

VOLUNTEER TRAINING TOPICS

(NOTE: See CFC Policy page 2, Volunteer Training section for a Complete Training Description)

Definitions of Abuse

1. Verbal Abuse- Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades or threatens any child or youth.
2. Physical Abuse – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person’s physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual’s caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual’s age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth.
3. Sexual Abuse – Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4) romantic involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in sponsored activities of this church, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples are not limited to: displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one’s own or another person’s body, touching another person’s body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse. (#6 taken from Resolution #30 *Book of Resolutions 2000*).

Appropriate Discipline

Children and youth should be made aware that appropriate behavior is expected at all events. Gentle reminders are always necessary when dealing with children and youth. When these reminders don’t work, then discipline needs to move to the next step. In cases where behavior has to be addressed, designated event adults should handle it. In no case is physical discipline an appropriate measure to deal with problems. A reasonable response might include a period of “time out” for the child or youth. This should be done with necessary supervision keeping safe sanctuary guidelines in mind.

Keeping parents involved is important. They need to be kept up to date on their child’s behavior. For serious offenses, the appropriate response will be to send the child or youth home immediately. Parents and the leaders will help make proper arrangements.

Appropriate Physical and Emotional Boundaries

Physical boundaries are most important in dealing with children and youth. Persons working with children and youth have to understand and respect those boundaries. Obviously these boundaries change as children grow older. A young child sitting in the lap of a caregiver is most appropriate, whereas an older child or youth sitting in a adult’s lap would not be acceptable. Hugs and kisses from a toddler to an adult are entirely different than the same from a youth.

Emotional boundaries are also important. As a child grows older it is important for the adult to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships. It is important for those working with children and youth to

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not step outside of those lines and allow the younger person to become too attached to them. It is important for the older person to be careful where conversations might lead and to steer clear of inappropriate talk. When an adult recognizes that there might be an issue with these boundaries, great space should be allowed to come between them and the child or youth in question. If that does not solve the problem, then the event leadership should address the issue.

Leader/Volunteer Misconduct

It is a privilege to work with youth. Great responsibility is required. Those who violate this policy shall immediately be removed from contact with children and youth and appropriate authorities shall be notified immediately.

Spiritual Boundaries for Safe Sanctuary

As we seek to lead young people in the development of their faith story, it is essential that we guide them and do not manipulate their emotions. We must allow each person involved to make their own decisions without stigma, coercion, or pressure in any form. As we do this faithfully, we will see more fruitful commitments in the lives of all our participants.

RESOURCE: Adapted from the Sample Policy for Local Congregations – UMC TN Conference