

Lake Washington United Methodist Church
Safe Church Policy
For Ministries with
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

Working with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

The congregation of Lake Washington United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, volunteers, and all others who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The attached Safety and Risk Management policies reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

Definitions:

Children and youth are 18 years of age and younger or anyone participating in an activity as a youth (i.e., pre high school graduate.)

Vulnerable adults are elderly, frail, developmentally disabled, and/or dependent persons.

Lake Washington United Methodist Church Safety Policies Covenant Clergy Staff

(Clergy staff members have been required to complete and sign a copy of this document which is kept on file.)

As a staff member in this congregation, do you agree to:

1. Observe and abide by all church policies regarding working with children, youth and vulnerable adults? Yes No
2. Report promptly abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor, pastoral staff, or the safety officer? Yes No
3. Complete, sign, and submit the Federal background check form? Yes No

I have participated in a training event or have read and understand the training materials provided by the church related to my assignment.

I have read and will retain the *Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Ministries with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults* brochure and other materials as provided, and I agree to observe and abide by these policies.

Signature _____

Print Full Name _____

Date _____

Theological Statement

As Christians, we are called to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. From our ancient Hebrew roots, we receive a legacy of justice and mercy. Hospitality and generosity were essential elements of the covenant between the people and their God. Holy places of worship were treasured as places of safety and harmony.

The New Testament continues to affirm our covenant relationship with God and with the whole community of faith. We are called to live just and generous lives, following the great commandments set forth by Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith, in worship and in loving nurture and to be encouraged to grow in their own faith. Today, the church may be the only place where some children and vulnerable adults find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow, to thrive, and to become faithful people. As a Christian community, we must live up to that responsibility with secure and open hands and hearts.

We must also recognize that we live in a world where there are risks and uncertainties. An open and hospitable Christian community will always, to some degree, be a vulnerable community. Yet it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risks by following a thorough and practical policy of prevention. Your pastor and staff are committed to training and supporting our children, youth, parents, vulnerable adults, and all volunteer leaders in understanding and following the safety procedures and policies outlined in this brochure.

May God bless all our efforts to be the faith community Jesus Christ has called us to be.

Portions of this statement come directly from Safe Sanctuaries by Joy Thornburg Melton; Discipleship Resources, 1998.

Policies

Background Checks

All paid staff and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are required to complete a Washington State Patrol Background Check. Paid staff and volunteers with overnight driving or more intense contact are required to complete a national background check.

If the Background Check shows an individual has been convicted of a crime against a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, he or she will be denied the position of working with these populations. In the case of possession, illegal sale or misuse of drugs or alcohol in the past seven years, he or she may be denied the position or may work under closer supervision of the pastoral staff. This will be decided at the discretion of the pastoral staff.

Additionally, paid staff (other than clergy who are appointed by the Conference which has done background checks on them) will be required to fill out a standard application form which includes documentation of their work history for the past ten years and which request personal reference with complete addresses. The form will also include consent to verify all information provided, a waiver of any right to confidentiality, and a waiver of any right to pursue damages against the church caused by the reference's response, and certification that the information is true and correct.

Prevention

All volunteers and staff should be

- Aware of potentially abusive situations.
- Informed and watchful for signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Supportive of the church’s abuse policy.
- Willing to attend training about abuse prevention.
- Aware that we all need appropriate human touch, and that trouble is caused when touch is not appropriate.

**Lake Washington United Methodist Church
 Safety Policies Covenant
 Volunteers & Non-clergy Staff**

(Volunteers have been required to complete and sign
 a copy of this document which is kept on file)

As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to:

1. Observe and abide by all church policies regarding working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults?
2. Report promptly abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor, pastoral staff, or the safety officer?
3. Complete, sign, and submit the Washington State Patrol background check form?
 I have participated in a training event or have read and understand the training materials provided by the church related to my assignment.

I have read and will retain the Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Ministries with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults brochure and other materials as provided, and I agree to observe and abide by these policies.

Signature _____
 Print Full Name _____
 Date _____

Annual training for staff, adults, and helpers

working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults

Volunteers in this capacity are required to attend a training session in which they are informed of the church's policies for the prevention of child and other abuse and are taught about the various forms of abuse and how to recognize signs of abuse. The training will include procedures to be used in all ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults; appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse; and details of the state laws regarding abuse. At the end of the orientation/training, all will be required to sign a covenant to abide by the church's policies and procedures. Workers unable to attend will be provided with the written training information and will be required to sign the covenant. Such training is offered annually; volunteers are expected to attend a session every three years.

Dealing with reported incidents of sexual or physical abuse and incidents of same by paid or volunteer staff

Reporting is important. Our children are our greatest resource and, as the Church, we have an obligation before God to do all within our power to provide physical safety in our programs, as well as quality content and leadership. This applies to vulnerable adults as well. Reporting is, at present, the best hope that the abuse will stop and that wholeness and shalom might be restored.

Any paid or volunteer staff who observes abuse or evidence of abuse, or receives information about abuse, will contact the pastor. If the pastor is suspected, contact will be made with the chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee who will then report to the District Superintendent. The suspected incident should not be discussed with anyone else. Confidentiality is important for the wellbeing of the victim and others involved.

Preventative safety procedures for working with children and youth

The following procedures protect both the vulnerable persons from abuse and the volunteer from false accusations of abuse:

- All rooms used as classrooms, offices, and meeting rooms have windows providing visibility from the hallways.
- Two unrelated adults, whenever possible, will be in every classroom or youth group meeting.
- During Sunday morning, at least one "rover" will be available in the hallways of the Sunday school areas so that, in the event that classrooms have only one teacher present, the "rover" can be available if the teacher should need help in any way. The rover can also supervise students who leave their classroom for any reason.
- If only one adult is present, the room door should be kept open; a childproof gate will be used if needed to keep very young children in the room.
- Use safe touching practices and ask first; use firm and clear touch, not suggestive touch; pat shoulders and heads, not chests and bottoms; hug from the side; discourage children above the age of nursery care from sitting on laps.
- Single night over-nights with youth will be staffed by a minimum of one adult per six youth who will remain awake at least until it is verified that all youth are soundly sleeping, even if this requires adults to remain awake all night.
- Students and leaders will use changing areas at pools and showers at separate times so that the privacy of neither the student nor leader is violated.

- Youth leaders and teachers will be a minimum of 4 years older than the students they supervise. Young adults who are closer than 4 years in age are not permitted at youth functions.
- Drivers for youth programs will have been legally licensed drivers for at least 5 years, will carry their own insurance, and will be registered with the Church's insurance as authorized drivers for the church.

Classroom/program dismissal

Children in fourth grade and younger are to be collected from their classrooms by their parent(s) or other responsible adults. These adults will have been listed as people who are authorized to pick up each child. Registration forms for Sunday school students include space to specify if there are persons who are legally restrained from having contact with the child. Parents will register their children upon the day of their first time in any program, and will specify who, besides themselves, are authorized to pick up their child.

Children are not to be left alone

- Children will not be left unattended in the classrooms or elsewhere in the church or on its grounds.
- If there is an emergency and the teacher must leave the classroom, the rover will be asked to step in and supervise until the teacher returns.
- When a child needs to leave the classroom for any reason, the teacher will ask another child of the same sex to accompany him or her.
- Parents are asked not to bring their children to activities until five minutes before the start time so that teachers and leaders have adequate time to prepare and ensure that all children are adequately supervised.

Nursery Safety

The nursery is for infants and preschool children only and will be supervised by a paid staff member who is trained/experienced in early childhood development. This staff member will maintain certification in infant/child CPR and in First Aid.

The Dutch door to the nursery is to have the bottom half always closed to help keep the children safe inside. The upper half is to be kept open except when it is not practical because of noise levels, but the door has a window through which parents may observe their children. Children are to be signed in by their parent(s) or other designated adult(s) and will be greeted by the nursery attendant. Their parent(s) or other designated adult(s) will sign them out promptly after worship.

Annual First Aid/CPR training

The church will encourage, on an annual basis, all church members working the children, youth, and vulnerable adults, as well as ushers and staff, to receive or renew First Aid and CPR training.

Advance notice to an involvement of parents

It is our practice and policy to give the parents advance notice and full information regarding the events in which their children will be participating in. If the event requires transportation away from the church or includes an overnight stay, full information about the destination and schedule are shared in advance in multiple ways. An open-door policy, allowing parents access to programs and events at any time, will help keep lines of communication open.

Parental Responsibilities

- Parents or caregivers are responsible for making sure that the information on registration forms is accurate and up to date. This will include information about allergies, medical conditions, and any other information that will help staff and volunteers work with the children.
- In the case of children with serious or unusual food allergies, the parents should remind leaders and may want to provide clearly labeled snacks for their children.
- Parents or caregivers are to pick up their children as soon as possible after each class or activity, making sure the volunteer or staff person is aware that they are taking the children. If a parent is not able to pick up a child, the parent is to arrange for another person to do so, making sure that the person in charge of the activity or class is aware that there will be a substitute and who the substitute will be.
- Parents are encouraged to share information and insights about their children that will help staff and volunteers meet their needs and work with them in the manner most suited to them.