

# **CHILD PROTECTION STANDARDS**

**FOR  
THE WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**ADOPTED BY ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2003**

**REVISED – MARCH 2009**

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# CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE OF THE 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 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.

Physical contact with children/youth in our programs is healthy and affirming. However, we recognize that all hugging, touching, and close physical contact carries an implied risk in our culture. Physical contact of any nature should be carefully controlled to demonstrate only respect and Christian concern for any of our children/youth.

Our culture appears to be experiencing an increase in the incidence of child abuse and neglect. As much as we do not like to think about abusive and hurtful things happening in the church, it is clear that it is our duty as the Church to guard and protect the children, youth, church staff, and volunteers who participate in our ministries.

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (from *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church - 1996*. [pp. 384-386])

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodists, we adopt this policy for the protection of our children and those who work with them in our annual conference.

## **Purpose**

Our conference's purpose for maintaining this Child Protection Policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

By maintaining these policies and procedures, we demonstrate our commitment in several ways:

- ⊕ We cultivate an environment which fosters safe relationships among our children/youth and their adult workers;
- ⊕ We provide the required training for the large number of adults who work with children and youth at Conference/District events and in local churches;
- ⊕ We establish the minimum standards required for local church Child Protection Policies;
- ⊕ We maintain a Clearing House for application, screening, and training records for adult workers with children/youth;
- ⊕ We provide a practical, working model for local churches and related organizations; and,
- ⊕ We raise the issue of child protection to a broad audience throughout the conference.

## **Statement of Covenant**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth, as well as those who work with children and youth. In support of this covenant, we will:

- ⊕ Encourage the development and implementation of reasonable procedures specifically designed to protect children, youth, staff, and volunteers associated with activities of the church;
- ⊕ Encourage the establishment of appropriate ways of responding to alleged, reported, or suspected incidents of abuse in a fair and compassionate manner;
- ⊕ Be in a compassionate ministry with all affected persons: the alleged victim, the alleged victim's family, the accused, the accused family, and the church family; and
- ⊕ Provide resources in support of child protection issues for the Church.

## **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this annual conference is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ at all levels of the Church so that each child/youth will be "...surrounded by steadfast love,...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44)

# PROCEDURES TO SUPPORT THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## I. Definitions

### A. Abuse

Child abuse is a broad term encompassing a variety of acts perpetrated against a child/youth by an adult or significantly older or more powerful youth or child that results in intentional harm to the child/youth, or that negligently endangers a child's/youth's health, safety or welfare. The child/youth 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 victim, and who misuse that power or authority to harm the child/youth physically, sexually, emotionally, or spiritually, perpetrate child abuse.

The Code of Maryland and the West Virginia Code provide legal definitions of acts constituting criminal child abuse.<sup>1</sup> 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 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. 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 body.
- 2) Emotional Abuse – Abuse in which a person exposes a child/youth to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child/youth of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children/youth 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 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 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 by exposing them to or involving them in sexual behavior for which they are unprepared, to which they cannot consent (either morally or legally), and from which they are unable to protect

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<sup>1</sup> W.Va. Code, §§49-1-3 and 61-8D-1 through 61-8D-6; Maryland Code, §§3-601 through 3-607, 11-203 and 11-209.

themselves. The child/youth victim is never capable of consenting to abusive behavior, and cannot be blamed for the abuse regardless of the child's/youth's conduct. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of the child/youth for the purpose of or exposure of the child/youth to pornography or prostitution.

- 5) Hazing/Initiations/Bullying – Abuse that occurs when the child/youth 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 or youth. 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.

## **B. Age Groups**

The *Book of Discipline* helps us provide the following definitions:

Youth - “all persons from approximately 12 through 18 years of age (generally persons in the seventh grade through the twelfth grade, taking into account the grouping of youth in the public schools)”

Adult - persons 18 years of age and older

Child - persons up to “approximately 12 years of age (generally persons from birth through the sixth grade, taking into account the grouping of youth in the public schools)”

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

## **C. Staff/Volunteer**

- 1) Conference Staff - any person in the employ of the West Virginia Annual Conference in a professional, program, support, or other position or a volunteer elected to a position of “Coordinator” or “President” (e.g. Youth Coordinator, UMW President)
- 2) Event Staff - a person in any position of responsibility at an event sponsored by the West Virginia Annual Conference or one of its agencies or districts. Or any person who takes instruction and direction from a Conference Staff person or another Event Staff person at such an event.

## **II. Selection and Screening of Conference Staff and Volunteers**

Although our Christian concern for children/youth leads us to be saddened when any form of child abuse takes place anywhere, our major policy need is to be certain that abuse does not occur within the framework of any conference program or ministry with children/youth. These policies and procedures are intended to help make safe and care-filled environments for conference-sponsored events.

Agencies may set *additional* standards for selection and performance of paid or volunteer staff persons.

### **A. Persons Representing the Conference at Conference-Sponsored Events**

In order to create a safe environment for conference-sponsored events, all persons working with children/youth at conference-sponsored events will be selected, trained, and supervised according to the procedures below.

Examples of conference-sponsored children/youth settings for which persons working with children/youth would be selected, trained and supervised would include, but are not limited to:

- ⊕ Conference Camps, those initiated and implemented by the Ministry Team on Conference Camps and Spring Heights
- ⊕ District Camps, programs initiated and implemented by district camping committees or other related district committees at a district camp site or another site
- ⊕ Summer Youth Celebration, Fall Workshop or other events/activities sponsored by the Council on Youth Ministries (conference or district) including meetings
- ⊕ Annual Conference Children's Conference or other events sponsored by annual conference or district program agencies
- ⊕ Child care provided for any conference or district sponsored event
- ⊕ Mission trips which include youth or children as participants or as recipients of the mission work
- ⊕ Any other conference or district sponsored event where children/youth are present

### 1. Application

- a. Each person being considered to work with children/youth in any conference/district program shall fill out an application form and covenant each time he/she enters into or begins anew in a position or event.
- b. Application will request at least the information on the sample included as part of this document (Appendix 1)

### 2. Reference checks

- a. Each person being considered to work with children/youth in any conference/district program shall submit to the agency responsible for the ministry/event 3 references. Each should have known the applicant for at least five years and be familiar with the applicant's character particularly as it relates to supervision of children and youth. None of the references may be related to the applicant and should not be related to each other. If possible, one of the references should be a pastor in the West Virginia Conference.
- b. The agency responsible for the ministry/event will contact the three references for all new applicants. It is up to the agency to determine the method of contact. Acceptable methods include:
  - ◆ Providing reference forms (see Appendix 2) to the applicant with instructions to have the references return them directly to the appropriate person;
  - ◆ Sending reference forms directly to references;
  - ◆ Telephone contact by an agency designee.
- c. A written record of each contact will be retained with the Application form. (see Appendix 3)

### 3. Interview

- a. Before placing an applicant, the responsible agency and/or the Clearing House Coordinator will review the written application and references to determine if the applicant will be interviewed. Indications that an interview must take place include:
  - i. Applicant is new to the event or position in the event
  - ii. Applicant is new (less than 5 years) to the West Virginia Conference

- iii. Applicant wants to work alone
  - iv. Evidence that the applicant has been charged with a crime against children or youth.
  - v. Upon checking references, issues are raised which require clarification
- b. Interviews will follow the interview guidelines attached to this document (Appendixes 4 & 5) and be conducted by a person designated by the agency responsible for the ministry/event.
  - c. 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 of the West Virginia Annual Conference.
4. Covenant Statement
- a. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each staff or volunteer will sign a statement (Appendix 1 - Application, Part 3 or Summary Brochure) that they have read, understand and agree to abide by the Child Protection Standards of the West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church.
  - b. Such a signed statement is required of all persons and is prerequisite to beginning work at any event.

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

## **B. Persons Representing the Local Church at a Conference/District Sponsored Event**

For those conference/district sponsored events where groups of children/youth arrive with their own adult leadership, the local church shall be responsible for selecting and screening those adults. In addition, those adults shall complete the "Liability Release Form for Local Churches." (Appendix 6)

Events that would fall into this category include, but are not limited to: retreats at conference/district facilities, confirmation rallies, Awakening, district youth rallies, etc.

## **III. Child Protection Clearing House**

To help leaders of district and conference events comply with child/youth protection policies of the Annual Conference, the Conference Sexual Ethics Team will establish a Child Protection Clearing House. The Clearing House will be maintained through a Clearing House Coordinator to be elected by the Annual Conference (upon nomination by the Conference Sexual Ethics Team) and overseen by the Sexual Ethics Team which deals with issues related to "Safe Sanctuaries" training.

The Clearing House will have three functions. Its primary function is collecting and maintaining information on those who apply to work with children and youth at Conference and District events to help these events comply with Conference Child/Youth Protection Standards. For each event, every adult must have on file an application and references. This does not necessarily mean, though, that if a person works several events he/she must re-file new material each time. Maintaining this information in a central location will avoid much duplication. It will also facilitate information sharing between event leaders which could aid in recruiting and in matching event needs with the strengths of volunteers around the conference.

The second function is educating. The Clearing House will help event leaders understand what the policies are and that their purpose is to protect our children from institutional abuse in any of several forms. Our policies also help to protect our adults by keeping them out of situations which children and parents may find questionable.

The third function of the Clearing House is monitoring. By keeping conference/district leaders aware of the child/youth protection policies, The Coordinator will also be working to keep all events in compliance.

The leaders of all conference and district programs remain responsible for seeing that the standards are followed. The Clearing House is a support tool to help these leaders comply.

### **How Will It Work?**

1. Event leaders will provide the Clearing House with a list of names of volunteers for any event so the Clearing House knows from whom to expect information and can report on the progress of its collection. It is suggested that event leaders have the majority of their recruiting done and the list submitted 120 days prior to the event to allow sufficient time for information collection.
2. Each adult will complete a standard application asking for background information and references who can speak to his or her suitability to work with children. It is up to event leadership to give each volunteer an application and three (3) or more reference forms. It is up to the applicant to return the application to the Clearing House. Further, the applicant needs to provide each reference with a standard form and ask the reference to send the completed form directly to the Clearing House. For volunteers recruited near the time of the event, the event leader may collect references by phone but must submit a "Telephone Reference Questionnaire" for each reference.
3. For workers who are re-applying, the process will be abbreviated. Workers in short term positions need to submit an application for processing annually. If a volunteer works for conference or district events for several *consecutive* years, they will be asked to participate in the full process only every 5 years. Workers may be asked by conference or event leaders to participate in training or submit additional references for successful processing of an annual application. Workers and staff in ongoing positions must keep their information with the Clearing House current and participate in the full process every 5 years.
4. The Clearing House will keep event leaders updated on the progress of information collection and volunteer processing. Event leaders will be contacted personally regarding any information received which raises a "red flag" or questions a person's suitability for working with children or youth. Each volunteer will move through several categories: In Process, In Process with Questions, Processed Successfully, and Processed Unsuccessfully.
5. Final decisions about categorizing a volunteer as "Processed Unsuccessfully" will be made collaboratively by: 1) Event Leader, 2) Clearing House Coordinator, and 3) Director of Leadership Formation and Ministry Support. It will be the responsibility of the Event Leader to inform the volunteer.
6. Information from previous events or other sources may be considered when processing a volunteer application. A separate decision will be made each time a volunteer makes application.

7. Information received from references is "property" of the West Virginia Annual Conference. It will be shared with event leaders and within the Office of Leadership Development and Ministry Support. Information may be shared with District Superintendents or other conference leadership if necessary. Information from references will not be shared by the Clearing House with anyone outside of conference leadership.

#### **IV. Supervision of Children and Youth at Conference/District Sponsored Events**

Two Adult Supervision - At least two unrelated adults will be present for all activities involving children or youth. There are at least 4 reasons for this standard:

- ⊕ To remove an opportunity for abusive situations
- ⊕ To remove an opportunity for false accusations of abuse
- ⊕ To provide support for leadership at the events
- ⊕ To provide sufficient leadership to deal with emergency situations

While recognizing the importance of developing youth leaders throughout the conference, we must also recognize that persons 18 and under are youth and not adults. Therefore, when youth assist with an activity, the youth may not be counted toward fulfilling the Two-Adult rule.

Permission Forms - Permission Forms indicating a parent's knowledge of the event and release for emergency medical treatment are required for each child/youth attending a conference/district sponsored activity. The forms will be retained by the person responsible for the event for the duration of the event and by the sponsoring agency for at least one year following 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 by the leader of the event.

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.

Transportation - The following standards will be followed when a conference/district agency is 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 be part of a caravan with other vehicles or be accompanied by another adult
- ⊕ Driver must have read and signed the Participation Covenant Statement

Open Door Policy - Parents, volunteers, or staff of the conference 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 are present.

Housing - The following standards will be followed when a conference/district agency is providing housing as a part of a conference/district sponsored 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 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

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

Hazing/Initiations/Bullying - Hazing is any situation where some are entertained at the emotional expense of another. This is sometimes intentional harassment and sometimes “innocent fun.” Both are abusive exercises of power which erode the self-esteem of the child/youth. Such abuse has no place in the program of the Church and must be avoided. Common examples of “innocent fun” hazing include: a “snipe” hunt, skits involving a victim, good-natured put downs, or secret organizations. Even when the “victim” agrees to the “joke,” we are modeling unacceptable behavior.

## **V. Responsibility of Adult Workers Outside Official Events**

Recognizing that it is impossible to monitor relationships outside of events, adult workers are reminded that they are to be held accountable to the spirit of these policies in all their interactions with the children/youth of God’s Church.

## **V. Response to Allegations of Abuse by Conference Workers**

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children/youth 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 abuse takes place. We shall report abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. To report 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 conference, that person shall report the incident immediately to the leader of the conference/district sponsored event.

If abuse occurs or is reported, it is our intention 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 take place.

In the event of any potential violations of the law, the Event Leader will do the following:

- ⊕ Immediately separate the accused from contact with children and youth. Be careful to realize this is a precaution and not a presumption of guilt.
- ⊕ Immediately separate the alleged victim from other children and youth 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 the Coordinator of the Child Protection Clearing House or another member of the Sexual Ethics Team for advice and support in following procedures. This Coordinator (or other Team member) will report the incident to the Director of Connectional Ministries or a District Superintendent who shall contact the Conference

Chancellor and follow appropriate steps from the Conference Crisis Response Plan. 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.

- ⊕ Immediately notify the proper authorities (Children 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.
- ⊕ Notify the parents or legal guardians of the alleged victim. It is important to emphasize that the authorities must be notified even if the parents do not wish the incident to be reported. (Note: if one or both of the parents or the legal guardian is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities and follow their advice on how to proceed.)
- ⊕ 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 (Appendix 7) 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 be filed in the Bishop’s office where it shall remain confidential.
- ⊕ Make certain that contact with anyone not directly related to the incident (media, other adult workers, other children/youth participants) will be handled only by the Director of Communications as part of the Crisis Response Plan. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments would be premature.
- ⊕ Reach out to the alleged victim and his/her family as well as the accused with Christian compassion and pastoral care.

## **VII. Education of Workers**

The Conference, through the Clearing House Coordinator, will provide training focused on current and timely issues of child protection for those working with children and youth. Sessions will be led by trainers approved by the Clearing House Coordinator. Attendance at this training shall be required for all adults and youth helpers who will have any direct contact with children or youth at a conference/district sponsored event. It shall be open to those working with children/youth on the Local Church level.

This training should include:

- ⊕ The definition and recognition of child abuse
- ⊕ The conference policy and procedures and their purpose as protection for children/youth 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.

Persons successfully completing approved training will be issued a Certificate of Training by the Child Protection Clearing House noting date of completion and date of expiration.

## **VIII. The Local Church**

A. Each Local Church will have a Child Protection Coordinator (where applicable, one person may serve this position for multiple Churches within a Charge).

1. This person will be identified on the annual Charge Conference Form

2. This person will be trained by the Conference Sexual Ethics Team through the Conference Clearing House Coordinator
3. This person will oversee the development and implementation of the Church's Child Protection Policy

B. Each Local Church will have a Child Protection Policy which addresses:

1. Selection of Adult Workers with children
2. Education of Adult Workers with Children in issues related to child protection
3. Safe Practices promoting child protection
4. Reporting procedures



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Our Conference encourages the use of two teachers/leaders for all children/youth 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 plead 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?

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### **Part 2 - Church History and Prior Children/Youth Work**

Name of Church you attend \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_ How long have you attended? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for working with children/youth: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Part 3 - Participation Covenant Statement

The West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist 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 Conference. The following policy statements reflect our Conference's commitment to preserving Conference gatherings 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.

1. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth.
2. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the Conference to keep volunteers informed of Conference policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
3. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

#### Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this Conference, do you agree to observe and abide by all Conference policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth?  Yes  No
2. As a volunteer in this Conference, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times?  Yes  No
3. As a volunteer in this Conference, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?  Yes  No
4. As a volunteer in this Conference, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor?  Yes  No

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

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 4 - References**

Please list three persons who have known you for at least three years and who are familiar with your character and/or your work particularly as it relates to supervision of children and youth. None of the references may be a relative. If possible, one of the references should be a pastor in the West Virginia Conference.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time you have known the reference \_\_\_\_\_  
How do you know the reference? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time you have known the reference \_\_\_\_\_  
How do you know the reference? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time you have known the reference \_\_\_\_\_  
How do you know the reference? \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 5 - 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 or youth. 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 West Virginia 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 and youth 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 2 - Reference Questionnaire**

**Reference Questionnaire for Applicant  
to Work/Volunteer with Children or Youth  
at a West Virginia Conference 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 or youth at events sponsored by the West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, an applicant must have on file a record of three reference contacts. Please complete this questionnaire and return it by \_\_\_\_\_ in the attached envelope. 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 or youth?  
If so, please describe the situation:
4. What attributes of this applicant best prepare him/her for work with children/youth?
5. Do you know of any conditions making this applicant unsuitable for teaching or working with children or youth?  Yes  No -- If Yes, please describe
6. To the best of your knowledge, has this person ever been convicted of or plead guilty or no contest to child abuse or any violent crimes or had a child/youth removed from their home?  
 Yes  No
7. Please make any additional comments you would like about this applicant:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed questionnaire in the attached envelope. If missing, return in an envelope marked "Confidential" to:

Name of Conference Event \_\_\_\_\_  
Attention: J.F. Lacia  
Address PO Box 2313  
Charleston, WV 25328

**Appendix 3 - Written Record of Contact**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 4 - 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.

The interviewer needs to be able to explore issues as they arise during the interview and depart from the set of questions prepared to do so. It is helpful, therefore, if interviewers prepare ahead of time for the interview by:

1. Reading the application form
2. Noting areas for exploration

## **Appendix 5 - Sample Interview Questions**

1. Why are you interested in being associated with this conference-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 conference sponsored events and ask the applicant how they would respond in that situation.

**Appendix 6 - Liability Release Form**

**West Virginia Conference Liability Release Form  
For Conference/District Sponsored Events**

**For Local Churches or Other Groups Providing Their Adult Leadership  
for Children or Youth Groups**

Local Church \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Group Leader's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Conference Sponsored Event \_\_\_\_\_

Event Dates \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Our church has a child protection policy in place, and I have been trained in the use of this policy. I am aware of what I need to do in the event that there is an incident or accident that takes place at our housing facility or event site.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Our church does not have a child protection policy in place. However, I have spoken to the pastor and am aware of my responsibilities to provide supervision for my group at this event. Furthermore, the pastor has provided me instruction as to how I am to respond in the occurrence of an incident or accident at our housing or event site. I feel confident with the reporting procedures and the supervisory training I have received.

Moreover, we understand that the West Virginia Conference (and its agencies) assumes no responsibility for the housing facilities or the supervision of the youth in those facilities. This is the responsibility of the adult supervisors of the local church bringing the youth to this event.

Signature of the Adult Group Leader \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Pastor (or Lay Leader or Trustees Board Chairperson if the Pastor is the Group Leader)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 7 - Suspected Abuse Report**

**West Virginia Conference  
Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse  
At Conference/District Sponsored Events**

1. Event: Name, Location, Date, Leader, Sponsoring Agency

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of Person (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of abuse

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Alleged victim's name and date of birth

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Date/Location of initial conversation with or report from the alleged victim

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Victim's Statement (please give your detailed summary)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Initial Actions Taken

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Event Leader

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Children Services

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Law Enforcement

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parents

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Conference Official \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up Actions and Additional Information

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person making this report \_\_\_\_\_

Print name of person making this report \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Report \_\_\_\_\_