

Safe Sanctuary Procedures  
**St. John's United Methodist Church**  
 Dover, New Hampshire  
 Accepted August 20, 2012  
 Updated September 27, 2017

According to RS-209, every New England Annual Conference ministry at the local church level that relates to children, youth and vulnerable adults in programming or oversight shall create procedures for implementing a Safe Sanctuaries policy. Administrative teams of local churches ministries and programs, who give oversight to these ministries, shall be responsible for implementing and monitoring the compliance of this minimum standard policy and its related procedures. The following procedures have been designed to comply with Conference guidelines and St. John's Safe Sanctuary Policy which was adopted on April 16, 2012.

While it is assumed the list below could never be complete, each of the ministries and any other events involving children and/or youth shall follow our Safe Sanctuaries Policy and these accompanying procedures. Outside organizations that use our facility are also expected to follow our policy and procedures, including background checks of their coordinators at their expense.

**St. John's Ministries Involving Children and Youth:**

<b>Church Program</b>	<b>Position Responsible for Safe Sanctuary Procedure Implementation</b>
Sunday School	Sunday School Coordinator
Youth Group	Youth Director
Choirs	Music Director(s)
Other events/programs that may involve children and/or youth	Pastor/Council Chair/Committee Chair – varies with individual circumstances
Nursery	Nursery Coordinator

**General Guidelines:**

1. Reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of both paid and volunteer staff who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be taken.
2. Volunteers wanting to work in ministries involving children and/or youth at St. John's must have a relationship with the church for a minimum of six months before they are eligible for volunteer positions in youth and children programs, OR always work alongside another adult who has had a relationship with St. John's for a minimum of six months.
3. We follow the "two-unrelated-adult rule" (a minimum of two non-related adults present in each classroom/group of children) as closely as possible. Should unexpected circumstances occur whereby two adults cannot be present (i.e. Sunday School), we will adapt by doing such things as combining classes, use a rotating adult monitor, cell phone verifications, and/or cancellation.
4. A list of authorized persons for picking up children/youth from church events should be in writing on the registration form. In the event of a last minute change, a written note is preferable, but verbal permission from the parent will be accepted.

5. No youth will be allowed to leave a church event before its completion without the permission of his/her parent or guardian.

### **Transportation**

1. Anyone driving children/youth for any official church event must provide proof of insurance.
2. Anyone who drives children/youth for any official church event must be at least 21 years of age.
3. Adults serving in official capacity may provide transportation to youth when at least one other youth or adult is present. In the event of emergencies, a brief ride may be given by an adult without another person present using cell phone verification for brief rides (cell phone call will be made to parent at start and end of the ride for record purposes).
4. Youth may not drive themselves from the church to an offsite youth group event (i.e. when they fall under the supervision of the church staff/volunteers). In that case, staff/volunteers are responsible for driving all youth. Youth may drive directly to non-youth group, church-sponsored events with parents' permission.
5. When youth group involves an overnight event, all youth should be driven to and from the event by an authorized adult (Refer to General Guidelines #4).

### **Background Checks:**

1. All staff (lay and clergy) shall undergo national criminal background checks, at the expense of the church, at least every two years. With the exception of his/her own, the pastor will request all background checks and maintain the confidential records. The pastor's background check will be conducted by the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC). This procedure applies to all staff, regardless of economic status, ethnic origin, gender, race, age, sexuality or sexual identity.
2. All volunteers working with children or youth up through the age of 18 years old shall submit to national criminal background checks, at the expense of the church, at least every two years. This procedure applies to all volunteers, regardless of economic status, ethnic origin, gender, race, age, sexuality or sexual identity.
3. For events that are not specific to children or youth, but may include children or youth (i.e. Habitat for Humanity builds, church sponsored CropWalk, Harvest and Holly Fair, etc.), it is required that the coordinators of the event have background checks.
4. All adults on overnight trips which include children/youth will complete a background check unless it is a family event.
5. Authorization for background checks is valid for the duration of one's service to St. John's. The pastor will resubmit background checks as needed.
6. When attending events where there will be adults from outside our church community for whom we cannot request background checks (Habitat for Humanity, mission trips, etc.), parents will be required to sign a permission form stating they understand the risks involved.

### **Education:**

1. St. John's will provide training at least annually as well as opportunities for refreshers and updates to procedures and general safety. The Associate Lay Leader shall serve as coordinator to oversee compliance and training as well as reporting to Church Conference.
2. All volunteers and staff must complete an initial training program prior to beginning work with children/youth and a refresher course annually thereafter.
3. Training will include all aspects of our Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures. It will also include the need for age-and-developmentally-appropriate language while working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults; appropriate discipline practices; and definitions of abuse and reporting procedures.
4. First aid and CPR certification classes will be offered to volunteers and staff. Certification will be mandatory for all children and youth program directors.

### **In the Event of a Suspected Case of Abuse or Neglect:**

1. When a volunteer or staff member either witnesses or has reason to suspect an incident of child abuse or neglect, they are required to report the incident to either the pastor, lay leader, or associate lay leader. Together, in compliance with the local laws, the incident will be reported to the appropriate authorities:
  - New Hampshire - Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) 1-800-894-5533
  - Maine - Dept. of Health and Human Service Child and Family Services 1-800-452-1999
2. When a volunteer or staff member either witnesses or has reason to suspect an incident of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult, they are required to report the incident to either the pastor, lay leader, or associate lay leader. Together, in compliance with the local laws, the incident will be reported to the appropriate authorities:
  - New Hampshire - Bureau of Elderly & Adult Services 1-800-949-0470
  - Maine - Dept. of Health and Human Services Bureau of Elder Services 1-800-624-8404
3. Only the pastor or designee is authorized to speak or respond on behalf of St. John's to a request for information from the media. Anyone who is contacted by the media with regard to any incident involving St. John's should refer the inquiry to the pastor or designee.
4. St. John's maintains insurance through the New England Conference.
5. In the event of an incident, in addition to the services provided by the New England Conference, St. John's may also create a team to provide additional support where needed.

### **Administration of Policy**

1. This policy shall be updated as needed by a committee assigned by the Church Council Chairperson.
2. A copy of the St. John's Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures will be provided to the Tri-State District Superintendent when adopted and whenever changes are made.
3. Updated policies and procedures as well as other relevant sources for information related to our policy (i.e. link to Safe Sanctuaries on Global Board of Discipleship website, and/or NH state laws for working with children and youth) shall be posted at [www.stjohnsdover.org](http://www.stjohnsdover.org). Hard copies will be available in the church office and posted in the Education Office.