

Woodland United Methodist Church

Safe Gatherings Policy for Work with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

(Rev. November 2018)

Woodland United Methodist Church

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Introduction:

The congregation of Woodland United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church.

Jesus, time and time again, spoke of the importance of young people being included and provided for within the community of faith. Our hope and belief today is that the church is a place where children, youth, and vulnerable adults will find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive.

Sadly, the abuse of children happens all too frequently. Abuse often happens in settings where children, youth, and vulnerable adults should be able to feel safe — in homes, schools, camps, and even at Church. Abuse does occur in churches, large and small, rural and urban. It is a problem which cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real.

Purpose:

God has given us a sacred opportunity and great responsibility to nurture and protect children and youth and the persons who work with them. Our Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of safety for them. Thus, we establish this Safe Gatherings Policy for Work with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all, and where all can grow, thrive, and become faithful people of God.

It is the purpose of this policy first to protect the children, youth and vulnerable adults who come to us. The second purpose of this policy is to protect our staff, both paid and volunteer, from unfounded and/or malicious allegations of abuse.

Definitions:

People:

- Child/Youth: Any minor from birth until their 18th birthday (the legal age of consent).
- Vulnerable adults: persons age 18 or older with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities.
- Staff: Those who receive compensation for the work they do for Woodland United Methodist Church.

- Volunteers: Those who receive no compensation for time they spend supporting the ministries of Woodland United Methodist Church.
- The church: Specifically, the Woodland United Methodist Church.

Categories of Abuse:

- Neglect: The failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs.
- Sexual abuse: Generally, child sexual abuse is any sexual act between an adult and a child. This can include touching and non-touching behaviors.
- Physical abuse: Non-accidental physical injury by a caregiver regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child (there is no requirement for intent).
- Emotional/psychological abuse: A pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth.
- Bullying: The willful, conscious conduct intended to hurt, threaten or frighten another. This includes cyberbullying.

Activities: All worship services, educational events, fellowship events, and other activities where members from the church and community gather together at the invitation of the church or any of its members or leadership team. This includes activities located on the physical property of the Woodland United Methodist Church as well as activities conducted off site.

Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures govern all volunteers and paid staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

There will be an annual orientation and review of policy for volunteers and paid staff at which they will be informed of the following:

- Any updates to the Woodland United Methodist Church policies for the prevention of abuse.
- The procedures to be used in all ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- Appropriate steps to report an incident of suspected child or vulnerable adult abuse.
- Details of the state laws regarding child abuse (as stated in California Penal Code Section 11166(c)(1), a copy of which is on file in the church office).

At this orientation, the volunteers and paid staff will be given an opportunity to renew their covenant to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures. Volunteers and paid staff will be given the church policies in writing.

The church office will keep a record of all staff and volunteers who apply and use the Safe Gatherings training and clearance. The record will include the following information for each person: date of approval/denial, due date for renewal of approval, date of notification for annual orientation, and annual orientation attendance records. The church office will provide adequate notice to all staff and volunteers about the need for renewal of their approval. The church will also maintain records of annual orientations including dates and times, sign in sheets, topics covered, and documents required by the Safe Gatherings system or the CNUMC. The church office will keep written documentation that it has informed all its volunteers and paid staff about its Safe Gatherings policy.

1. First Aid/CPR training is preferred for all volunteers and paid staff who work with children, youth, and/or and vulnerable adults. At all off-site events involving these children, youth and/or and vulnerable adults, at least one adult with current certification in first aid and CPR training will be present.
2. All paid staff and volunteers who work with children, youth and/or and vulnerable adults will fill out a Volunteer Application for the position and will undergo a background check through the Safe Gatherings system. All information received from this background check will serve to inform the church leadership team and will be taken into consideration when deciding whether to grant or deny the volunteer application.
3. The background check should go back a minimum of 5 years, be rechecked every 3 years, and should also be rechecked after a year or more in a gap of service regardless of other timelines.
4. The "Two Adults Rule" will apply. The two adults will be non-related, non-cohabitating adults. No fewer than two volunteers and/or paid staff always should be present during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children, youth and vulnerable adults. If two adults are not present, doors to meeting rooms should be left open, and a Safe Gatherings approved volunteer will be assigned to roam the area and drop in where they are gathered.
5. At any one-on-one counseling session with children and/or youth, the door to the counseling office will remain open and in plain sight of another adult observer.
6. The windows in the doors of all classrooms or meeting rooms where children and/or youth meet must be uncovered. If there are no windows, the doors will remain open.
7. All volunteers involved with children, youth and/or and vulnerable adults must have been actively involved in the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.

8. The "Five-Years-Older Rule" will apply. Any volunteer or paid staff recruited or hired to work with children and/or youth should be at least five years older than any of the children or youth with whom he/she will work, unless specifically reviewed and approved by the Nursery Coordinator, Children's Ministry Coordinator, or Youth Director. If volunteers and helpers do not meet the five-year rule, they should never be left in charge of the group and should be under the supervision of a fully trained and Safe Gatherings approved adult.
9. All volunteers and paid staff should be eighteen years of age or older unless specifically reviewed and approved by church leadership and appropriate staff.
10. Parents or guardians will be given advance notice and full information about events in which their child will be participating. Parents must give written permission for their child's participation in each off-site event. Contact information, medical concerns and permission to treat must also be collected for each event.
11. Parents will be provided with names of volunteers for each event.
12. Any volunteer who transports children, youth and/or vulnerable adults for church events in his/her own car or in a car belonging to the church or another church member will have at least seven years' driving experience, provide a copy of a valid California driver's license, and provide a copy of a valid insurance card. **It is prohibited to be alone in a car transporting children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.**

Reporting Child Abuse

It is the policy of the Woodland United Methodist Church that any volunteer or staff member who works with children and/or youth is required to report suspected abuse. Reference is made to California Penal Code Section 11166(c)(1).

At any church event, if a volunteer or staff member suspects the abuse or neglect of a child or youth, whether it has occurred at the event or prior to the event, that person must report his/her suspicions to the leader of the event or the church pastor, and together they must ascertain the details needed to make an accurate report. This report must be made within 24 hours or immediately upon return to the church to the church if the event is off site. The report should include the following information if obtainable:

- The name, address, sex, and birth date of the alleged victim
- The name and address of the alleged victim's parent(s) or guardian(s)
- The nature and extent of the alleged abuse and neglect
- Any evidence of previously known or suspected abuse or neglect of the alleged victim and/or their siblings
- The name, address, and relationship to the alleged victim-of the person who is alleged to have perpetrated the abuse or neglect
- Any other information known to the person making the report that would be helpful to the investigation of the alleged abuse

24-hour hotline for reporting child abuse/neglect in Yolo County is (530) 669-2345

Report Adult Abuse or Neglect in Yolo County (530) 661-2727

Woodland Police Department (530) 666-2411

Davis Police Department (530) 747-5400

West Sacramento Police Department (916) 617-4900

Yolo County Sheriff (530) 668-5280

Response Plan

The event leader or pastor will contact Child Protective Services of the appropriate county. A copy of the information reported should be kept and considered confidential.

If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is providing ministry to children and/or youth under the auspices of the Woodland United Methodist Church, he/she will be required to refrain from all events involving children and/or youth until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any activities, care must be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in an activity, the entire staff of that activity will cooperate with the investigating agencies.

The California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church will be notified of any alleged incident of abuse by paid staff or volunteers. The response plan of this conference will be followed. A copy of this plan will be on file in the Church office. All information and official communication should go through the Cal-Nevada's Director of Communication.

Crisis Plan

The pastor and designated lay church leaders will report to and coordinate with the Bishop's office in the event of crises.

Response Plan for Known Convicted Offenders

Should a convicted child and/or youth abuse offender seek to attend the church and the leadership of the church becomes aware of the person's conviction, the church will require this person to enter into a written covenant agreement containing guidelines for the person's involvement and activity within the church.

Woodland United Methodist Church Children and Youth Ministry

Volunteer Recruitment Procedure

1. Volunteers may be recruited by anyone in the church, or someone may come forward on their own to volunteer. Church leadership including the pastor and a representative from SPRC will discuss and pray about the volunteer, including a discussion of the gifts and graces of the volunteer.
2. The potential volunteer fills out an application/disclosure form and discusses their desire to volunteer with church leadership.
3. The application is reviewed by church leadership, including the pastor and the leader of the particular area of ministry in which the potential volunteer is interested. All "yes" answers on the disclosure form will be considered in this review but will not necessarily prevent the potential volunteer from being accepted.
4. The potential volunteer will take the Safe Gatherings training and examination located at <https://safeGatheringss.com/>. Woodland United Methodist Church will pay the fee.
5. When the church receives the response from the Safe Gatherings process, a determination will be made about whether the potential volunteer may serve.

**Woodland United Methodist Church
Safe Gatherings Volunteer Disclosure Form**

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

California driver's license number (if driving) _____

What Ministry are you interested in being a volunteer in? _____

The congregation of the United Methodist Church of Woodland is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. We require disclosures by all persons who will be working with these groups. All those who wish to work as youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, or drivers of such persons must fill out this form completely and give it to the Pastor of the church.

History (Please answer yes or no to each question, and attach an explanation for each "yes" answer)

- a. Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children and/or youth? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- b. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the past three years? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- c. Within the past 30 days, have you abused alcohol or illegal drugs? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- d. Have you ever been reviewed by church and/or secular bodies and been restricted from involvement with children and/or youth, or been restricted from children and/or youth ministry? ☐ Yes ☐ No

By signing below, I indicate that I understand that the Woodland United Methodist Church will run a background check through the Safe Gatherings system and I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct.

Signature : _____

Date: _____