

## Child Protection Policy Overview – Lakewood UMC

(updated August 18, 2014)

1. Goal – To ensure safe and comfortable interactions between youth and adults participating in the youth programs of Lakewood UMC.
2. Affected Areas and Limitations
  - a. Guides and governs our interactions during regular program times (Sundays and Wednesdays)
  - b. Guides and governs our interactions during youth trips
  - c. Does not cover interactions away from church such as tutoring, homeschool teaching, or interpersonal relationships between counselors, youth, and parents. In these situations parents must use their judgment in the amount of outside contact they are comfortable with. Attending youth events (plays, sports, etc) is an important way to build relationships and trust and we encourage our adult counselors to do so as possible.
  - d. You can expect the adult counselors to be obvious and clear in their interactions with your youth in all situations (at church or away); proper communication, support and backing of your rules, etc.
3. Application Process
  - a. All adults are screened (now included local, state, and federal screening)
  - b. All adults sign the child protection agreement from the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.
  - c. Volunteers must have been active at Lakewood UMC for at least one year (in other words, you can't just show up to church and then start working with youth). The youth director knows each of the volunteers prior to their involvement with the youth program.
  - d. We work with adults coming in to ease them into positions of leadership and provide opportunities to dialogue with them about their roles.
  - e. We will be doing annual reviews of our rules and guidelines.
  - f. Counselor Bios – are available at this meeting and we encourage you to go beyond that and strike up a conversation with a counselor you do not know in the same way you would your child's teacher, coach, or other adult in their life.
  - g. Youth Intern – hired for the summer
    - i. Always a former youth, usually at least two years out of the group
    - ii. Limited areas of responsibility – primarily helping to plan summer events and work logistics for those events and trips (Youth Week, Mystery Trip)
    - iii. College Aged Counselors
      1. At least one full year out of the group
      2. Limited responsibilities (growing towards more as they help)
      3. Typically assigned to specific areas to help (small groups, games, etc.)

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### 4. Supervision

- a. Conference requires one screened adult for classroom supervision – we usually go for two
  - i. Jr. High Sunday School often only has one but the door remains open
  - ii. Up to parents to consider these exceptions and decide if they feel comfortable with their child participating in these areas
- b. Open door policy – parents are welcome to attend anything we do, please just notify the youth director as these protection policies will apply to any parents in attendance
- c. Counseling
  - i. The youth director does the majority of this. Other counselors are sometimes sought for advice, opinion, etc. In these cases, privacy and safety are important for your youth but you can expect us to properly conduct ourselves and communicate with you as necessary.
  - ii. The youth director will often counsel in his office but the blinds will not be drawn and the door will be unlocked. We are trying to respect the privacy of the youth but also maintain transparency in our conduct.
  - iii. Periodically the youth director or other counselor may meet with a youth off site, for coffee or lunch, to talk or touch base. We believe this is a vital part of the youth ministry. However, you can expect this to be all "above board" with no appearance of deception or impropriety. More often than not we will let you know that we are meeting with your youth to ensure proper disclosure (though what is discussed is obviously bound by privacy). If you are uncomfortable with this, we encourage you to talk directly to the adult counselor and also to feel free to notify the youth director.
  - iv. In any situation where your child's life is in danger (suicidal thoughts) or they are physically harming themselves (eating disorders, cutting) you can expect that you will be brought into that conversation quickly (depending on the severity, suicide issues will be immediate contact).
  - v. Any allegations of abuse are required by law to be reported to authorities.

### 5. Transportation

- a. At least two adults per vehicle
- b. All drivers at least 21 years of age (25 to drive the larger bus) and clean driving records – all are on "approved list"
- c. Mix of male/female counselors when vehicle is mixed whenever possible (not required by the conference but recommended and typically obeyed by us)
- d. We "patrol" the bus periodically, walking to the back, chatting with kids, trying to make sure conduct is appropriate for the trip
- e. At sundown on a trip, guys and girls are often separated on the bus
- f. We will not text or misuse our phones while driving

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### 6. Trips and Retreats

- a. Conference rule is two screened adults. Our rule is a maximum 1:8 ratio of screened adults to youth. We aim for 1:6.
- b. Always have each gender of counselor available on mixed gender trips
- c. Hotels
  - i. Never have adults in same rooms as youth
  - ii. Female adults are assigned to supervise female youth, same for male
  - iii. We do not patrol halls, we do bed check at lights out
  - iv. Hotels are checked on line for positive reviews and to ensure safety
  - v. All hotels will have interior corridors

### 7. Sunday Nights

- a. Drop off and Pick Up
  - i. Youth Choir – please drop off your youth by the choir room
  - ii. MYF – please drop off your youth in the circle drive by the CAC
  - iii. Pick up – All pickups should be done at the CAC circle drive. We are asking youth to bring their vehicles over to the CAC/back property from the choir room after choir practice. We are asking for no one to depart from the sanctuary side of the campus at night.
- b. Rules for leaving
  - i. Youth are not to leave church until the end of the evening unless they have notified an adult (this includes going home after choir practice). Once a youth has left campus, they are not to return that evening (this is mainly to prevent the liability of people coming and going without our knowing).
  - ii. If you need to pick up your youth early, please make sure they know to notify an adult counselor before leaving and we will have an adult accompany them to be picked up.

Florida Conference Child Protection Handbook:

[http://flumc.brickriver.com/files/oPage\\_Manager\\_Files/NNUY287V\\_0323161715\\_001.pdf](http://flumc.brickriver.com/files/oPage_Manager_Files/NNUY287V_0323161715_001.pdf)

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### APPENDIX V

#### PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of           Lakewood UMC           Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statement reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.

All adults involved with children or youth of our church must have been active participants of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall observe the Child Protection Policy at all times.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and laws regarding child abuse.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth?             Yes    No       

I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

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Signature of Applicant

Date