



# Apex UMC Family of Faith Safe Sanctuaries Manual

Approved November 2019

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## **1 Safe Sanctuaries Statement of Purpose and Commitment**

The 1996 General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The Safe Sanctuaries program was created as a guideline for churches to follow to keep our children, youth, vulnerable adults and leaders safe.

Apex United Methodist Church's Family of Faith Communities is committed to providing a safe and nurturing church home, in which our children, youth and vulnerable adults can experience God's love and grow in their Christian faith. As members of the Body of Christ we all share in this responsibility and we further commit to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ so that each person 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). To this end, anyone who is concerned about the physical or emotional safety of a child or student in our congregation, or any student who believes they have been harmed, is encouraged to report the incident so that we may fulfill our commitment to maintaining a Safe Sanctuary.

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## 2 Statement of Safe Sanctuary Terminology

The following terms are provided to clearly define the types of workers who serve within our Faith Community.

**Paid:** All individuals who are hired/paid by the church and have been given the responsibility of managing, leading or directly working with children/youth. All paid leaders are background checked and required to participate and sign off on Safe Sanctuary guidelines.

**Volunteer Leader:** Individuals 18 and older who are given the responsibility of managing or directly working with children/youth. These individuals have been background checked and Safe Sanctuary trained.

**Volunteer Helper:** Individuals who teach, work or help alongside a Volunteer Leader and have not been given the authority to volunteer alone. These individuals are volunteers who may or may not have completed Safe Sanctuary training and may not have been background checked at this point in time.

**Children:** Any person age 17 or younger.

**Students:** Any person age 5-17.

**Youth:** Any person age 12-17.

**Vulnerable Adults:** A person age 18 or older who with a mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.

**Chaperone:** A person age 21 or older who accompanies a group of children, students, youth or vulnerable adults.

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### 3 Standard Procedures for Operating Safely

In response to the initiative set forth by the 1996 General Conference of the church, we have taken the following steps to ensure that our children, youth, vulnerable adults, workers and church are safe:

1. All persons working with children and children, youth and vulnerable adults are given information about our policies and procedures during their training process.
2. All leaders (including paid and non-paid staff) must be screened if working with children or children, youth and vulnerable adults.
3. The AUMC Family of Faith Communities Safe Sanctuaries policies are available in the church office upon request.
4. Leaders (including paid and non-paid staff) are asked to sign a document stating they will adhere to the policy.
5. Coordinators are in regular relationship with leaders in order to ensure that policies are followed.

The procedures that we have adopted to ensure that our children and children, youth and vulnerable adults are safe include but are not limited to the following:

1. A minimum of one adult who is Safe Sanctuary trained and background checked in the room at all times. One adult should not be left alone with two or less children, youth or vulnerable adults.
2. In the event only one adult can be secured, the door shall remain open at all times and a leader will be assigned to roam if there is not a window in the door.
3. Children and student classes and groups are assigned to meet in locations in the same vicinity to facilitate monitoring of activities.
4. During all Family Ministry programming, a drop-in policy is in place. Leaders understand that coordinators circulate to ensure policies are followed.
5. Restroom Policies:
  - a. Only paid nursery workers allowed to change diapers and preschool workers take children into restrooms to assist with toileting needs.
  - b. Children are monitored from outside the restroom at all times.
  - c. Children, youth and vulnerable adults are expected to go and come from restrooms on their own.
  - d. If parents wish to change their children, he or she needs to do so in the restroom changing facilities.
  - e. Adults responsible for special needs children, youth or vulnerable adults should work with Family Ministries staff to create an individual Safe Sanctuaries plan.
6. Parents will have access to advance notice and full information regarding event(s) in which their child or student is participating.
7. Youth may be assigned to assist with children's ministry programs; these youth are subject to the "five-years-older rule" and are provided coaching in classroom expectations.
8. Concern/Incident Report Forms are available at check in locations, in Family Ministry information areas and may be requested from coordinators.

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## 4 Leader Screening Procedure

1. Anyone wishing to be a leader in an area that directly relates to children, youth and vulnerable adults must consent to a background check.
2. To participate as a volunteer leader, you must regularly attend one of the faith communities of Apex UMC or be pursuing membership or be a member of another UMC. If you do not meet these criteria, a reference check may be required. Leaders are expected to be active participants in the worship life of the Apex Family and agree to the doctrine and practices of the United Methodist Church.
3. The Background Authorization Form is available on Apex UMC Family of Faith Communities website or it can be obtained from the following (see page 11):
  - Preschool Director
  - Apex UMC Director of Youth Ministries
  - Apex UMC Associate Director of Youth Ministries
  - Apex UMC Director of Children's Ministries
  - Apex UMC Associate Director of Children's Ministries
  - Peak Family Ministries Coordinator
  - 519 Youth Ministries Coordinator
  - 519 Family Ministries Coordinator
  - Fiesta Cristiana Youth Ministries Coordinator
  - Fiesta Cristiana Family Ministries Coordinator
  - Nursery/Childcare Coordinator
  - Toby White, Director of Senior Adult Ministry
4. Completed background forms are to be returned to your director/coordinator. Results are kept confidential and stored in a locked cabinet. Once the form is no longer needed, it is shredded to protect confidentiality.

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## **5 Guidelines for Trips and Off-Site Programming**

The following additional guidelines address issues of safety that may arise when children, youth and vulnerable adults participate in off-campus trips and programs.

All offsite events and trips require written permission forms, even if a parent or guardian is present.

### **5.1 Transportation**

1. An adult can transport 3 or more children in a vehicle. If an emergency situation arises where a student needs transportation and only one adult is available (e.g., utilizing two adults would compromise the supervision of remaining student), then every effort will be made to relieve the emergency situation.
2. Drivers will be asked to give permission to check driving history.

### **5.2 Lodging & Activities**

1. At no time will a student and an adult leader stay in a room by themselves unless they are related. Children, youth and vulnerable adults and adults will not sleep in the same bed with anyone to whom they are unrelated.
2. Adults and students will be split by gender for overnight accommodations. We will work to make accommodations for transgender individuals or individuals who do not identify with their assigned sex at birth.
3. When large common sleeping areas are used, adults will remain in the immediate vicinity sleeping near the exits.
4. All participants should have privacy for showering/bathing. If there is a common shower, arrangements should be made to schedule showers separately for student and adults.
5. The Family Ministries Team will obtain rules and policies of hosting organizations in advance so that a modification plan can be put in place should there be a need to adjust these guidelines to fit the host site.
6. In independent activities (e.g., skiing, beach), children, youth and vulnerable adults must stay in groups, checking in with an adult supervisor in a public place at designated times.

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## **6 Procedural Guidelines for Handling Concern or Reported Allegations of Abuse By Apex UMC's Family of Faith Communities Leader (Paid or Unpaid)**

1. Any allegation of abuse of a minor by an Apex UMC's Family of Faith Communities leader (paid or unpaid) must be immediately reported to a member of the Family Ministries Team and then, subsequently, to the Lead Pastor immediately upon initial receipt of an allegation. Such notification shall be by personal statement, phone call, text, email or whatever form of communication is quickest in the circumstance the person making the report finds him/herself. If such an allegation is reported to a staff member, said staff person still is to turn report immediately into the Lead Pastor. If the allegation is against the Lead Pastor the report shall be made to the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) and the following procedures followed absenting the Lead Pastor from each process.
2. Upon receipt of such allegation, the Lead Pastor, the Administrative Council Chair, and the Chairperson of the SPRC will immediately determine whether the allegation in question is a reportable incident within the guidelines set forth by applicable N.C. statutes and the Wake County Department of Human Services. If so, the allegation will actually be reported to the appropriate authorities by the Administrative Council Chairperson or SPRC Chair and the Lead Pastor as soon as possible.
3. The allegation in question shall be then reported, within 24 hours of receipt, to all clergy across the Family of Faith Communities, as well as, to the Chairperson of the SPRC and the Chair of the Administrative Council, as well as, to the appropriate member(s) of the Family Ministries Team, to the extent that they are not the initial recipient of such an allegation or the subject of same.
4. The Lead Pastor shall immediately notify the District Superintendent (DS) and Conference Communications Director (CCD) of the allegation and will work with the DS and CCD. If the allegation is against a clergy person, the DS will determine if the allegation is a chargeable offense under The Book of Discipline. If the allegation is against the Lead Pastor, The SPRC Chair will contact the DS and CCD.
5. If the allegation in question is not a reportable incident, the Lead Pastor, the Administrative Council Chair, the SPRC Chair along with the appropriate pastor and/or staff member(s) described in the paragraph above, will immediately determine how best to further investigate the allegation in question, and/or address the same with the accused, the minor or vulnerable adult, and the minor's parent(s) or legal guardian(s).
6. Any concern or allegation of abuse regarding a minor or vulnerable adult who is affiliated with one of the Apex UMC Faith Communities that is directly observed or reported, requires immediate report to the civil authorities per The Book of Discipline. Therefore, any report or allegation or observation of abuse made to any pastor or staff member must therefore be immediately reported to the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor and said pastor or staff person will immediately contact the appropriate authorities.



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## **7 Procedural Guidelines for Handling Concern or Reported Allegations Of Abuse By Unaffiliated Third Parties**

1. Any concern or allegation of abuse regarding a minor who is affiliated with one of the Apex UMC Faith Communities, made to anyone other than the Family Ministry Team or the Executive Director, must be reported to said staff members within 24 hours of the initial receipt of such an allegation.
2. The allegation in question shall be then reported, within 24 hours of receipt, to all clergy, and to the appropriate member(s) of the Family Ministries Team, to the extent that they are not the initial recipient of such an allegation or the subject of same.
3. The Executive Director and/or Family Ministries Team, along with the appropriate staff member(s), will then immediately determine whether the concern or allegation in question is a reportable incident within the guidelines set forth by applicable N.C. statutes and the Wake County Department of Human Services. If so, all clergy shall be immediately advised of such determination, and the allegation will actually be reported to the appropriate authorities no later than 48 hours from the initial receipt of such allegation.
4. If the allegation in question is not a reportable incident, the Executive Director and/or Family Ministries Team along with the appropriate staff member(s), will nonetheless immediately determine how best to further proceed with the concern or allegation in question, including being in contact with the minor's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), to the extent they are not the subject of the allegation. These individuals will then confer within 24 hours with all clergy to reach consensus on the recommended course of action, with the goal being to implement same within no more than 48 hours from the initial receipt of such allegation.
5. To the extent that any allegation of abuse of a minor presents immediate ongoing harm to the minor, the procedures detailed above should be taken by the involved persons with all possible haste.

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## 8 Procedure for Distributing and Handling Concern/Incident Report Forms

1. **Distribution:** Concern forms will be available to all Apex UMC Family of Faith Communities leaders (paid and unpaid), church members, parents, children, youth and vulnerable adults and/or visitors in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:
  - a. In Family Ministries information areas
  - b. Available in church offices
  
2. **Handling of Concern/Incident Reports:**
  - a. All concern/incident reports received by anyone affiliated with Apex UMC's Family of Faith Communities shall be immediately directed to the appropriate persons as set forth in the guidelines established in the Safe Sanctuaries Manual.
  - b. Access to such reports during the implementation of the procedures listed in these guidelines shall be strictly limited to the designated persons.
  - c. Following completion of such procedures, all such reports shall be stored in a central repository, kept locked at all times, and made available for subsequent review only by clergy or paid staff who are directly responsible for making employment and/or leader selection decisions.
  
3. **Handling of General Concern Reports:** All reports received by anyone affiliated with Apex UMC Family of Faith Communities that relate only to general concerns shall be immediately directed to coordinators and campus pastors.
  
4. **Acknowledgement of Receipt:** Upon receipt of the Concern/Incident Report Form, the Executive Pastor or other appropriate personnel will acknowledge the receipt of the form to the submitter of said form.

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## **9 Steps to Volunteer Clearance**

The following steps should be followed to obtain volunteer clearance. Each volunteer must repeat these steps every 3 years.

1. Complete Safe Sanctuaries Training.
2. Complete and submit your Background Check and Leader Consent forms.
3. Wait for approval from your Family Ministries or Youth Director/Coordinator.

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## 10 Apex UMC Family of Faith Communities Concern/Incident Report

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Program/Event Involved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Event Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Leader(s) Involved (Paid or Unpaid): \_\_\_\_\_  
General Concern/Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Affiliates of Apex UMC's Family of Faith Communities Involved in the Incident (and Contact Information if available):

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

Circle Primary Campus:                      519                      Apex                      Fiesta Cristiana                      Peak

Once complete, please submit form at the Apex UMC church office or mail to:

Executive Director  
Apex UMC Family of Faith Communities  
100 S. Hughes Street  
Apex, NC 27502

For immediate attention, please mark your envelope "High Priority – Personal and Confidential."

*For office use only:*

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Action Taken?                      Yes                      No                      Date of Follow-Up: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, describe. If no, why is follow-up unnecessary?

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# 11 Background Check Authorization Form



Ministry Leader/Ministry Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Former Name(s) and Dates Used: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address Since: \_\_\_\_\_

(MM/YY)

(Street)

(City)

(State/Zip)

Have you ever been charged, convicted or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony including but not limited to drug related charges, child abuse, and/or other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violation?)

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ If yes, please explain:

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

The information contained in this form is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize **Apex United Methodist Church Family of Faith Communities** and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a comprehensive review of my background causing a consumer report and/or an investigative consumer report to be generated for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the consumer report/ investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to the following areas: verification of social security number; current and previous residences; employment history, education background,; drug testing, civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions; driving records, birth records, and any other public records.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency (including the Social Security Administration and law enforcement agencies) to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me, to **Apex United Methodist Church Family of Faith Communities** or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources.

I hereby release **Apex United Methodist Church Family of Faith Communities**, the Social Security Administration, and its agents, officials, representative, or assigned agencies, including officers, employees, or related personnel both individually and collectively, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind, which may, at any time, result to me, my heirs, family, or associates because of compliance with this authorization and request to release.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle Primary Campus:                      519                      Apex                      Fiesta Cristiana                      Peak

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## Safe Sanctuaries Leader Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name) commit myself to serve God and others by participating as a member of the Apex UMC Family of Faith Communities Family Ministries Team. As a member of the team, I join with other leaders who are committed to excellence in all we do for our community of faith.

I have received, read and understand the Apex UMC Family of Faith Communities Safe Sanctuaries policies and understand that I consent to a background check before working with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle Primary Campus:

519

Apex

Fiesta Cristiana

Peak