



Connecting God's Family by Knowing, Loving, and Serving
so that the world might experience Christ's Love!

Child/Youth Protection Policy

Statement of Purpose:

As a Christian Community of Faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers and volunteers who work directly with and supervise the children/youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of those who work directly with children/youth, implement procedures in programs and events, and educate our workers, helpers and volunteers regarding the policies and state law.

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child 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).

**A. Original Effective Date: June 9, 2006
As Revised, effective January 24, 2019**

B. Definitions:

"Adult" – a person 18 years of age or older

"Child(ren)/Youth" – any person under the age of 18

"Church" – First United Methodist Church of Keller d/b/a Keller United Methodist Church, including all campus(es).

"Child/Youth Protection Committee" shall consist of at least one pastor, two SPRC members, a member of Trustees, Lay Leader, Director of Children's Ministries, Director of 5th – 7th Grade Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, Pre-school Director, Pastor of Discipleship Ministries and a representative from each group working with Children/Youth. The Child/Youth Protection Committee will meet as needed to write and revise the Child/Youth Protection Policy and present it to the Ministry Team for approval.

"Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee" shall be appointed by the Lead Pastor or his designee and convened on an as needed basis. It should include an SPRC member and at least one pastor. It should also include the Records Custodian

and legal counsel for the Church, if those persons are available. The group may meet by telephone, electronically or in person. Duties are listed under "G" below.

"Function" – any ministry, party, class, child care, activity, trip or other gathering specifically designed or planned for Children/Youth and sponsored or supported by the Church. This will include functions both on and off the property of the Church. Central Texas Conference (CTC) events are not included in this definition and are covered by the CTC policies. **This definition does not include events where children are chaperoned by their own parents or guardians or their designees.**

"Helper" – A person under 18 who has met all of the Helper requirements set forth in "C" below, but has not been designated as an Eligible Volunteer by the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee.

"Policy" – this document, Keller United Methodist Church Child/Youth Protection Policy.

"Records Custodian" – an employee or volunteer named by the Child/Youth Protection Committee to keep records of all screening, references, background checks, any related documents, and any information considered by the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee, as well as documents regarding training of Volunteers, Workers, and Helpers (collectively, "Records").

"Volunteer" – an adult person, or a person age 16 or 17 who has been approved by the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee, who has met all the Volunteer requirements set forth in "C" below.

"Worker" – An employee of the church who has met all the Worker requirements set forth in "C" below.

C. Eligibility for Volunteers, Workers and Helpers

To be "Eligible", each person working directly with and supervising Children/Youth at any Function must meet the following requirements:

1. Volunteers and Helpers must be either:
 - a. a member of the Church for six consecutive months prior to eligibilityOR
 - b. a regular attendee at services or ministries for at least six out of the eight calendar months prior to eligibility.
2. Volunteers and Workers must agree to a screening, including:
 - a. A criminal history check conducted by the Church.

- b. Provide three written references from persons who have known the applicant for at least three years, and are not related to the applicant by blood or marriage.
- 3. Volunteers, Workers and Helpers must attend a training session approved by the Child/Youth Protection Committee.
- 4. Volunteers, Workers and Helpers must sign and agree to the Participation Covenant Statement.
- 5. At any time, at the discretion of the leader of the Function and/or the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee, an Eligible Volunteer or Eligible Worker may be excluded from supervising a Function.

D. Renewal of Eligibility

- 1. After twelve (12) consecutive months of absence from services or ministries of the Church, an Eligible Volunteer or Eligible Helper must complete all of the requirements under paragraph C to renew eligibility.
- 2. The Child/Youth Protection Committee may periodically conduct a global renewal process wherein some or all Eligible Workers, Volunteers and Helpers are required to be re-screened and/or re-trained.

E. Supervision Requirements

1. Functions

- a. At least two unrelated Eligible Volunteers and/or Eligible Workers shall supervise every Function. At least one shall be at least five years older than the oldest Child/Youth participant.
- b. Any person who is not "Eligible" by the definition under paragraph C may not work directly with and supervise the Children/Youth at any Function.
- c. Every room where Children/Youth gather should maintain an open door policy or be equipped with a see-through window or a half-door which remains open.
- d. The following ratios should be required at all times:
 - 10:1 Nursery (newborn to toddler) to Volunteer/Worker/Helper
 - 15:1 Children/Youth (Pre-K through high school) to Volunteer/ Worker/Helper

There are many circumstances when a more conservative ratio (more supervision) should be considered. Volunteers and Workers shall strive to make each situation safe depending on the circumstances. When a Function requires more than two supervisors, Helpers may serve to meet the required ratio.

- e. Any co-ed overnight trip shall require both male and female Eligible Volunteers or Eligible Workers.
- f. For any Function involving Church sponsored or Church organized transportation, the transportation will be Safe Sanctuary compliant (and compliant with this Policy) if:
 - i. Each individual vehicle is in compliance with paragraph E.1.a. above; OR,
 - ii. Each individual vehicle has at least one Eligible Volunteer or Eligible Worker, and the group travels in caravans of at least two (2) vehicles.

The Child/Youth Protection Committee urges that all vehicles in a Function should travel in a caravan whenever possible. It is the responsibility of the drivers to strive to maintain a caravan at all times.

This provision shall in no way negate the requirements of paragraph E.1.a. for any aspect of the Function other than transportation.

- g. Overnight trips, as a whole, must comply with this Policy. In addition, for the overnight portion of the trip, the leader/organizer of the trip shall develop a detailed written description of the plan for sleeping, bathroom and shower arrangements. Prior to the trip, the written plan for sleeping, bathroom and shower arrangements shall be approved by a pastor and available for parent/guardian inspection.

2. Counseling

Anyone counseling a Child/Youth shall maintain an open door policy and/or ensure the room is equipped with a see-through window or half door which remains open.

3. Sign-in/Sign-out

At any Function where parents or guardians leave their Children/Youth in the care of Eligible persons, a sign-in/sign-out procedure will be implemented for Children through the end of fourth grade.

F. Visiting Groups and Churches

- 1. Use of Keller UMC's campus facilities is governed by the Church's Board of Trustees. In any case where a visiting group will be conducting or sponsoring a Function for Children/Youth as defined herein, this Policy will be in effect.
- 2. Visiting United Methodist Churches which follow a formal Safe Sanctuary program of their own and offer a formal Safe Sanctuaries course of their own at

their home church may use Church buildings if the visiting church follows this Policy while using our facilities. To ensure compliance, wherever this Policy refers to the "Church", insert the name of the visiting church. Every Eligible Volunteer, Eligible Worker, or Eligible Helper who will be counted under this Policy's "2 adult rule" under D.1.a. must be familiar with this Policy and sign the related Keller UMC Covenant before the event. The visiting church's event leader/contact person is responsible for providing original covenants (for each adult volunteer or staff) to our business office no less than three (3) working days before the event.

3. United Methodist clergy, when invited to participate in any Church Function, will be considered an Eligible Worker and presumed to meet the requirements under paragraph C. To ensure compliance with this Policy, each visiting clergy who will be counted under this Policy's "2 adult rule" under D.1.a. must be familiar with this Policy and sign the related Keller UMC Covenant before the event. The Function leader/organizer is responsible for providing an original covenant for each visiting clergy to the business office no less than three (3) working days before the event.

G. Records and Screening

1. The Records Custodian shall keep records of all screening, references, background checks, any related documents, and any information considered by the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee, as well as documents regarding training of Volunteers, Workers, and Helpers (collectively, "Records").
2. Records shall be kept confidential and in a locked cabinet, but will be provided upon request to any pastor of the Church, the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee, law enforcement, Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Child Protective Services (CPS), or the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Records may also be disclosed in response to a court order or valid subpoena. Digital copies of records are available in the ShelbyNext software system utilized by Keller UMC. The Executive Director of Operations, Financial Administrator, and three administrative assistants have access to the digital records.
3. Records are the property of the Church and will not be made available to the applying Worker, Volunteer or Helper, or any person offering a reference, or any other person requesting such information, except as described in Section G. 2.
4. The Records Custodian shall keep an updated list of all Eligible Volunteers, Workers, and Helpers listed by category. This list shall be made available to all Church staff, members, volunteers, parents, and any person who has an interest in the welfare of the Children/Youth and our programs.
5. Except as provided in paragraph G. 2., the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee shall keep all matters confidential and shall meet only as needed if/when a background check reveals a potentially disqualifying history. In any case, the eligibility of a Volunteer, Worker, or Helper shall be in the sole discretion

of the Child/Youth Protection Screening Committee. At any time, this committee may suspend eligibility of a Worker/Volunteer/Helper. This committee will also consider applications of persons age 16 and 17 to become Eligible Volunteers.

H. Training

1. Initial training referenced under paragraph C(3) shall be provided by the Church and approved by the Child/Youth Protection Committee.
2. The Church shall also make available occasional refresher training on various topics relating to Child/Youth safety.
3. The Church shall make available to all Volunteers, Workers, Helpers and parents free training in Pediatric Life Support.

I. Pre-school

Building Blocks Pre-school is a ministry of this Church and is also a licensed child care facility which is regulated by the Texas Department of Child Care Licensing. Building Blocks should strive to maintain the same standards as all other Church programs as outlined in this Policy. However, when this Policy is in conflict with the Texas Department of Child Care Licensing, the Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers will supersede this document for the pre-school operation.

J. Reporting

Any suspected incident of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect of a child must be reported immediately to the Lead Pastor, or in the Lead Pastor's absence to his/her designee. If for some reason the report should not be made to the Lead Pastor or his/her designee, it must be reported to the District Superintendent. **This Policy requirement is not a substitute for the duty to report under Texas Law.**