

A group of people are gathered on a grassy lawn. In the foreground, several women are sitting on a white blanket, looking at a book or document. One woman is pointing at the book. In the background, a man in a blue patterned shirt and dark pants stands with his hands on his hips. Further back, another man in a black t-shirt and blue pants is looking at a phone. The background shows a parking lot with several cars and a building. The text is overlaid on the image.

Asbury Church
Maintaining a Safe Sanctuary

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Fact...

Every 15 seconds a child is abused or neglected. Often abuse occurs in settings where children, youth or vulnerable adults should have been able to feel safe -- homes, schools, camps, and most sadly the church. In more than three quarters of the reported incidents of child abuse, the victim was related to or acquainted with the abuser.

Purpose...

The purpose of these policies is to protect all the children that come to us, to protect both our paid staff and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of abuse and to limit the extent of legal liability of Asbury United Methodist Church.

Groups Involved

- Sunday School
- Vacation Bible School
- Middle High Fellowship
- Acolytes and Liturgists
- Youth Sports
- The Nursery
- Persons providing and receiving childcare for special activities
- Boys 2 Men mentoring program
- Youth Dancing Angels
- Cub Scouts
- Girl Scouts
- Youth Dancing Chosen Vessels
- Youth Choir
- Children Church
- Youth School Sharpener
- After School Program

OVERALL POLICY

Sets forth the commitment of Asbury UMC to the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth participating in church-sponsored activities, as well as the people who work with them.

SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT OF WORKERS

Background Checks:

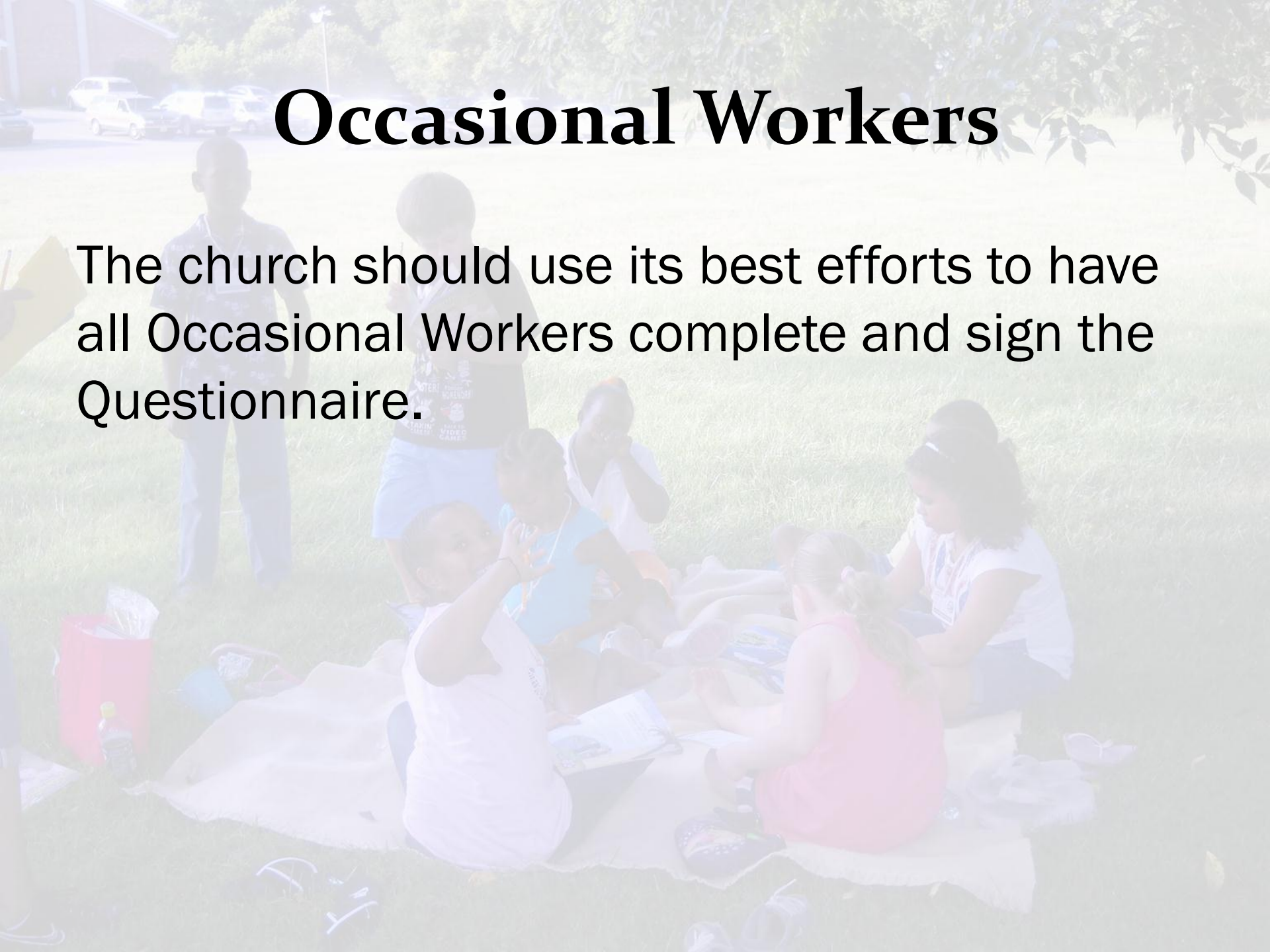
Asbury UMC conducts background checks on all clergy, full-time, paid staff, regardless of whether they would be considered as Supervising Worker, an Occasional Worker, or neither.

Supervising Workers

A person may be designated a Supervising Worker only if he or she (1) has signed the Questionnaire, and (2) either has been a church member for 6 months, or is known to the church community by other church members as a caring and nurturing person. At any Church Group activity one, or if practical two, adults should be designated as the Supervising Workers.

Occasional Workers

The church should use its best efforts to have all Occasional Workers complete and sign the Questionnaire.



Visitors

An adult who is simply visiting a Church School activity as a guest speaker, observer, or one-time helper need not complete and sign a Questionnaire. However, one or two Supervising Workers should be present while the visitor is there.

Youth Aid

Youths (persons ages 10 to 17) will not be required to complete and sign the Questionnaire prior to serving as youth aides at a Church Group activity.

Asbury will permit a person to serve as a youth aide for a Church Group activity only if there are 1 or 2 adult Workers present.

Youth Aid Continue...

- The Asbury Academy will develop/provide an orientation session for Youth Aides in the Asbury Academy annual curriculum that will educate them about appropriate interaction with children.
- Any Church Group desiring the help of youth aides should consider requiring those Youth Aides to sign some type of participation covenant in which they would agree to abide by the Basic Procedures Regarding Safety of Children and Youth and any other procedures applicable to that Church Group.

Required Forms

Each Church Group should require a parent or guardian of a child or youth to complete any forms needed for the participation of that child or youth in that Church Group's activities, such as a Church School registration form, a Vacation Bible School registration form, permission slips, consents and releases. Permission forms are mandated for any activity which takes place away from the church property, or which involves an overnight where the parent or guardian is not present. If the person in charge of a particular Church Group activity has not received the required forms with respect to any child or youth, that child or youth should not be allowed to participate in that Church Group activity.

Dismissal

Each Church Group should review its dismissal procedures. Supervising Workers should dismiss any child in 4th grade or younger only to a person who is authorized in writing to pick up that child.

Advance Notice and Full Information

Each Church Group should give written advance notice and full information to all parents with respect to any event in which children or youth are participating. In this way, a parent or guardian will have the option not to allow his or her child or youth to participate if he and she feels uncomfortable with any aspect of it.

Age Appropriate and Safe Equipment and Materials

Each Church Group should make sure that all equipment used is age-appropriate and safe. The Church Group should request that its Workers immediately report to the Asbury Academy any unsafe equipment or conditions.

Orientations

On at least an annual basis, The Asbury Academy should consult, delivery, and conduct orientations for all persons working with children or youth, including Supervising Workers, Occasional Workers, youth aides, and the parents and guardians of children or youth participating in church-sponsored activities. In addition to other subjects, the orientation should familiarize these people with appropriate interactions with children, permissible methods of discipline, the realities of child abuse and neglect, the possible indicators of child abuse and neglect, Basic Procedures Regarding Safety of Children and Youth, and any other applicable procedures.

Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

When a Worker becomes aware of an allegation of child abuse in the context of church or home, or begins to suspect child neglect, that Worker should report the allegation or suspicion immediately to the department head.

Adult Involvement in Church Group Activities

Each Church Group should attempt to have at least 2 unrelated adult Workers present during any child or youth activity (the "2-adult goal"). Any adult Worker should be at least 3 years older than the oldest child or youth participating in the activity (the "3-years-older rule"). Youth aides (ages 10 to 17) need not meet the 3-years-older rule, but should not be used to meet the 2-adult goal. In addition, a Worker who is under 21 and working with high school youth should not be considered an adult Worker for purposes of the 2-adult goal. Each Church Group should determine under what circumstances the 2-adult goal is practical. We recommend that the 2-adult goal be mandatory with respect to any activities held away from the church facility. On the other hand, in the upper grades of the Church School (1st grade and up), the Church Group may decide it is more practical to use "floaters" instead of a second adult Worker in each classroom.

Overnight Activities

Notwithstanding the 2-adult goal, we recommend that at least 3 adult Workers be present for overnight activities (regardless of whether the overnight activity is held at or away from the church facility), with at least one adult Worker from each gender represented. For overnight activities, wherever possible and safe, adult Workers should sleep in a space that is separate and apart from the space where the youths sleep. Although some overnight activities may be in one room at the church facility, each youth participant should have his or her own sleeping bag and the adult Workers should sleep in a space that is as far apart from where the youth are sleeping as is possible and safe.

Discipline

Each Church Group should review its method of discipline. It should be clear and understandable, and it should include adequate warnings to the child or youth, good communication with the parent or guardian, and if necessary, the involvement of the supervisor of the Worker doing the disciplining. Each Church Group should educate its Workers annually with respect to its method of discipline.

Window/Open Door Policy

Every room used for children or youth activities should have at least one window. Pastoral or other counseling of children or youth should not occur behind an entirely closed door.

Diaper Changing Policy and Child/Youth Departures from Rooms

Any Worker changing a child's diaper should ensure that there is at least one other adult present in the room. If for any reason, including going to the restroom, a child or youth leaves the room where a Church Group activity is being held, the Supervising Worker should monitor that child or youth to the extent possible. The Supervising Worker should use his or her best judgment in deciding how closely that child should be monitored.

Substitutes

Each Church Group should create a list of approved substitutes for its activities. When a Supervising Worker is unable to participate in a scheduled activity, he or she should arrange for someone on the approved list to substitute. If unable to find a substitute, he or she should call his or her supervisor to make other arrangements.

Attendance

Each Supervising Worker should take attendance for each activity and keep written records as to which Workers or other adults were present as well.

Emergencies

Each Church Group should periodically review its emergency procedures to make sure that they are adequate. Each Church Group should familiarize its Workers with the evacuation plan and the specific route applicable to their activity. In addition, each Church Group should instruct its Workers that in the event of an evacuation, the Worker should take his or her attendance sheet and take attendance once outside.

First Aid/CPR Training

A group of people, including children and adults, are sitting on a lawn for training. Some are looking at books or papers, while others are engaged in conversation. The scene is outdoors with trees and a building in the background.

Each Church Group should consider designating at least two people to take the required first aid and CPR training on an annual basis.

Abuse Survivors

We strongly recommend that if one is aware of a person who is interested in working with our children or youth who is an abuse survivor, one should encourage that person to prayerfully consider the following prior to working with our children or youth.

- Discuss that experience with the pastor (certified to provide counseling) or
- Another counselor (certified to provide counseling).

Awareness of Policy

A faded background image showing a group of people, likely church members, gathered outdoors on a grassy area. Some are standing, and others are sitting on a white blanket on the grass, possibly during a service or a group activity. The scene is bright and sunny.

The Church Council should convey this message to all Church Group leaders and instruct them to pass it along as they see fit.

Asbury's Senior Pastor's responsibility is to educate the congregation by providing some background on this issue during a regular Sunday services.

SAFE SANCTUARIES BASIC OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. Two Adult Rule
2. Windows In All The Classroom Doors
3. No Workers Under The Age of Eighteen
4. Five-Years-Older Rule
5. Open Door Counseling

SAFE SANCTUARIES BASIC OPERATING PROCEDURES Cont

6. First Aid/CPR Training

7. Annual Orientation for Workers

8. Advance Notice to Parents

9. Participation Covenant For All Participants and Leaders

10. Parent and Family Education

11. Appropriate Equipment and Supervision