

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The resolution was readopted in 2004 and 2008. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus also said, “As for whoever causes these little ones who believe in me to trip and fall into sin, it would be better for them to have a huge stone hung around their necks and be drowned in the bottom of the lake” (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little one, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse” (§162C). Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child, youth, and vulnerable persons sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members (adult) survivors of early sexual trauma. Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse. 1. “Ritual abuse” refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be. 2. God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church— 2008, pp.240-242. Copyright©2008 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)

Other scriptures remind us of the need to care for vulnerable persons such as the elderly. “Honor your Father and Mother as the Lord, God has commanded you” is one of the Ten Commandments outlined in Exodus 20. Jesus, from the cross, saw to the care of his mother, a vulnerable person in that context (John 19.25-27). Vulnerable persons are persons who for physical, cognitive, emotional or other reasons, are unable to advocate for themselves. Bullying is a new problem in our society that also requires our attention if we are to maintain safe spaces in our ministries and our churches. Our faith in Jesus Christ compels us to make the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable persons in our care a priority. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of abuse in our church.

Purpose

Salkehatchie Summer Service’s purpose for establishing this Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our youth and vulnerable persons.

Statement of Covenant

Salkehatchie Summer Service hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all our youth and vulnerable adults as well as all our adults who work with youth and vulnerable persons. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting campers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our adults with youth and vulnerable persons on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with South Carolina state law.

Procedures

Because it is our fervent hope and prayer that sexual abuse or any other form of abuse (physical, neglect, emotional, financial, or bullying) will not occur during a Salkehatchie event, we must put into place sufficient mechanisms to reduce the risk of abuse of youth, vulnerable persons, and those who work with them. For that purpose, our ministries shall implement the following procedures in all Salkehatchie events.

Because Salkehatchie adults are leaders within our covenant community, and because they have opportunities to supervise and be in contact with youth, and vulnerable persons, all adults that attend Salkehatchie shall have criminal background checks completed every three years.

Recruiting/Screening Salkehatchie Campers

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of youth and vulnerable adults. It can be time consuming and expensive, but well worth the effort that the most reliable, committed and experienced staff and volunteers are in place for Salkehatchie Summer Service events that involve youth and/or vulnerable persons.

Definitions:

- a) A Camper is someone at least 14 years old and is fully registered to attend camp.
- b) A supervisory adult is at least 23 years of age, and the person who is responsible for supervising assigned campers. Supervisory adults are assigned to campers by the Camp Director only.
- c) A Camp Director is defined as a supervisory adult, at least 23 years of age, and the person who is responsible for the management and oversight of the camp to which he or she has been appointed.
- d) A Site Leader is defined as a male or female at least 23 years of age and is responsible for managing and overseeing services performed on a specific site assigned by the Camp Director.
- e) An Adult is defined as a male or female, 18 years of age and over.
- f) A Youth is defined as a male or female 14 to 17 year of age.
- g) Runners shall be defined as anyone who routinely or on a daily basis delivers supplies to the camp or sites. These runners shall be registered as Salkehatchie campers meeting all the requirements.

- h) A Cook is not a camper and will not be allowed to supervise campers unless fully registered. Cooks who are not registered are requested to sign a "Release of Liability" form which requires that they are informed regarding the Salkehatchie Safe Sanctuary policy.
- i) A "Day Worker" is not a camper and will not be allowed to supervise campers. The Camp Director is the only person authorized to call in a day worker for a **specific task** and for a **designated amount of time**. Typically, Day workers are professional plumbers and electricians. Site leaders will be the overseers.
- j) A "vulnerable person" is someone who is defenseless in some way against others with power to include: persons who are elderly, disabled, have communication barriers or inabilities, or are susceptible to bullying or harassment.

The MINIMUM Safe Sanctuary standards are:

- A. All adult campers that serve in a supervisory capacity shall be at least 23 years old and shall:
 - Demonstrate an active relationship with a local church of at least six months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in youth activities and must:
 - Complete a Covenant Form
 - Complete an application form and provide three-character references.
 - Have communications with the Camp Director or designee about the supervisory role.
 - Complete the background check process (on-line).
 - Review and agree to comply with the Salkehatchie Expectations, Rules and Regulations, Sensitivity, Safety, and Stewardship Guidelines, and the Safety Manual for Volunteers.
- B. All adults 18 -22 years of age shall:
 - Complete a Covenant Form
 - Complete an application form and provide three-character references.
 - Complete the background check process (on-line)
- Review and agree to comply with the Salkehatchie Expectations, Rules and Regulations, Sensitivity, Safety, and Stewardship Guidelines, and the Safety Manual for Volunteers.
- C. All youth 14-17 years of age shall:
 - Complete a Covenant Form
 - Complete an application form.

- Review and agree to comply with the Salkehatchie Expectations, Rules and Regulations, Sensitivity, Safety, and Stewardship Guidelines, and the Safety Manual for Volunteers.
- D. All adult campers with a break in service of more than one calendar year will re-submit to the screening procedures for new participants. Otherwise, every adult will complete a new criminal background check every 3 calendar years.
- E. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's personnel file.
- F. All applications and related forms must be completed prior to service.
- G. If a reference check is accomplished by phone, detailed notes of the conversation should also be included in the personnel file.
- H. The "Release and Waiver of Liability" form for all registered campers shall be completed and signed prior to checking in and attending camp.
- I. The "Release and Waiver of Liability" form for each camper will be maintained by the Office of Connectional Ministries of the UMCSC Conference for a period of at least 10 years. All Camp Directors shall send completed "Release and Waiver of Liability" and Reference forms to the UMCSC Conference no later than two weeks after the camp ends. All other registration information will be maintained by the board.

Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting and Training

- A. **Reporting.** Camp Directors must ensure that an allegation of abuse directed at a camper under age 18 is responded to and reported, according to the conference guidelines and the requirements of South Carolina state law. Salkehatchie will continue to use and refer to the "Mandatory Reporting by Clergypersons and Others of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect" information, which is online at <http://www.umcsc.org/home/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/MandatoryReporting.pdf>. All Camp Directors or their Designees shall be informed regarding developments in safety and abuse prevention. Each camp shall have at least one person certified in CPR and First Aid from a nationally recognized body such as American Red Cross.
- B. **Training.** Training is a mandatory component of Salkehatchie Summer Service, LLC. Training shall include information, explanation, and discussion of:
 - The Salkehatchie Summer Service LLC Policy for the Prevention of Abuse of Children, Youth and Vulnerable persons.
 - Behaviors or other indicators which may signal problems
 - Requirements of SC state law for reporting incidents of abuse - Procedures for response to incidents or allegations of abuse and for reporting such incidents

A video featuring the main points of the Salkehatchie Safe Sanctuary policy may be shown at the beginning of camp along with any clarification and discussion. Camp Directors and all campers will sign

a covenant to abide by the Salkehatchie Safe Sanctuary policy. A copy of the Covenant should be sent to Conference office following the week of camp.

Regular Operations for Salkehatchie Camps and Events

1. Minimum supervisory standards will include the “two-adult rule.” The two-adult rule requires that regardless of the group size, there will always be two unrelated adults present with campers under 18 years of age. For vulnerable persons, there will be at least two unrelated adults present to assure that proper assistance for first aid, or care can be given as quickly as possible.
2. SC state law defines children as persons under the age of 18. These persons do not count as adults.
3. If both boys and girls are participants, then the adult leaders shall include both men and women.
4. Young adults between the ages of 18-22 may have limited supervision with youth between the ages of 14-17. While young adults between the ages of 18-22 may not be assigned as a site leader, the Camp Director or site leader may assign them to oversee work projects on the site or other camp activities.
5. The number of adults required for each event (above the minimum of two) will be determined by the number and age of the participants and the nature of the activities.
6. Unauthorized visitors are persons who are not properly registered and/or have not been approved by the Camp Director to visit camp. Only a Camp Director may authorize visitors to attend a specific event or site visit during the week. At no time will the visitors be authorized to supervise any youth. The Camp Director will be fully responsible for any authorized visitors who are allowed to attend a specific event or site. No camper shall “invite” visitors to attend a camp or site unless the Camp Director has approved the visitor in advance. Examples include: Youth Directors, Pastors, Friends, Family
7. Campers will not be allowed to leave the designated meeting area without the Camp Director’s permission.
8. During Salkehatchie, no one-on-one activities involving a youth and an adult shall be conducted “behind closed doors” or in isolated areas away from supervisory adults. All Salkehatchie camp activities will be carried out in locations where this policy can be properly implemented.
9. The “Release and Waiver of Liability” form for all registered campers shall be completed and signed prior to checking in and attending camp.
10. All adults, age 18 and over, are required to submit three references prior to checking in and attending camp.
11. While transporting youth during the week of camp, it may not be reasonable to assume that we would have two supervisory adults in each vehicle. In this situation, the two supervisory adults must maintain “line of sight” while traveling, where possible.

12. Sleeping arrangements are designed by the Camp Director prior to the start of camp to the extent possible. The Camp Director will designate an area for males and a separate area for females. If space allows, the Camp Director may designate areas for youth males and a separate area for adult males and for youth females and a separate area for adult females. The Camp Director may also allow youth and adults to stay within the same designated area as long as there are two non-related adults in that designated area; one of the adults must be a supervisory adult.
13. Older model fifteen passenger vans have been deemed dangerous by federal authorities and must not be used for transporting youth or vulnerable persons. Churches can transport their youth and adults to Salkehatchie in a van, but if the van is not a newer, safer model, it cannot be transporting youth at camp.
14. Bullying in the form of name calling, isolating or through media is not acceptable at any Salkehatchie event. Behaviors that constitute bullying include, but are not limited to, comments that are derogatory with respect to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, color, or disability; sexually suggestive, humiliating, or demeaning conduct, comments, or photographs; and threats to stalk, haze, or physically injure another camper. A camper who is found bullying will be sent home.
15. The above “Regular Operations for Salkehatchie Camps and Events” list must be reviewed with all campers at the beginning of camp and prior to any other activity.
16. The Camp Director will arrange for the “Salkehatchie Safety Manual” to be reviewed prior to work being performed on any site.

Cell Phones & Social Media Use

Creating a safe sanctuary in today’s virtual world goes beyond the physical building (i.e. school, church, camp) of the camp and must include intentional thought regarding how adults at Salkehatchie interact with youth in this virtual world that includes the use of cell phones and social media. This will include communication prior and following camp. To that end:

1. Text messages to campers under age 18 sent from the adult(s) should only be sent in a group/mass text manner.
2. Should an adult receive a private text from a youth that seems to be questionable, they should immediately end the conversation in the virtual realm and offer opportunities to have the conversation in person and in compliance with this policy.
3. Adults should communicate with parents/guardians/youth directors before (or instead of) texting/calling youth.
4. Campers must not use social media, blogs, or personal Websites to harass, bully, or intimidate children, youth, or staff members. Behaviors that constitute harassment or bullying include, but are not limited to, comments that are derogatory with respect to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, color, or disability; sexually suggestive, humiliating, or demeaning conduct, comments, or photographs; and threats to stalk, haze, or physically injure another camper.

5. No adults should post photos on social network sites without prior written permission by a parent/guardian. Photos posted on camp Facebook pages and other social network sites **MUST NOT BE TAGGED** with names or location indicators. All photos must be appropriate and within the spirit of the mission of our ministry.
6. All campers should be sensitive to and think about the potential to embarrass others and invade someone's privacy by taking unwanted photographs or posting them on social media without permission. As we are the hands of God as we work on homes and prepare for that work at camps, campers should think about the following before taking photographs or posting them on social media:
 - a. Respect the privacy of your fellow campers and site family. Always ask permission of everyone in a photo before posting it on social media. You should tag no one other than yourself.
 - b. No photo should be posted showing the living conditions of a site home that also includes the photo of a family member or his or her name or the address of the site home.
 - c. Because of the potential for embarrassment and invasion of privacy, photos should generally not be taken in cabins or around sleeping quarters.
 - d. As a general rule, photos should not be taken after lights out or before breakfast.

Reporting

- All reporting of alleged incidents or actual incidents of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse must strictly follow South Carolina law.
- A Camp Director who has reasonable cause to suspect that child, youth abuse or vulnerable adult abuse has occurred should secure the safety of the person, if possible, and then immediately report the incident to the Chairperson of the Salkehatchie Board of Managers. The Chairperson of the Board will notify the Annual Conference of the report. The Camp Director will then follow all appropriate procedures for reporting to the child's parents or guardian or care giver, and the local Sheriff's office
- Persons who are the alleged perpetrators of the reported abuse will be directed to refrain from all activities involving other campers until the incident report is resolved. Care should be taken in any removal of a person from any activities, to handle discreetly, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

Response Plan

- 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, all adult campers shall be expected to cooperate fully with all official investigating agencies.
- The Conference Director of Connectional Ministries, or his/her designee, is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Director of Connectional Ministries by the Salkehatchie Chairperson. Training in how

to handle media requests should be a regular part of Salkehatchie's training. A spirit of cooperation is exhibited by directing the media to the "official spokesperson."

- If the allegation concerns activities or persons outside any relationship to Salkehatchie, it is the responsibility of the Camp Director to make the initial contact with the local Sheriff's Department. An example would be a youth telling an adult at camp about abuse that was perpetrated by a relative during the prior year. If this report were made to an adult, the adult should notify the Camp Director as soon as possible.
- If the allegation is against another camper, the adult receiving this information must report it to the Camp Director immediately. The Camp Director will then notify the Salkehatchie Chairperson, who will then notify the Director of Connectional Ministries immediately. The Director of Connectional Ministries will advise the Director of Administrative Services, who will notify the Conference's insurance carrier.
- In either case, pastoral support and counseling will be made available to all persons involved with the incident as indicated.

Conclusion

Salkehatchie is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each camper 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). We take our policies to reduce the risk of abuse seriously and we are committed to their enforcement for the safety and security of all our children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who work with them.

All Salkehatchie camps and adults are required to comply with these policies.

All camps shall be subject to review by the board's members.

Non-compliance with these policies shall result in potential probation or suspension of the Camp Director by the Board.

The Chairperson of the Board shall initiate a review of these policies and procedures at least every two years or when procedural changes are made.

These policies and procedures were affirmed by the Connectional Ministries' Congregational Specialist for Safe Sanctuaries. This policy was developed by the Salkehatchie Board in compliance with The Resolution to Require the Establishment of a Safe Sanctuary Policy in Every United Methodist Church and in every United Methodist Conference Event in the South Carolina Annual Conference adopted at the 2007 session of The South Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

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