

**Detroit Annual Conference Policy Statement for the
Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons
(Revised at 2013 Detroit Annual Conference)**

Changes approved at 5/2013 DAC are in **bold and underlined print**

Preface

“...Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not stop them: for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.’ ” Luke 18:16-17

The innocence of children is what best enables them to seek out God with fearless enthusiasm. That innocence is also what leaves them most vulnerable to abuse or neglect. The Detroit Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Inc. (“Detroit Conference” or “Conference”) recognizes that any abuse – physical, sexual, or mental – is destructive to the development and well-being of any person. Therefore, the Detroit Conference is determined to minimize the risk of abuse or neglect and to protect participants in programs and activities of the Detroit Conference and its districts and agencies. The Detroit Conference will not tolerate and prohibits abuse and bullying at the programs and activities of the Detroit Conference, its districts, and its agencies. Retaliation or false accusation against a target, witness, or another person with reliable information about these matters is prohibited.

The Detroit Conference embraces its calling to provide functions, activities and events which are spiritually and developmentally appropriate and free from abuse or neglect. This Policy is intended to guide the selection of leaders and caregivers for district and Conference sponsored functions, activities, or events only. This Policy is no substitute for local church responsibility in developing and maintaining its own protection policy. Each local congregation is responsible for working with its insurance provider in developing a policy and procedures to facilitate the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable persons. (For help in the local church in developing policy and procedures, please refer to *Safe Sanctuaries*, resources available from Cokesbury.)

Preamble

Through baptism we renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness and reject the evil powers of this world. We will surround all God’s children with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their trust of God. The faith community lays the foundation for them to grow to be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life. The occurrence of abuse or neglect within the household of God breaks this covenant. Sadly abuse or neglect remains a reality in today’s society both outside and within the church. The Detroit Conference accepts its biblical and moral responsibility to address this issue.

Therefore, this Policy is intended to promote the health, welfare, and safety of children, youth, and vulnerable persons during district and Conference related functions, activities, or events. This document shall be referred to as the Protection Policy, or simply, this Policy.

The goals of this Policy include:

1. Promoting a safe and nurturing environment for all children, youth, and vulnerable persons who participate in events sponsored by the Detroit Conference, its districts, and agencies.
2. Protecting children, youth, and vulnerable persons from abuse and neglect.
3. Protecting our care providers from false accusations of abuse or neglect.
4. Minimizing potential Detroit Conference liability.

This Policy is intended to supplement and not replace the continuing need of our districts and Conference to minister to the spiritual and emotional needs of both victims and perpetrators of abuse or neglect.

Preamble - Cont.

All camp ministry functions, events, and activities shall be in compliance with the Policy and the State of Michigan Department of Human Services (formerly Family Independence Agency) Camp Licensing Rules and Regulations for Children and Adult Foster Care Camps. American Camping Association Accreditation Standards are recommended.

The definitions of terms used in this policy follow:

1. Abuse: Abuse means harm or threatened harm to an individual's health or welfare through physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, maltreatment, and/or sexual harassment.
2. Certification and Protection Policy Training: This is required training for all staff members (paid or volunteer) who will work with children, youth, and vulnerable persons at district or Detroit Conference ministry settings.
3. Negligence: Negligence is the failure to act as a reasonably prudent person would do in the same or similar circumstance. It can include failing to prevent an act of abuse or omission of an act that would ensure the health, welfare, and safety of a child, youth, or vulnerable person.
4. Participants: Participants are children, youth, or vulnerable persons, as well as all others, who are registered, enrolled, attending, or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by or under the auspices of the Detroit Conference.
5. Physical abuse: Physical abuse is any non-accidental act or failure to act that results in bodily harm or mental injury to a person. Physical abuse may result from punishment to a person that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition.
6. Protection Policy Committee: The Protection Policy Committee is the group elected by the Conference to oversee the implementation of this Policy.
7. Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is any conduct of a sexual nature which violates or attempts to violate the free choice and consent of another person, and includes any criminal sexual act defined by any federal, state, or municipal law, which includes but is not limited to rape, sexual molestation, sexual battery, aggravated sexual battery, lewd and lascivious behavior, enticement of a child, indecent solicitation of a child, aggravated indecent solicitation of a child, exhibiting sexually explicit material, or indecent liberties with a child, youth, or vulnerable person.
8. Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment is any sexually related behavior that is unwelcome, offensive, or which fails to respect the rights of others. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome advance, a request for a sexual favor, and any other verbal, nonverbal, or physical contact of a nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
9. Staff persons: Staff persons are defined as Conference Certified persons who provide leadership and/or care for events of the Detroit Conference and/or its districts whether they are volunteers or paid.
10. Vulnerable person: A vulnerable person is an individual who because of age, developmental disability, mental illness, or physical handicap requires supervision or personal care or lacks the personal and social skills required to live independently.
11. Bullying: Any written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication, that is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm someone either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following:
 - A. Substantially interfering with their opportunities, benefits, or programs involving the Detroit Conference, its districts, or its agencies.
 - B. Adversely affecting their ability to participate in or to benefit from the programs or activities of the Detroit Conference, its districts, or its agencies by placing the individual in reasonable fear of physical harm or causing substantial emotional distress.

Preamble - Cont.

- C. Having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on their physical or emotional health.
- D. Causing substantial disruption in, or interference with, the orderly operation of the programs or activities of the Detroit Conference, its districts, or its agencies.

The Protection Policy Committee and/or sponsoring agency (for instance, Outdoor & Retreat Ministries) will be responsible for reviewing all applications, screening, and documentation submitted for the purposes of certification. The Protection Policy Committee will grant certification to those who have met the requirements. (Listed below.) All documents related to application will be held in confidence in a secure location. Access to documents will be limited to members of the Protection Policy Committee and, if required, sponsoring agencies. Documents will be held at the Detroit Conference office and at other locations as determined by state law or licensing agencies. (For instance, at camps.)

Section I: Certification and Re-Certification Procedures

A. Care Provider Selection

In an effort to assure the safety of children, youth, and vulnerable persons, all persons working directly with, accompanying or supervising children, youth, and vulnerable persons at any district or Conference event shall be certified to do so according to the requirements of this Policy. Certification will be granted if a Conference agency's staff selection process meets or exceeds the requirements of certification as indicated in this Policy.

1. All persons, paid or volunteer, seeking certification shall:
 - a. be at least 16 years of age **and upon turning eighteen (18) years of age, they must apply to re-certify as an adult.**
 - b. be an active member/constituent of a local congregation, or active in a ministry setting for at least 6 months at time of application.
 - c. complete a Detroit Conference Certification Application
 - d. grant written permission for a criminal background check with appropriate law enforcement agencies.
 - e. complete an application for driving participants during events/activities, if desired.
 - f. provide three references from unrelated persons **of legal age (18 years or older)** including ways to contact them.
 - g. attend a certification training event.
 - h. successfully complete a test indicating reasonable knowledge of the issues addressed in the Policy **and the certification training event.**
2. Anyone who is not certified will not be permitted to supervise, provide leadership for, or work with children, youth, or vulnerable persons in Conference or district events, activities, or functions.
3. Screening Documents
The Protection Policy Committee shall review all references submitted for the purposes of applying for certification. The Detroit Conference certification application includes:
 - a. personal information, including Social Security number, driver's license and other current information
 - b. local church or ministry setting work and references
 - c. background check authorization.
4. Background Checks
No less than one background check shall be pursued for each applicant. The background checks may come from one of the agencies listed below.

Section I: Certification and Re-Certification Procedures - Cont.

The processing of the application, references, and criminal background checks for certification shall be the responsibility of the Protection Policy Committee or sponsoring Conference agency. The applicant shall not be held responsible for the financial cost of such checks. A criminal record check of the applicant shall be obtained from the appropriate law enforcement agencies located in any state or country where the applicant has lived for a period of at least one year within the last fifteen years while being at least 18 years of age. Historical address information will be required. These law enforcement agencies may include but are not limited to the Michigan State Police, Michigan State Bureau of Investigation, Michigan Division of Motor Vehicles, the State of Michigan Department of Human Services, and/or the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

5. Personal Interview: The applicant may be personally interviewed by the Protection Policy Committee for purposes of certification. This may be done at the Protection Policy Training or at other settings.

B. Qualifications

1. No one shall be certified to serve as a care provider or leader who may represent a significant risk of committing abuse or neglect, or violating any part of this Policy.
2. No one shall serve as a care provider if he/she is known to have been previously convicted of or pled guilty to any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act of conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults involving children, youth, or vulnerable persons, murder, kidnapping, pornography, sexual harassment, and the physical or sexual abuse of a child, youth, or vulnerable person. This qualifying rule shall be applicable no matter how long ago the crime occurred.
3. No one shall serve as a care provider who has had a verdict rendered against him or her in any civil action out of any personal act or conduct related to sexual abuse, sexual harassment or physical abuse of a child, youth, or vulnerable person. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict was rendered.
4. No one shall serve as a care provider who has participated as a perpetrator in any previous act of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or physical abuse of a child, youth, or vulnerable person. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago this occurred or whether a civil or criminal verdict was rendered.

C. Certification

Certification is required for an individual to provide care at a district or Conference event, activity or function. Certification does not determine whether an individual is an appropriate care provider for a particular event. The event leader may contact a potential care provider or references to determine whether a person's skills match the needs of a particular event. Certain events, functions, or activities will require additional training particular to that event, activity or function. (For instance, camping.)

Certification will be granted when all screening procedures and Protection Policy Training have been successfully completed and documented. Certification is valid for three years from the month it is granted. Those who are certified will receive a certification card that is dated and approved by the Protection Policy Committee. The certification card will indicate whether an individual is approved to drive during an event.

Section I: Certification and Re-Certification Procedures - Cont.

Certification granted by other annual conferences, which meets or exceeds the screening and training standards set forth in this Policy, will be honored at events, which are sponsored by or include participants from that annual conference.

1. As the status of a caregiver changes, she/he must complete any additional requirements that may be appropriate.
2. Any certified caregiver or leader who violates or fails to meet any of the qualifications of this Policy may at any time have his/her certification revoked by the Protection Policy Committee.
3. Those who witness conduct on the part of a care provider which violates this Policy or puts participants at risk needlessly, shall report their concerns to the event director. If the event director is the subject of concern, a written and signed report, which shall include pertinent details, shall be made to the Protection Policy Committee.
4. If certification is revoked, written notification will be given to the individual involved. In the case of clergy, their district superintendent shall also be informed.

D. Re-certification

Re-certification is the renewal of certification within three years of the individual's original certification date.

If the individual is not re-certified within six months following the expiration of the original certification, the individual must follow the initial applicant certification guidelines.

E. Confidentiality

1. Except as otherwise provided herein, all documents and information obtained on all certification applicants and care providers shall remain confidential.
2. All consents by parents or guardian will be accessible to leadership in the Conference for use in promoting the health, welfare, and safety at Conference related functions and events.
3. Notwithstanding the above, all material obtained during the screening process may be disclosed when it is reasonably necessary in the context of any criminal or civil litigation involving the care provider or Conference/district. In addition, a care provider's records, documents, files, and information may be disclosed with the written consent or at the written direction or request of that care provider.

Section II: Protection Policy Training

- A. The Protection Policy Committee shall be responsible for offering training for care providers for the purposes of certification.
- B. The Protection Policy Committee shall be responsible for training those responsible for implementing this Policy.
- C. The Protection Policy training shall be designed to create and raise awareness of and sensitivity to the issues of abuse, neglect and bullying. This shall include a knowledge, understanding, familiarity, and agreement to implement the Protection Policy of the Conference. This training and education shall include how to avoid incidents and the appearance of abuse, as part of the strategy to prevent false accusations.
- D. The Protection Policy training shall be provided regularly.
- E. The Protection Policy Committee shall be responsible for maintaining a current list of all certified care providers.

Section III: Care Provider Supervision

A. General Statement

Proper supervision is necessary to avoid creating the opportunity for both actual abuse or neglect and false accusations of abuse or neglect to occur. Proper supervision includes providing care providers with Protection Policy training. Supervision during the care provider's performance of their responsibilities shall give special attention to high-risk settings such as nurseries, restrooms, and overnights.

B. General Rules and Procedures

1. Adequate staffing

- a. All district or Conference-related functions, activities, and events involving children, youth and vulnerable persons shall be staffed to meet the standards of this Policy. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring agency to ensure standards set forth in this Policy are being met. The portion of the function, activity or event, which involves care providers, shall be cancelled when staffing required by this Policy is not provided
- b. Providing staffing shall be the responsibility of the event director of the Conference-related function, activity, or event.
- c. All care providers under the age of 18 shall be at least four years older than those they are supervising. Care providers under 18 years of age shall comprise no more than 20% of the staff for an event, activity, or function.

2. Two-Care Provider Rule

- a. At least two certified care providers, one of which must be an adult, shall be present at each Conference-related function, activity, or event involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- b. The two-care provider rule in the preceding paragraph may be waived in the following situations.
 - 1.) The certified care provider is an adult and there are at least three children over 12 years of age present.
 - 2.) Cabin or tent sleeping during a function, event or activity in which there is only one adult care provider of the same gender as the children, youth, or vulnerable persons present.
 - 3.) One adult care provider remains while the other care provider temporarily leaves the area or room for a medical, family, or other reasonable necessity, i.e., escorting a child, youth, or vulnerable person to the rest room.
 - 4.) One adult care provider remains when the other care provider must leave for an unexpected medical, family, or other reasonable necessity.
 - 5.) A care provider is taking a child, youth or vulnerable person to or from a Conference-related function, activity, or event. The waiver must be completed for each child, youth, or vulnerable person.
 - 6.) One adult care provider is acceptable when a parent or guardian for each participating child, youth, or vulnerable person checks the appropriate box on the waiver.

C. Additional Procedures for Nursery

1. No one other than those receiving care in the nursery, their parents or guardians, certified care providers, children, or youth of the servicing care providers shall remain in the nursery.

Section III: Care Provider Supervision - Cont.

2. There must be a sign-in and sign-out procedure in place. The care providers must have some method of contacting the parent or guardian during the event.

D. Additional Overnight Procedures

1. Only in exceptional circumstances with Protection Policy Committee advance notice and written approval in advance of the district or Conference related function, activity, or event may an adult without Detroit Conference certification and training be present on any overnight with children, youth, or vulnerable persons. However, host pastors or staff in host churches not directly involved with the program, devotional leaders, event speakers, musicians, or other specialists providing services such as food or entertainment may be present, but may not be alone with children, youth, or vulnerable persons until they have completed the required screening and certification training. Parents, legal guardians, and special needs care givers may be present with their children or care recipient, but may not be alone with other children, youth, or vulnerable persons until they are certified.
2. No males shall sleep in the same sleeping area as unrelated female persons.
3. No females shall sleep in the same sleeping area as unrelated male persons.
4. Leadership and supervision for overnight events must be provided for all participants. Male participants shall be supervised by a male leader. Female participants shall be supervised by a female leader.

E. Ratios of Caregivers to Participants

1. The two-care provider rule is always recommended (Note exceptions in III B 2). In situations where there may be one teacher in a classroom, there should be a window in the door and a leader designated to look into the classrooms periodically.
2. These ratios are recommended:
 - For infants one and under: 1 Caregiver to 1 Infant
 - For 2 year olds: 1 Caregiver for 2, 2 year olds
 - For 3 year olds: 1 Caregiver for 3, 3 year olds
 - For 4 year olds: 1 Caregiver for 4, 4 year olds
 - For 5-8 year olds 1 Caregiver for 5, 5-8 year olds
 - For 6-10 year olds 1 Caregiver for 6, 6-10 year olds
 - For 11-13 year olds 1 Caregiver for 7, 11-13 year olds
 - For 14– 17 year olds 1 Caregiver for 8, 14-17 year olds
3. Events may involve the participation of uncertified adults, such as Teddy Bear Camp, Family Camp, etc. All uncertified persons at an event shall be considered participants.
4. Uncertified trained caregivers who must accompany a participant in order to care for their needs shall provide care only for the individual they accompany. They shall be supervised by certified staff for the event.

F. Transportation

This policy addresses only transportation offered during and after an event. Each local church should establish procedures for assuring the safety of children, youth, or vulnerable persons who will be transported to and from a district or Conference event.

1. During an event, state laws must be observed, including those regarding seat belts, children in the front seat and car seats.

Section III: Care Provider Supervision - Cont.

2. During an event, all drivers must have valid driver's licenses and auto insurance and be a minimum of 21 years of age and have been certified as drivers by the Conference Protection Policy Committee.
 3. During an event, all drivers will have waivers for every child, youth, or vulnerable persons they transport.
 4. Special provisions should be made when drivers will be awake all night at lock-ins, retreats, or other events so that they are not driving when over tired.
 5. Participants will be released from an event only to those 21 years old or older or as otherwise indicated by parents or guardians. It is strongly encouraged that adult drivers transport participants to and from events.
- G. Event Director Responsibilities
1. Secure a safe and appropriate location that is conducive to the health and welfare of the participants and appropriate for the objectives of the event.
 2. Provide adequate supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable persons by confirming the number of certified leaders needed for your event.
 3. Ascertain the certification status and suitability of leaders for your particular event. An individual or their references submitted for certification may be contacted.
 4. Know the procedures that are to be followed in case of an incident of suspected abuse or neglect.
 5. If needed, submit the names of possible staff to the Protection Policy Committee to determine if they are certified to work with children, youth, or vulnerable persons.
 6. Establish and communicate to all staff expectations and procedures for your event, for instance, procedures regarding medications, medical situations (universal precautions) and emergencies and how they will be handled during your event.
 7. Establish a sign-in and sign-out procedure, assuring that participants are released only to those designated by a parent/guardian.

Section IV. Policy for Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect Involving Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons

A. Persons Required to Report

1. All care providers and conference employees who have reasonable cause to suspect (MCL § 722.623 (1)) abuse or neglect of a child, youth, or vulnerable person shall report all known and suspected cases of abuse or neglect which (1) occur on the Conference premises, (2) occur at a Conference-related function, activity, or event or (3) are disclosed or observed during Conference-related functions, activities or events. That may include the event director, staff, volunteers, counselors, and other leaders. All other persons may report known and suspected cases of abuse or neglect in accordance with this Policy and the laws of the State of Michigan.
2. If any child, youth, or vulnerable person arrives at a Conference-related function, activity or event and exhibits signs of abuse or neglect, the event director shall evaluate the situation and in consultation with the Conference staff, the Director of Connectional Ministries, or the district superintendent shall implement this Policy's reporting procedure.
3. The reporting requirements in this Policy are the minimum requirements. This Policy does not preclude anyone from reporting a known or suspected case of abuse or neglect to others for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable persons.

Section IV. Policy for Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect Involving Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons - Cont.

Unless such protection requires otherwise, however, confidentiality of the information reported or received shall be respected to protect the rights and interest of the victim, the alleged perpetrator, and their families.

B. Reporting Procedures

1. The care provider shall immediately report the known or suspected abuse or neglect to the event director.
2. Immediately, the event director shall make by telephone, or otherwise, an oral report to the Department of Human Services. (MCL § 722.623(1)). This oral report shall be made in conjunction with the person who made the observations or received the disclosure. The following information will be required in the oral report:
 - Name, age, and gender of the alleged victim and other family members.
 - Address, phone number, and/or directions to the alleged victim's home.
 - Parent's place(s) of employment.
 - Description of the suspected abuse or neglect and information that might establish the cause of or manner in which the abuse or neglect occurred.
 - Current condition of the alleged victim.
3. The report shall be documented in writing by the event director with notations as to indicate dates, times, persons involved in the process. Copies of this shall be made available to any involved Conference staff, and the Bishop's office.
4. Within 72 hours, the event director, with the person initiating the report, shall submit a completed State of Michigan "Report of Known or Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect" to the Department of Human Services in accordance with the directions given at the time of the oral report.
5. Following contact with the Department of Human Services, the event director shall inform:
 - The chairperson of the group sponsoring the Conference-related function, activity, or event.
 - The Conference Director of Connectional Ministries, in the case of a Conference event.
 - The district superintendent, in the case of a district event.
 - The facilities director, manager, or host church clergy person.
6. Notification of a parent or legal guardian of the alleged victim of abuse or neglect, which occurred prior to the Conference-related function, activity, or event, shall be determined by the Department of Human Services. When it is determined that a parent or legal guardian shall be notified, the event director shall call the parent or legal guardian informing him or her of what has been observed, and what steps have been taken in response to those observations. Unless otherwise instructed by the Department of Human Services, the event director shall follow the parent's or guardian's wishes regarding the continued participation of the involved child, youth, or vulnerable person.
7. Matters of known or suspected abuse or neglect are to be kept confidential, except as required by law or as disclosed to Detroit Conference representatives with a need to know such information.
8. The person designated by the Bishop's office shall be the only individual authorized to communicate on behalf of the Detroit Conference with the authorities and media after the initial report is made.
9. Persons who are the object of a report shall refrain from further activities with children, youth, or vulnerable persons until otherwise instructed by the event director.

Section IV. Policy for Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect Involving Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Persons - Cont.

10. The advice of the Bishop's office, legal counsel, and the Detroit Conference's insurance carrier will be sought as needed.

C. Bullying reporting procedures (in reference to MCLA 380.1310b(5)(d)-(i))

Those with knowledge of bullying in violation of this Policy are encouraged to report the facts to the event director, who will investigate the matter and make a written report to the Conference Director of Connectional Ministries and Conference Protection Policy Committee. Together the event director and Conference staff shall determine what notification is appropriate to give to the parent or legal guardian of a victim and the perpetrator, or others.

Conclusion

While the vast majority of those who work with our programs are of the highest moral character and are deeply committed to the needs of those to whom they minister, the realities of a society where awareness of the potential for abuse or neglect has been heightened makes a consistent screening policy and abuse prevention training necessary. We understand that those with clean backgrounds and records might find this process burdensome or offensive. Yet, if we are to take seriously our responsibility for children, youth, and vulnerable adults, all applications for workers and volunteers must be treated in the same manner. We take seriously the need to be careful and thorough in our screening. Further, we live in a litigious society, where the potential exposure of the Conference, districts, and even local churches where events are held mandates the need for a church-wide policy that is clear and consistently enforced. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we endeavor to make our programs safe and secure for all who participate.