

CHURCH SCHOOL SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

The following is a summarized version of our Church Wide Safe Sanctuary Policy that pertains to our church school program. For a full copy of the Church Wide Safe Sanctuary Policy, contact the Office Manager at 978-256-9400 or aldersgatehelmsford@verizon.net.

1. Objective

- a. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Aldersgate United Methodist Church (AUMC) Safe Sanctuary policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth for persons of all ages who are entrusted to our care, with particular emphasis on children and youth. We hope to ensure as much as possible that AUMC is a safe sanctuary where children and youth are nurtured, confirmed, and strengthened in their faith journeys. It is our intention to always provide a safe and supervised environment wherever our ministries may take place. It includes policies and procedures for all who use the church and work with children and youth. We want to bring light to the issue of child abuse, so that there is an open atmosphere around this issue.
- b. **Scope.** This policy applies to all activities which take place within the buildings and properties of AUMC, as well as any programs, activities, or events conducted as part of the church's ministry that take place off AUMC property. Categories of leadership this policy applies to include clergy, paid staff, and volunteers. The policy is in conjunction with the AUMC Policies and Procedures manual.

2. Children and Youth

- a. **General Health and Safety.** No person under the age of 18 will be left solely in charge of children or youth in any situation. A volunteer or paid staff member must be at least five years older than the youth they are supervising. Two adults should be present at all programs working with children and youth. A "floater" who moves from room to room can constitute a second adult. Classrooms must be accessible to viewing at all times. Windows to classrooms will be not be blocked by objects or curtains, however, material, such as a curtain, will be readily available to cover the window in case of a threat. Adults will always accompany children age seven or younger and a buddy system will be used for older children and youth who go somewhere outside of the classroom (during class) or sanctuary (during services). Children seven years of age or younger must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to and from their classrooms or during an in-church event. Parents/guardians must stay with children until both supervisory adults are present. If an adult unfamiliar to the adult supervisor has permission to pick up a child, this adult must present written permission signed by the parent or guardian. No person under 13 should be outside the building without an adult. No person under 13 should be in the kitchen area unless they are with a parent or guardian. Bathroom doors will remain open; individual stall doors will be closed when in use.

b. Staff Supervision Guidelines

- i. **Two Adult Rule.** Two non-related approved adults must be present at all times during program activities involving children and youth. This applies to classroom activities, activities away from the church facility and when transporting children and youth. Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per Sunday School hour to every class of children or youth. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers/leaders to permit such team teaching. A “floater” who moves from room to room can constitute a second adult. Other church sponsored groups of children or youth who meet at the church should have two or more leaders present whenever possible. When feasible, both male and female leaders should be present. If the group stays overnight at the church, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and one female if the group is mixed gender. See additional specifications for youth overnight outings in section 3.4.2 of this document.
- ii. **Chaperone to Youth Ratio Goals.** The ratios of chaperones to children and youth are in the table below and should be considered goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event. Note that, in the nursery, a youth helper can be considered a chaperone.

Program	Chaperones	Children
Nursery	2	10
Sunday School	2	14
Youth Programs	2	16
Mid-week Classes	2	14
Vacation Bible School	2	14

- iii. **Nursery Checkout Procedures.** All parents utilizing the church nursery will read the crib room parent book and fill out a registration form for their child. This form will also include who may checkout their child promptly after service or event is over.
- iv. **Doors and Windows.** All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from hallway or remain open while occupied.
- v. **Transparency.** Further protection for the children and youth requires that an open-door policy be followed. In this policy, the parents of the children served and the clergy, administrative, and professional staff of the church have the right to visit and observe the children’s/youth’s activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced, and to ask questions.

3. Reporting and Response Obligations

a. Accidents

- i. **Reporting:** If a child is injured and requires first aid of any type, including a Band-aid or ice, an accident report will be filled out, with one copy given to the parents and the original kept on file. Accident Report Forms are located with the First Aid kits and in the Sunday school office. A sample form is in Appendix A. The completed reports will be on file in the church school office.
- ii. **Logs:** Accidents of any kind, no matter how small, will be recorded in a logbook in the church office. Sample sheets in the logbook are in Appendix B. The book will be a summary of incidents and their causes, so that activities or unsafe conditions that, if left unaddressed, could lead to injuries in the future can be identified, and actions taken to prevent them. All church members, not just leaders, are encouraged to report near-accidents or potential accidents so actions can be taken to prevent accidents. The Trustees will review the logbook periodically and determine how to address issues, if possible.