possible to find such a substitute, then only substitutes who are personally known to the relevant ministry leader for at least six months or who have been cleared through an immediate background screening, such as "Safehands" or a comparable background checking service shall be used.
- b. Any coordinator/supervisor who becomes aware of an injury to a worker or participant shall take steps to ensure proper medical attention is given to the injured person. If the injury is minor, the parent or guardian should be notified of the injury when picking up the injured person. If the injury requires medical attention, then the parent or guardian of the injured person should be notified along with the worker's coordinator/supervisor as soon as practical. Proper emergency attention should be provided to the injured person, possibly including summoning an ambulance in the interim.

7. Notice of Injury, Abuse or Molestation –

- a. A written incident/notice of non-minor injury report shall be prepared by workers whenever a non-minor injury occurs during a ministry function/event. The incident report shall be forwarded to the worker's coordinator/supervisor and a copy Provided to the Financial Administrator of OGUMC. (Form 4 attached).
- b. Workers who become aware of any non-minor injury, any abuse or molestation or any allegation of abuse or molestation connected with any ministry activity shall immediately inform their coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader of such matter. The coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader shall immediately inform OGUMC Senior Pastor or Senior Associate Pastor.
- c. Any coordinator/supervisor who becomes aware of any non-minor injury, or any abuse or molestation, or allegation of abuse or molestation connected with any ministry activity at

OGUMC shall immediately inform the Senior Pastor or Senior Associate Pastor and shall complete a 'Notice of Injury' form. (Form 4 attached).

- d. Any ministry leader at OGUMC who becomes aware of possible abuse or molestation of a participant shall ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that abuse or molestation may have occurred.

The Senior Pastor or Senior Associate Pastor shall promptly contact the church attorney to provide a written opinion before any report of abuse or molestation is made to law enforcement authorities. If practical, such opinion by the attorney shall be obtained within 24 hours of the time that the Senior Pastor or Senior Associate Pastor first becomes aware of the abuse or molestation.

- e. Upon notice of abuse or molestation to the Senior Pastor or Senior Associate Pastor, then the church's insurance carrier shall be promptly notified, as well as any District or Conference agencies that need to be notified of such allegations according to the Book of Discipline.

- f. Confidentiality of all persons involved shall be scrupulously safeguarded.

8. Violation of Policy or Procedures –

- a. Workers shall promptly notify their coordinator/supervisor of any activity undertaken on their own behalf or by others which violates this policy or procedure.
- b. Any coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader OGUMC, who becomes aware of a violation of the policy or procedures, shall take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with the policy and procedures by all workers; and shall remove workers from their position if such removal is warranted, or if the workers pose a potential threat to others.

9. Internal Investigation –

- a. Any employee of OGUMC who is the subject of an investigation shall be removed from his or her position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. If employee has admitted to the abuse or molestation, then he or she shall be terminated in accordance with OGUMC employment practices.
- b. Any volunteer worker who is the subject of an investigation shall be removed from his or position pending completion of the investigation.
- c. Any person who is not found innocent of alleged abuse or molestation shall be removed from work with children, youth, and the disabled at OGUMC. OGUMC shall consult with its attorney for advice if termination of employment is indicated.

10. Spokesperson For OGUMC

The Senior Pastor or Senior Associate Pastor or his or her designee shall be the spokesperson following notice or allegations of any abuse or molestation in connection with activities of the ministry. This person will be the only person authorized to convey information of behalf of OGUMC concerning the situation, so as to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation, and shall convey only such information as is deemed necessary under the circumstances.

11. Annual Employee/Volunteer Worker Review

- a. This policy and procedures shall be conveyed for review annually to all workers, employees, coordinators, supervisors and pastors to whom it applies.
- b. All employees of OGUMC shall complete a brief renewal application once each year. (form 2 attached).
- c. A yearly update of information shall also be completed by all volunteer workers associated with OGUMC who will be working in any capacity with children, youth or the disabled at OGUMC.
- d. In the event any employee renewal application and/or volunteer yearly information update suggests or indicates that any employee or volunteer worker has become unsuitable for working with children, youth, or the disabled, he or she shall be immediately removed from his or her current position(s), and shall not be considered for other positions involving work with children, youth or the disabled.

12. Policy/Procedure Revision --

This policy and procedures will be regularly reviewed with OGUMC's attorney and can be modified accordingly by action of the Church Council in accordance with the Book of Discipline and in compliance with the employment practices set forth from time to time in OGUMC's employment handbook. Any such modification shall be promptly conveyed to all persons affected by the modification.