

**CHILD
PROTECTION
STANDARDS**

**FOR
BANDERA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BANDERA, TX**

ADOPTED BY ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

ON

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES FOR BANDERA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Introduction

“People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them, and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ And he took them in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16)

This incident from the ministry of Jesus speaks of the value our Lord placed on children and the example of faith that they provide for the rest of us. As followers of Jesus, we understand that children, youth, and vulnerable adults are inherently valuable members of Christ’s community.

Jesus highlighted not only the faith and openness of children, but also their vulnerability. This vulnerability puts children at risk, but it also places them close to God. Their dependence on God may be what Jesus was trying to get his disciples to see as a model of their own faith. This vulnerability and dependence make the protection and support of the community of faith even more important. Jesus was teaching that, within the community of believers, there must be protection for each of us in our dependence on God and each other. As followers of Christ, we resolve to protect children and also learn from them as we all grow in the faith.

Bandera United Methodist Church Will:

- 1.) Develop and implement an ongoing education plan for the congregation and its leaders on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention.
- 2.) Adopt screening procedures (use of application forms, interviews, reference checks, background clearance, etc.) for workers (paid and unpaid) directly or indirectly involved in the care of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- 3.) Develop and implement safety procedures for church activities such as having two or more nonrelated adults present in any area, leaving doors open, having windows in doors, providing hall monitors, instituting sign-in and sign-out procedures, and so forth.
- 4.) Advise children, young persons, and vulnerable adults of an agency or a person outside as well as within the local church whom they can contact for advice and help if they have suffered abuse.
- 5.) Carry liability insurance that includes sexual abuse coverage.
- 6.) Assist the development of awareness and self-protection skills for children, youth, and vulnerable adults through special curriculum and activities
- 7.) Be familiar with annual conference and other church policies regarding clergy sexual misconduct.

(From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church-2012. Pp 240-241)

In response to our commitment to all children and our desire to create safe places where they can grow in body, mind, and spirit, Bandera United Methodist Church adopts the following policies.

PROCEDURES TO SUPPORT THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF BANDERA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

I. Definitions

A. Abuse

Child abuse is a broad term encompassing a variety of acts perpetrated against a child, youth, and vulnerable adult by an adult or significantly older or more powerful youth or child that results in intentional harm to the child, youth, and vulnerable adult, or that negligently endangers a child's, youth's, or vulnerable adult's health, safety or welfare. The child, youth, and vulnerable adult victim is never capable of consenting to abusive behavior, either legally or morally. In all circumstances, child abuse is morally wrong and the victim shares no responsibility for the abuse. Persons having greater power or authority than the child, youth, and vulnerable adult victim, and who misuse that power or authority to harm the child, youth, and vulnerable adult physically, sexually, emotionally, or spiritually, perpetrate child abuse.

The Texas Family Code provides legal definitions of acts constituting criminal child abuse.¹ While we find these definitions informative, we believe the Church must hold itself to a higher standard. Our churches must be the safest and holiest of places for all of God's children, youth, and vulnerable adults if we are to succeed in our efforts to live and serve as the Body of Christ in the world.

While it would be impossible to form an exhaustive list of actions constituting child abuse, the following definitions and examples serve as a guideline for the purposes of this policy:

1. Physical Abuse – Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child, youth, and vulnerable adult. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, paddle, etc.), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child's, youth's, or vulnerable adult's body.
2. Emotional Abuse – Abuse in which a person exposes children, youth, and vulnerable adults to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the children, youth, and vulnerable adults of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children, youth, and vulnerable adults exposed to emotional abuse may experience being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove, and it is devastating to the victim.
3. Neglect – Abuse in which a person endangers a child's, youth's, or vulnerable adult's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding meals, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child's, youth's, or vulnerable adult's self-worth. This is perhaps the most common form of abuse.
4. Sexual Abuse – Child sexual abuse is a criminal act perpetrated by an adult (or an older and more powerful youth) that exploits and harms children, youth, and vulnerable adults by exposing them to or involving them in sexual behavior for which they are unprepared,

Texas Family Code, §261.001

to which they cannot consent (either morally or legally), and from which they are unable to protect themselves. The children, youth, and vulnerable adult victim is never capable of consenting to abusive behavior, and cannot be blamed for the abuse regardless of the child's, youth's, or vulnerable adult's conduct. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults for the purpose of or exposure of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults to pornography or prostitution.

5. Hazing/Initiations/Bullying – Abuse that occurs when the children, youth, and vulnerable adults is subjected to ridicule, harassment, or other emotional or physical harm as part of a rite of passage, initiation, punishment, or for the enjoyment of the participants or other bystanders. This type of abuse may be perpetrated by adults or by older or more powerful children, youth, or vulnerable adults. While this type of abuse may not always constitute a crime, it serves no purpose in the Body of Christ and is not acceptable in our church.
6. Ritual Abuse- Abuse committed as part of satanic rituals.

B. Age Groups

Youth- “all persons from approximately 11 through 18 years of age (generally persons in the sixth grade through the twelfth grade, taking into account the grouping of youth in the public schools)”

Adult- persons 18 years of age and older and not enrolled in public school

Child- persons up to “approximately 11 years of age (generally persons from birth through the fifth grade, taking into account the grouping of youth in the public schools)”

Vulnerable Adult- “any person who lacks the absolute most basic (as distinct from mid-level or typical level) human life skills by reason of not having learned them through the formative years of childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. A vulnerable adult is unable, rather than unwilling, to properly learn or properly maintain these skills, and is usually completely without, and unable to obtain, any family, friends, acquaintances or other assistive persons in their lives to offer education or assistance in these areas. To be classed as vulnerable, the adult's circumstances must be unable to be altered or improved by the adult's own individual actions without direct assistance from a more typical adult. The vulnerable adult must also be shown to be, on some significant level, a risk to him or herself if assistance is not provided.”

For the purposes of this document, there need be no distinction between “child” and “youth”.

C. Staff/Volunteer

Local Church Staff – any person employed by the church in a professional, program, support, or other position or a volunteer elected to a position of leadership within the administrative structure of the local church.

Volunteer- a person in any position of responsibility within a ministry program or at an event; any person who takes instruction and direction from a staff person in a ministry or at such an event.

II. Bandera UMC Child Protection Standards Coordinator

In order for our church to comply with the Conference Child Protection Standards, we will elect a

local church Child Protection Coordinator (CPC). This person will be identified on the annual Charge Conference Form. The CPC will oversee the development and implementation of the congregation's Child Protection Standards. The CPC will be trained by the Conference Children, youth, and vulnerable adults Safety Policy Coordinator (CCYSPC).

The CPC will have three functions.

1. Collecting, processing and maintaining information on those who apply to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults at our church.
2. Educating staff, volunteers, and event leaders in our Child Protection Standards and those of the Annual Conference where applicable.
3. Monitoring church programs and events to assure compliance with our Child Protection Standards
4. Be in contact with the CCYSPC at the Conference.

III. Selection and Screening of Staff and Volunteers

Application

- Each person being considered to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall fill out an application form and covenant (Appendix 1) as well as a background check.

Reference checks

- Each person being considered to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall provide the names and contact information for three references. (Appendix 2). A written record of each contact will be retained with the application form. (Appendix 3)

Interview

- Before approving an applicant, the CPC will review the written application and references to determine if the applicant will be interviewed. Indications that an interview must take place include:
 1. Applicant is new to the ministry or event.
 2. Applicant has attended church less than two years.
 3. Evidence indicates that the applicant has been charged with a crime against children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
 4. The application or references raise issues that require clarification.
- Interviews will follow the interview guidelines attached to this document (Appendices 4 & 5) and be conducted by a person designated by the agency responsible for the ministry/event.
- The results of the interview, especially when sensitive areas have been discussed, should be kept confidential and disclosed only to those persons requiring this information in order to make a decision as to whether the applicant should be accepted for this or any other ministry/event.

Covenant Statement

- Before beginning work with either children, youth, or vulnerable adults, each staff or volunteer will sign a statement (Appendix 1 - Application, Part 3) that they have read, understand and agree to abide by the Child Protection Standards of Bandera UMC.
- Such a signed statement is required of all persons and is prerequisite to beginning work at any event of Bandera UMC.

In the unfortunate situation where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, the agency will handle such a decision in a confidential manner which is sensitive to that person.

IV. Supervision of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults in Ministries or Events at Bandera UMC

Bandera UMC will strive to meet each standard that follows in all ministries and events that include children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Two Adult Supervision - At least two unrelated adults will be present in the building for all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Youth should not be counted toward fulfilling Two-Adult Supervision.

Age – Those in supervisory roles or who have primary responsibility for a group of children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be adults at least five years older than the oldest child or youth for who they are responsible.

Permission Forms - Permission Forms indicating a parent’s knowledge of the event or a sign-in sheet acknowledging parents’ knowledge of an event is required for each children, youth, and vulnerable adults attending an event at Bandera UMC. The forms will be retained by the person responsible for the event for the duration of the event. If the event includes travel to another site, the forms will be kept by the leaders traveling with the group and copies will be kept at the church.

Co-ed Events - There will be at least one adult of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two or more adults present will be of the same gender as the children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Transportation - The following standards will be followed when providing transportation to, from, or as a part of a conference/district sponsored event:

- Driver must be at least 21 years old
- Driver must have a valid US driver’s license for the vehicle being operated
- The vehicle must be insured. Driver must have proof of insurance in his/her possession
- Driver must be accompanied by at least 2 children, youth, and vulnerable adults and be part of a caravan with other vehicles or be accompanied by another adult

Open Door Policy - Parents, volunteers, or staff may visit and observe any part of the program at any time

Sensitive Areas - Leaders of a program should avoid being in sensitive areas such as bathrooms, shower areas, and changing rooms with participants. No leader will ever be the only adult in such areas when children, youth, and vulnerable adults are present.

One on One Activities – The Program Director or Pastor must be notified of the intended meeting and such meetings shall only be done in public places such as restaurants, school events, or open areas of the church.

Housing - The following standards will be followed when providing housing as a part of an event:

- Whenever possible, males and females will sleep in different areas (e.g., rooms, floors, cabins, etc.)
- Adults must keep an appropriate distance from children, youth, and vulnerable adults sleeping near them

- Whenever possible, separate bathrooms will be designated for each gender. When only one bathroom is available, privacy will be assured by means of a lock, a sign or a sentry
- Adults will not share a room with less than 4 children, youth, and vulnerable adults

Medical Support - Leaders will know the location of the nearest medical facility and have telephone access to emergency medical assistance.

Hazing/Initiations/Bullying – All forms of hazing, initiation, and bullying will be avoided, even when the young person targeted agrees to go along.

Covenant Statement – All volunteers and staff, including drivers, shall have read and signed the Participant Covenant Statement (Appendix 1 - Application, Part 3).

V. Response by Bandera UMC Staff and Volunteers to Allegations of Abuse

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in the life of the church. The church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse of any kind. It is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that suspected abuse takes place. We shall report suspected abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. To report suspected abuse is to be a witness to the world of the love and justice of God. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help or too weak to help themselves.

If abuse is suspected by, observed by, or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the leader of the conference/district/church sponsored event as well as Child Protection Services and, in the instance of serious physical or sexual abuse, contact Law Enforcement.

In the event of any suspected abuse or neglect, the reporter will do the following:

- Immediately separate the alleged perpetrator from contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Be careful to realize this is a precaution and not a presumption of guilt.
- Immediately separate the alleged victim from other children, youth, and vulnerable adults in the program. Take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the alleged victim until the parents or guardians arrive.
- Report the incident to CPC, pastor, or youth director for advice and support in following procedures.
- Immediately notify the proper authorities, i.e., Children Protection Services, Department of Health and Human Services, local law enforcement, etc. This is a requirement of law. Do not attempt an investigation. This should be left to the professionals who are familiar with these cases.
- If the accused is a clergy member of the annual conference, local pastor, or diaconal minister, appropriate provisions of the *Book of Discipline* must be followed. Contact the CPC or District Superintendent for assistance regarding disciplinary provisions.
- Establish and maintain a written report of the basic information to ensure on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, the victims and others involved. Use the “Suspected Abuse Report” form for this report. The report shall be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It shall be written in ink or typed to prevent changes. It shall at all times be treated with the highest confidentiality. The report shall remain in the church office where it shall remain confidential.

If abuse occurs or is reported, it is our long-range desire to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance, and intervention. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can occur.

VI. Education of Workers

In partnership with the Rio Texas Conference Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Safety Policy Board, Bandera UMC will provide training focused on current and timely issues of child protection for those working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

This training should include:

- The definition and recognition of child abuse
- The Bandera UMC policies and procedures and their purpose as protection for children, youth, and vulnerable adults and for those working with them
- The policy/procedures on reporting abuse and appropriate forms
- The meaning and importance of confidentiality
- The maintenance of a positive learning environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics
- Appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders.

Consistency of training scope and presentation is very important. A record of persons who have successfully completed approved training shall be maintained by the CPC, noting the date of completion and the training materials used.

Bandera UMC has an open door policy, which means that a parent, volunteer, or staff person can visit/observe at anytime. Are you comfortable with this atmosphere?

Bandera UMC requires the use of two teachers/leaders for all children, youth, and vulnerable adults activities. Are you comfortable with team teaching?

Please note: Answering “Yes” to either of the next two questions does not automatically disqualify you from the position for which you are applying. An affirmative answer will necessitate an interview to provide further explanation.

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to a crime against children or other persons?

Have you ever committed any act of child abuse or sexual molestation against a minor?

Part 2 - Church History and Prior Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Work

Name of Church you attend:

District:

How long have you attended?

Other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years:

List all previous church work involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults (include church name and address, type of work performed, and dates):

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults:

Part 3 - References

Please list three persons who have known you for at least five years and who are familiar with your character and/or your work, particularly as it relates to supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. None of the references may be relatives.

1. Name _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Email _____

Length of time you have known the reference _____

How do you know the reference? _____

2. Name _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Email _____

Length of time you have known the reference _____

How do you know the reference? _____

3. Name _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Email _____

Length of time you have known the reference _____

How do you know the reference? _____

Part 4 - Applicant's Authorization and Release

The information contained in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application, I hereby release any individual, church, judicatory, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to abide by the Rio Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church Child Protection Standards and will live by the understanding that, as a person of authority, it is my responsibility to avoid inappropriate behavior with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in my care.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing Authorization and Release and know the contents thereof and I sign it as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature _____

Date _____

Part 5 – Participation Covenant Statement

Bandera UMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in our ministries and events. The Bandera UMC Children Protection Standards reflect our commitment to being a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

Please answer each of the following questions:

Have you read the Bandera UMC Child Protection Standards?

yes/ no

Do you agree to observe and abide by all of the Bandera UMC Child Protection Standards?

yes/ no

Do you agree to observe the “Two Adult Rule” at all times?

yes/ no

Do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?

yes/ no

Do you agree to promptly report suspected abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisors and appropriate authorities?

yes/ no

The Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church requires that all individuals working/volunteering with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must undergo a background check, conducted by an agency assigned by the Conference office. Please complete this additional form and submit it with your application.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please return completed application and background check form to:

Bandera United Methodist Church
PO Box 128
Bandera, TX 78003

Or give your application to the church secretary.

Reference Questionnaire for Applicant to Work/Volunteer with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults at a Bandera UMC Sponsored Event

Your name was given as a reference for: _____

Who has applied for the position of: _____

As a condition of acceptance as a worker with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, an applicant must have on file a record of three reference contacts. Please complete this questionnaire and return it by _____ Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

1. How long have you known the applicant?
2. How do you know the applicant?
3. Have you observed him/her with children, youth, or vulnerable adults?

If so, please describe the situation:

4. What attributes of this applicant best prepare him/her for work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults?

5. Do you know of any conditions making this applicant unsuitable for teaching or working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults? Yes No -- If Yes, please describe

6. To the best of your knowledge, has this person ever been convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to child abuse or any violent crimes or had a children, youth, and vulnerable adults removed from their home?

7. Would you recommend this individual for approval to work with children?

Please make any additional comments you would like about this applicant:

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____ Phone _____

Please return this completed questionnaire to:

Child Protection Coordinator
Bandera United Methodist Church
PO Box 128
Bandera, TX 78003

Written Record of Phone Contact with Reference

Complete one form for each reference contacted

Confidential

1. Name of Applicant: _____

2. Individual, church or organization contacted (if a church or organization, identify both the organization and the person contacted)

3. Date(s) and Time(s) of Contact(s) _____

4. Person making contact(s) _____

5. Method of Contact (telephone, personal conversation, letter [attach])

6. Summary of conversation (summarize the reference's comments concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for children's or youth work)

Your Signature _____

Position _____

Date _____

Applicant Interview Guidelines

Goals of the interview

1. Fill in any gaps in the application form
2. Open paths for further discussion on the part of the applicant
3. Observe how the applicant conducts self in the process
4. Keep a written record of the applicant's responses to the interview process

In conducting the interview, the interviewer should be aware when “red flags” are raised concerning the applicant. These “flags” are indicators of issues which must be explored further to be assured that all information is collected concerning a prospective employee/volunteer. Some of these “flags” include:

Many addresses or churches attended over a short period of time.

This could indicate that a person is trying to be anonymous. But it could also indicate that he/she is a college student who moved a lot to keep rent low.

Wants to work with only one age group.

If someone would like to work with only one specific age group, it could indicate that person has targeted that age group for molestation. Or it could mean that is the age group for which they are trained and experience has shown that they do not work as well with other ages. Also be aware of those who seem overly committed to one age group. For example, someone who simultaneously leads a scout group, coaches Little League, serves as a Big Brother, and now wants to teach Sunday School may be neglecting their own age appropriate peer relationships in order to cultivate potential victims.

Does not want/need/like close supervision

The interview may indicate that the person does not like to be closely supervised. This might raise questions about motivation for applying for this work.

Sample Interview Questions

1. Why are you interested in being associated with this church-sponsored ministry?
2. How would you describe yourself?
3. When you heard about this position, what appealed to you the most?
4. What specific skills do you bring to this position?
5. With what age group and gender do you prefer to work? Why? Please give examples of your work with this age group.
6. Are you willing to work with other age groups or genders?
7. What kinds of programs or activities would you be willing to lead, supervise or conduct? If trained, would you be willing to conduct other activities?
8. What do you feel are the chief indicators of a successful program or activity?
9. Give a specific example of how you overcame a difficulty in job, school, or family.
10. Give an example of how you overcame a problem with a youngster other than your own. How were you disciplined as a child? How would/do you discipline?
11. Under what supervision style do you work best?
12. In what types of activities or recreation do you participate?
13. What were your favorite subjects in school?
14. What would you like to tell us that has not been covered?
15. What questions do you have about this ministry?
16. Other questions to raise regarding information given on the information form?

One might conclude the interview with one or two hypothetical situations which are typical at Bandera UMC events and ask the applicant how they would respond in that situation.

Report of Suspected Incident of Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult Abuse or Misconduct

1.) Event: Church Name, Name of Event or Ministry, Location, Date, Leader-

2.) Name of staff or volunteer observing or receiving disclosure of alleged abuse-

3.) Alleged victim's name and date of birth-_____

4.) Date/Location of initial conversation with or report from the alleged victim-

5.) Alleged victim's statement (please give a detailed summary)-

6.) Initial actions taken-

Persons notified (date, time, by whom, person contacted, notes)

Event Leader-_____

Child Protection Services-_____

Law Enforcement-_____

Parents-_____

Pastor or Conference Official-_____

Follow-up Actions- _____

Signature of person making this report- _____

Print name of person making this report- _____

Date of report- _____

Send Completed Report To: (If done at a later date to protect individuals involved)

Bandera United Methodist Church
PO Box 128
Bandera, TX 78003