

# **Los Altos United Methodist Church Staff and Volunteer Child Protection Policy**

## **I. Rationale**

Because God has given us a sacred opportunity and a great responsibility to nurture and protect children and youth and the persons who work with them, LAUMC will take reasonable steps to educate its staff and volunteers in the recognition and prevention of opportunities for and instances of child abuse. LAUMC will put in place reasonable procedures to attempt to provide a safe and supportive place for children, youth and the persons who work with them, to protect children and youth from child abuse on its campus and in its programs, and to appropriately intervene in instances of alleged abusive behavior, caring for all involved.

## **II. Definition of Abuse**

Child abuse includes any action or inaction that endangers a child or youth's normal development. This includes dangers to the child's physical body, as well as his or her emotional, spiritual or intellectual development. Sexual abuse has been defined as the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, and to which they are unable to give informed consent.

## **III. Covenant**

LAUMC will ask each member of the LAUMC staff and each volunteer who will be participating with children or youth as part of an LAUMC program to sign and abide by the Covenant attached as Exhibit A.

By "participation" we mean those staff or volunteers who act in leadership roles or as supervisors with children and youth in a church activity.

## **IV. Staff and Volunteer Selection**

### **Paid Staff**

The following criteria must be satisfied for each member of the paid staff of LAUMC before they will be permitted to participate with children or youth as part of an LAUMC program:

An employment application must be completed, including references.

A personal interview must be conducted. References must be checked and documented in a reference response form.

A criminal reference check must be conducted. Persons with any criminal Child abuse convictions will not be permitted to work with children or youth as part of an LAUMC program.

The covenant must be signed:

### **Volunteers**

The following criteria must be satisfied for any volunteer before they will be permitted to participate in a position of leadership (i.e. Trip Coordinators, Building Site Leaders, Kitchen Crew Leaders) with children or youth as part of an LAUMC program:

A volunteer form must be completed, including references.

The covenant must be signed.

In addition, a personal interview must be conducted with volunteers who will be placed in higher risk positions (e.g. overnight or largely unsupervised activities involving children or youth ministry). If reasonable questions are raised as to any potential volunteer's suitability to work with children or youth, a criminal reference check must be conducted. Persons with any criminal child abuse convictions will not be permitted to work with children or youth as part of an LAUMC program.

Volunteer references must be checked and documented in a reference response form in a timely manner, but not necessarily before the volunteer participates in a program.

### **Drivers**

Before any person will be permitted to drive children or youth not in his or her own family in connection with an LAUMC program, he or she must complete the Driver's Application and update the form every three years.

### **Screening**

The staff members responsible for children and youth ministry will initially screen all records. The confidential portions of all records obtained during these processes will be maintained in confidential files accessible to only the LAUMC staffs that have a need to know the contents of the records.

## **V. Practices and Procedures**

Whenever possible, adults will be assigned in teams of two or more to LAUMC programs involving children or youth.

Whenever possible, volunteers who have been affiliated with LAUMC for less than six months will be paired with a longer term volunteer.

The staff members responsible for children and youth ministry must clear all chaperones and supervisors of overnight activities in advance.

Uncovered windows will be installed in all rooms in which minors meet with adults.

Church leaders will make random visits to all classrooms and frequently visit or inspect areas of church buildings that are isolated from view.

All staff members responsible for children and youth ministry will be trained in screening for child abuse issues.

Nursery practices: Parents must register their children when leaving them in the nursery. Parents will be given an identification tag, which will match a tag attached to the child and his or her belongings. The identification tag will be noted on the sign-in sheet. Parents must present the tag and sign their children out when leaving the nursery.

## **VI. Support for Involved Parties**

Because we believe that each person is a beloved child of God, LAUMC will provide appropriate support to all parties involved in any allegation of child abuse: the child or youth and parents, the accuser and the accused.

*Approved by Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) 9/16/02  
Stored in Los Altos UMC Records Library, "Policies & Procedures"*