



Safe Place Policy for the protection of children, youth and adults

Approved by Session April 26, 2021

This policy supersedes all prior Unity Presbyterian Church Safe Place Policies and Guidelines.

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Psalm 27:4-5

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

At Unity Presbyterian Church (Unity), we take very seriously our moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe sanctuary for children and youth and support for those who work with them. This is an expression of our faith as we seek to be united in Christ’s love, glorifying God through worship, nurture, and service to all people.

Unity maintains a commitment to extending the hospitality of Christ to all persons, regardless of race, gender, age, ability, or sexual identity. We also recognize that communities of faith are places where persons come for sanctuary, for a visible witness to God’s mercy and healing, and to participate in a community through which the Holy Spirit can inspire them toward service. Therefore we likewise recognize the need for all persons within our congregational life to work together to create an environment at Unity that is a safe haven for all – physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc. Child safety must therefore be a collective effort – a partnership between parents/caregivers, Unity staff, Unity volunteers, congregation members, and staff and volunteers of outside agencies who utilize Unity’s space for events and programs.

We believe that parents, volunteers, and employees prefer a church with an established, caring protection program. Therefore, Unity commits to provide a safe environment and affirms the rights of children, youth, and adults to be protected from inappropriate treatment whether through neglect, discrimination, emotional, physical, spiritual or sexual abuse.

No policy can be crafted to cover every possible circumstance. It is expected that those involved in ministries to children and youth will apply the guidelines and requirements contained within this policy sensitively and sensibly.

I. Purpose, Applicability, and Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy

Purpose

This policy is intended to create an environment where:

- Children and youth are protected from neglect, discrimination, emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual abuse
- Employees and volunteers are educated on ways to prevent abuse and avoid situations which might result in allegations
- Employees and volunteers are protected from unwarranted allegations of child abuse

Applicability

This policy applies to persons including all Unity employees, all church Deacons, and any volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity, whether on-site or off-site, including but not limited to:

- Sunday school classes
- Nurseries and child care (at any time)
- Children in Worship (CIW)
- All Youth Programs
- Vacation Bible School
- Sunday Night Live
- Unity Preschool
- Children's and youth choirs

All scout groups chartered by Unity and all non-Unity sponsored organizations that have direct supervision of children and youth and wish to use Unity's facilities will, as a prerequisite to utilizing Unity's facilities, sign the Outside Group Leader Release Form (Appendix D).

Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy

- Responsibility for implementation and compliance will reside with the Director of Christian Education and the Director of Youth Ministries.
- Perceived conflicts or ambiguities in interpretation and application of this policy will be resolved by the Director of Christian Education, the Director of Youth Ministries and the Head of Staff. The policy will be reviewed at least every two years by the Christian Education Taskforce. The Christian Education Taskforce is made up of the Director of Christian Education, the Director of Youth Ministries, and the Moderators of Children's Ministry Team, Youth Ministry Team and Adult Discipleship Ministry Team or their designees. Any proposed changes in this Policy will be presented by the Christian Education Taskforce to the Session for its consideration and approval. If the Policy is changed, those changes will be communicated to members of the Church through usual communications and in writing to all Church employees and approved volunteers.

II. Screening and Eligibility

Below is a list of required screenings for all Unity employees and any volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity:

Employees/Volunteers	Criminal Background Check	Reference Check	Training	Driver's License Check
All Employees	X	X	X	as needed
Adult Volunteers	X	as needed	X	as needed
Youth Volunteers	N/A	as needed	X	N/A

- Persons who have been members of Unity for at least six (6) months or regularly attending for at least six (6) months are eligible to volunteer to participate in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity. The applicable Program Director may grant exceptions after conducting an interview with the potential volunteer and consulting with the Director of Christian Education or the Director of Youth Ministries. (e.g., parents of children who are enrolled in church programs may be cleared for volunteering before six months by the applicable Program Director).
- All employees or volunteers who will be transporting children or youth agree to a Driver's License screening to check their driving record and to verify that they hold a valid license and auto insurance at the beginning of their service. Those with moving violations may be prohibited from driving, as determined by the applicable Program Director, Director of Christian Education, or the Director of Youth Ministries.
- Adults who have been convicted of any offense involving child abuse, sexual abuse, or contributing to the delinquency of a minor will not be accepted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity for children or youth.
- Interviews, reference checks, employment records, and background checks are to be documented in writing. These records are considered church property and will be maintained as confidential.
- Upon adoption of this policy, all current employees and all current volunteers who participate in children and youth programs will be required to sign the Application to Work with Children and Youth (Appendix B), attend training, and successfully undergo the screenings outlined here. At the beginning of their service, all new employees and new volunteers will be required to sign the Application to Work with Children and Youth (Appendix B), attend training, and successfully undergo the screenings outlined here.
- Adverse Impact Notice: If Unity decides not to offer a volunteer position or employment based on information in a background check or driver's license check, Unity will advise the applicant that the decision is based on the background check or driver's license check and show the applicant the report and tell the applicant how to contact the reporting entity.

III. Renewals and Training

Renewals

- Background checks will be renewed every three years. They may also be rerun at any time on a random or as-needed basis. Current employees and volunteers will not need to complete a new application for the renewal.

- Driver's License checks will be renewed annually for all employees and volunteers who transport children and youth.
- Employees and volunteers are required to participate in Unity Safe Place Training every 5 years.
- Employees and volunteers are required to report to the Head of Staff any circumstances under this policy that might affect their ability to work with children and youth at any time.

Training

- All employees and any volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity are required to attend a training session at the beginning of their service and every five years after that.
- Initial training will be conducted by the Director of Christian Education or the Director of Youth Ministries or their designee using a prepared presentation based on the outline below. Training and training renewals may be offered online.
- Unity will offer regular training sessions throughout the year with the goal of creating an awareness of child and youth protection issues. Training will include:
 - o The theological and legal need for the Safe Place Policy
 - o Definition of child abuse
 - o What constitutes inappropriate treatment/ inappropriate conduct
 - o Church policies governing working with children and youth, including the Two-Adult policy and the Open Door policy
 - o Appropriate conduct for supervising and chaperoning children and/or youth
 - o Appropriate conduct and protocols for use during online meetings, use of social media, and use of electronic means of communication with children and youth
 - o Procedures for reporting allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues and how Unity will respond
 - o Behavioral guidelines for employees and volunteers
- Parents bear primary responsibility for teaching children about child and youth protection and safety issues; however, Unity may offer age-appropriate educational opportunities with children and youth about child and youth protection issues. Particular care will be given to training older youth who may be interacting with younger children.

IV. Supervision

Two-Adult Policy and Open Door Policy

It is the goal of Unity to have at least two adults present during children and youth programs and ministries. Employees and volunteers are expected to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, any situation in which they would be alone and out of sight of others with a single child or youth.

Adults should only visit a child's or youth's home in the presence of a parent or legal guardian. This is to protect not only children and youth from situations in which abuse might occur, but also adults from false accusations of inappropriate treatment. Recognizing that it is not always feasible to have at least two adults present, the following alternatives may be implemented:

- Classroom doors will be left open (doors with unobstructed windows may be closed)

- A Supervisor is provided for periodic observation (e.g., staff member and/or other designated CE volunteer)
- A Youth volunteer may be used as described below (See Youth Volunteers)
- When driving children or youth on Unity-sponsored events, only one adult is required in each car as long as there is more than one child or youth, unless the driver is the parent or legal guardian of the child or youth.
- In situations where it is necessary for an adult to be alone with a child or youth, the individual should notify another adult before and after the period during which he/she is alone with the child or youth.

Overnight Activities/Transportation Policy

The two-adult policy extends to all overnight and transportation-related events in so far as practicable. Adults should avoid being in a one child/one adult situation at all times. If this is necessary, (e.g., for a child to get home after an event) an effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child.

- For overnight activities, it is required that at least two **unrelated** adults be over age 21, one of which is over age 25.
- Children and/or youth and adults sleeping in the same room or area must be of the same gender.
- If an adult is sharing sleeping quarters with only one child or youth, he or she must be the parent or legal guardian of that child or youth.
- There must be a same-gender adult leader for every 7 children or youth attending overnight events.
- Adult drivers will be between the ages of 25 and 65. On rare occasions, an exception for drivers to the age of 21 and over the age of 65 can be made by the Director of Youth Ministries or the Director of Christian Education.

Youth Volunteers

Unity recognizes that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for youth who are under the age of 18 to assist with the care of children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such volunteers:

- Youth volunteers must be in 6th grade or higher.
- Since background checks are not done on Youth under 18 years of age, Youth volunteers will be trained and reference checks completed, as needed, as specified in this policy.
- Youth volunteers must be under the supervision of an adult and are not left alone with children.
- Youth volunteers will not volunteer in the Infant Nursery unless they are working with a parent or other adult volunteer and have permission of the Nursery Coordinator.
- Youth volunteers may volunteer in Toddler and Preschool Nursery with permission of the Nursery Coordinator.

V. Digital Interactions with Children and Youth

The internet and social media are evolving tools which offer great promise for developing and deepening ministries but also pose significant safety challenges. In an increasingly digital world, we acknowledge that utilizing ways to connect with children and youth via various online platforms are necessary and helpful. Furthermore, online opportunities for connection and faith formation are necessary when children and youth are unable to meet in person.

Unity employees and adult volunteers participating in children and youth programs of Unity should always remember that procedures outlined in this policy for in person gatherings also apply to the digital world.

Procedures for Online Gatherings with Children and Youth

Scheduling and Communicating about Online Gatherings

Online Gatherings with children and/or youth will be advertised in advance, and will take place at particular times (for example: 12:30 pm on Sundays for Confirmation Sunday School, 6:30 pm on Sundays for Youth Group, 7:00 pm on Tuesdays for Youth Bible Study, etc.)

- Invitations for online gatherings with children and/or youth will be sent to parents of children and to youth with their parents copied.
- All online gatherings with children and/or youth will be on Zoom accounts managed by Unity staff members.
- Meeting IDs, Passwords and Links for online gatherings for children and/or youth will not be shared on public forums.
- All online gatherings with children and/or youth will utilize either waiting rooms and/or passwords to assure that only approved participants join the gatherings.
- A minimum of two Safe Place trained adults will be present at online gatherings with children and/or youth. To the extent possible, such adults will arrive a few minutes prior to the meeting and will not leave until all children or youth participants have left the gathering.

Platform Settings for Online Gatherings

- **Chat Functions:** All chat functions will be disabled where possible for online gatherings with children and private chat will be disabled when possible for online gatherings with youth unless used as a part of the lesson plan for that particular gathering. Adults participating in the gathering will remind youth of appropriate use of chat and will have the authority to turn off chat if abused.
- **Screen Sharing:** Hosts will maintain control of screen sharing at all times for online gatherings with children. Screen sharing permissions will be given to participants during online gatherings with youth when necessary as a part of the lesson plan for that particular gathering.
- **Recording Meetings:** Parents and participants will be notified ahead of time and alerted to the reason needed if an online gathering for children and/or youth needs to be recorded.

Participating in Online Gatherings

Adult leaders and participants are expected to choose an appropriate location and appropriate attire for

online gatherings. If you would not wear it to an in-person gathering at church, do not wear it for an online gathering.

Children (5th grade and under):

- Parents are required to log on and remain for the duration of gatherings that include children 3 years old-Kindergarten to assist with technology and participate with their child.
- Parents are required to be present during log on and log off with children in 1st-5th grades. They are welcome to remain for the entire meeting, but are not required to. These children are expected to log on to online gatherings in shared spaces in their homes easily accessible to their parents.

Youth (6th-12th grades):

- Youth may log on and participate in gatherings without a parent present. Parents are asked to be cognizant of gathering schedules and when their youth should be participating in church organized online gatherings.

Use of Social Media with Children and Youth

- In church social media posts (including but not limited to Facebook & Instagram) children and youth should NOT be tagged or identified by name.
- Parental consent must be obtained in writing before images of children or youth are posted on Unity's social media accounts.
- Unity staff, including but not limited to the Communications Coordinator, Director of Christian Education, and Director of Youth Ministries, should monitor church social media accounts for inappropriate content. Inappropriate content will be removed and individuals who author such content may be removed from groups at the discretion of the group administrator.
- Unity staff and adults volunteering with children and youth programs may share posts from Unity social media accounts on their personal accounts. They should not, however, post pictures of children or youth they may have taken during church sponsored events on their personal social media accounts as the photo consent form grants consent for Unity's social media accounts only.
- Unity staff and adults volunteering with children and youth programs who learn of anything through social media that may indicate a child or youth has been abused, neglected, or exploited must report that information immediately to the Senior Pastor, Director of Christian Education or Director of Youth Ministries.

Use of Digital Communication with Children and Youth

We believe it is important to teach youth best practices in communicating online with adults. To this end, appropriate church communications with Safe Place trained grown-ups are a good way to practice. We encourage parents to be aware and in charge of their child's online presence. Unity staff and adults volunteering with children and youth programs will adhere to the following guidelines.

- Communications regarding children's ministry programming will be sent to parents of children. No digital communications will be sent directly to children.

- Communications regarding youth ministry programming will be sent directly to youth, if email addresses are available and copied to the email addresses on file for parents of youth.
- All efforts will be made to hide (BCC) youth email addresses in group emails.
- Parents who do not want their child to be contacted by email or other social media may opt out by informing the Director of Youth Ministries.
- Unity staff may also use group texting apps such as Remind to send group texts regarding youth ministry events.

Unity staff and adults volunteering in youth ministry should use appropriate judgement regarding content, appropriate time, and the necessity of individual digital communication with youth via text, direct message, etc.

VI. Behavioral Guidelines for Employees and Volunteers

Leadership in the Church demands the highest standards of moral integrity and personal responsibility. Therefore, all employees and volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity are expected to observe the following guidelines. Unity employees and volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity:

- Will not verbally, emotionally, physically, spiritually or sexually abuse children or youth or discipline children or youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care. Will use physical restraint only in situations necessary to protect the child or youth, other children or youth, or staff from harm.
- Are expected to observe the Two-Adult Rule and Open Door Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times, except in emergency situations, and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
- Will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children and youth from touching others in an inappropriate or unwanted manner.
- Should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children or youth entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the applicable Program Director, who will report to the Head of Staff or designee.
- Will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or be impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church-sponsored programs. Will not smoke or use tobacco during church programs.
- When transporting children or youth on Unity-sponsored trips and outings, will refrain from texting or using cell phones while driving and will identify a passenger designated to communicate with passengers in the other cars when necessary.
- If using a device while in the presence of children or youth, should be aware of the content on the device, making sure that children or youth in close proximity are not exposed to inappropriate images, language, or other inappropriate content.
- Will not i) use profanity, inappropriate language, jokes, or any kind of harassment in the

presence of children, youth or parents; ii) share inappropriate details of their personal life; or iii) ask children or youth to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal, or electronic. Unity employees and adult volunteers may not have any romantic or sexual relations with program participants under 18 years of age.

- Will report to the Director of Christian Education or the Director of Youth Ministries and/or Head of Staff any situations where risk of inappropriate treatment exists or the policy is not being followed.

VII. Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Suspected Child Abuse

The following procedures will be followed in the event of an incident or allegation of abuse, or if any signs of injury or possible child abuse are noticed:

- **Assure Safety/Security.** The applicable Program Director will assure the safety and security of the child or youth, which may include removing the child/youth from a location before any other action is initiated, including confronting anyone.
- **Report the Incident.** The person who suspects or witnesses inappropriate treatment of a child or youth will report the incident immediately to the applicable Program Director (or his or her supervisor if the Program Director is the individual suspected of inappropriate treatment) with responsibility for the program/activity. Within 24 hours of the incident, the person who made the report will prepare a written report with all known details and facts and will provide that report to the person to whom the initial report was made.
- **Notify Church Authorities.** The Program Director will notify the Head of Staff or designee immediately.
- **Document the Report.** The Head of Staff or designee will document all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.
- **Notify Attorney.** The Head of Staff or designee may contact an attorney to seek legal advice, which should be documented in writing.
- **Notify the Parents/Guardians.** The Head of Staff or designee will notify the parent(s) or legal guardian of the alleged victim no later than 24 hours from the reporting of the incident unless the allegation was made against the parent(s) or legal guardian.
- **Notify the Department of Social Services.** If the Program Director, Head of Staff or designee, receives information that gives the person reason to believe that abuse has occurred, he or she shall make a telephone report to the York County Department of Social Services or local police or sheriff's department as soon as possible. The person who suspects or witnessed the inappropriate treatment should be included in the call, if possible.
- **Allow Civil Authority to investigate.** The investigation of the alleged inappropriate treatment will be conducted by the York County Department of Social Services or other appropriate public authorities.
- **Report to Church's Insurer.** The Head of Staff or designee will make an appropriate and timely report to the church's liability insurer. If the accused is a church employee, the Head of Staff or designee will also make an appropriate and timely report to the Staff Ministry Team chairperson.

Best Practices during Investigation

- **Media Contact.** The Head of Staff or designee will be the sole spokesperson for the church regarding media and other public or church inquiries.
- **Confidentiality.** All persons involved in the reporting or investigation of alleged inappropriate treatment will cooperate with the Church and civil authorities, but will not discuss the matter with anyone else.
- **Respect for and Treatment of Person Accused.** Any person accused of inappropriate treatment must be treated with dignity and support. All reports will be taken seriously, but will not be judged prematurely. If the person accused of inappropriate treatment is an employee or volunteer participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity, the Program Director will relieve the person accused of the inappropriate treatment of further responsibilities until the appropriate public investigating authorities complete the investigation and determine whether or not the information obtained through the investigation substantiates the allegations.

Additional Comments

- **Allegations Regarding a Pastor.** Any allegations against a Pastor involving inappropriate treatment will be promptly reported to the Presbytery for action in accordance with its own policies and procedures.
- **Allegations Regarding Outside Organizations.** Organizations that use the church facilities will notify the Head of Staff or designee as soon as possible about any incident of inappropriate treatment involving any person affiliated with that arm of the organization using the church facilities. In addition, the organization using the church facilities will follow that organization's reporting practices or, if it has no established reporting procedures, that organization will follow procedures substantially like those set forth in this section. In either case, there will be no contact by the church representative with the person accused of inappropriate treatment.
- **Sexual Offenders** - At no time is a Sexual Offender to be assigned to ministries with children and youth. At no time is a Sexual Offender to congregate with children and youth. At no time is a Sexual Offender allowed in areas of the church or grounds dedicated to children and youth or in use primarily by children and youth unless in the presence of other adults.

GLOSSARY

Child Abuse – A non-accidental injury or pattern of physical or mental injuries to a child or youth. Child abuse may include:

- **Neglect** – Occurs when the adults responsible for the well-being of a child fail to provide for the child. Neglect may include not giving food, clothing, shelter; failure to keep children clean; lack of supervision and withholding medical care.
- **Emotional Abuse** – Chronic and persistent acts by an adult that endanger the mental health or emotional development of a child including rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, bullying, corrupting, constant criticism, mean remarks, insults, and giving little or no love, guidance and support.
- **Physical Abuse** – An injury or pattern of injuries that happen to a child that are not accidental. These injuries may include beatings, burns, bruises, bites, welts, strangulation, broken bones, or death.
- **Spiritual Abuse** – Takes place when leaders to whom people look for guidance and spiritual nurture use their positions of authority to manipulate, control, and dominate.
- **Sexual Abuse** – Sexual abuse is the sexual assault or exploitation of children and can include rape, sexual battery, sexual offense, indecent liberties, promoting or participating in prostitution of a minor, sexual exploitation of a minor, disseminating pornography to children, kidnapping or abduction. Sexual abuse may consist of numerous acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Children can be victimized from infancy through adolescence. Typically, the perpetrator keeps the child from disclosing the abuse through intimidation, threats, and rewards.

Child – Anyone currently in 5th grade or below

Youth – Anyone currently in 6th grade and above, but under 18 years old

Employee – Any person who works for salary or wages at Unity.

Inappropriate Treatment /Inappropriate Conduct– any act or action that could be considered Child Abuse

Policy – The most recently approved version of the Unity Safe Place Policy. All appendices and addendums are considered part of the Policy.

Policy Summary – Appendix E attached to this Policy.

Program Director – Any person with supervision over a particular program or ministry. (e.g. Nursery Coordinator, CIW Coordinator, Director of Unity Preschool, Director of Music, Director of Christian Education, Director of Youth Ministries.) If one of these individuals is accused of inappropriate treatment, reporting of such incident will be to the Head of Staff.

Sexual Offender – Any person convicted of a crime involving sex including rape, sexual battery, sexual offense, indecent liberties, promoting or participating in prostitution of a minor, sexual exploitation of a minor, disseminating pornography to children, kidnapping or abduction; and anyone listed on a Sex Offender Registry.

Training– As referenced in this Policy, training shall be conducted using a prepared presentation and accompanying documentation. Initial training and training renewals may be offered in person or online.

Volunteer - Any person participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity, whether on-site or off-site.



---Confidential---

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER APPLICATION TO PARTICIPATE IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS AND MINISTRIES

Training Date:

- Employee
- Volunteer
- Nursery
- CIW
- Sunday school
- SNL
- VBS
- Preschool
- Music
- Youth
- Other

Date _____

Name _____
Last First Middle

Date of Birth _____ Social Security Number _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Occupation _____ Place of Employment _____

Are you a member of Unity Presbyterian Church? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, how many years? _____ If no, how long have you been attending Unity? _____

Current Address:

Street City State Zip

If you would be willing to transport children or youth on church-sponsored outings or trips, please provide the following information:

Drivers License No. _____ State Issued _____

List all previous church work involving children/ youth: (Organization name, address, contact person, type of work, dates, etc.)

List all previous non-church work involving children/ youth. Be specific:

Non-related Personal References

(not required for anyone who has been participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity for two or more years)

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Phone: _____

Authorization to Obtain Records and Information and Waiver and Release

I understand and agree that as part of my Application to Participate in Children and Youth Programs and Ministries, Unity Presbyterian Church, together with third party organizations engaged to assist, will request information about me, which may include, but is not limited to background checks, criminal records, reference checks, driving licensing records and reports. Such reports may include civil court records, Sex Offender registries, arrest records, and summaries from state motor vehicle divisions, as well as reference checks to persons you have listed, as well as others who may be identified as a part of the Application process. I hereby authorize Unity Presbyterian Church, and any third parties it engages, to obtain information and utilize that information in determining my request to volunteer. I hereby release and hold harmless Unity Presbyterian Church, as well as its pastors, employees, and volunteers, from any and all liability claimed to be resulting from such actions and disclosure. I further understand and agree that Unity Presbyterian Church will periodically check these same sources for updated information; and I hereby release and hold harmless Unity Presbyterian Church, its pastors, employees, and volunteers from any and all liability claimed to be resulting from such actions and disclosure.

Signature _____ Date _____

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches, or other organizations listed in this application to give you any information they may have (including employer's opinions) regarding my character and fitness for working with children or youth, and I hereby release all such references, churches, or other organizations from liability for damages of whatever nature that may result from furnishing such evaluations to you. I waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

I have not participated in, or been convicted of, or pled guilty or nolo contendere (no contest) to abuse, sexual misconduct, or criminal offense of any kind.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to follow the Safe Place Policy and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of Unity Presbyterian Church. I understand that any violation of this policy or misrepresentation of information that I have provided may result in termination of employment or volunteer service with children/youth. I further understand that if I drive on a Unity Presbyterian Church-sponsored children or youth event, my personal Automobile, Liability, or Medical Insurance shall serve as primary coverage, with Unity Presbyterian Church's insurance serving as secondary coverage, in the event of any and all liability, loss, damages, claims or action for bodily injury, and/or property damage.

I have received training on the Safe Place Policy and accompanying addendums of Unity Presbyterian Church, have read the accompanying documentation, and agree to observe all church policies and procedures regarding working with children/youth.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please return completed form to Kathryn McGregor or Kaiti Bryant, Unity Presbyterian Church, 303 Tom Hall Street, Fort Mill, SC 29715



Unity Presbyterian Church Safe Place Policy **OUTSIDE GROUP LEADER RELEASE FORM**

To be completed along with
Unity's Event Request Form

At Unity Presbyterian Church (Unity), we take very seriously our moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe sanctuary for children and youth and support for those who work with them. This is an expression of our faith as we seek to be united in Christ's love, glorifying God through worship, nurture, and service to all people.

Unity maintains a commitment to extending the hospitality of Christ to all persons, regardless of race, gender, age, ability, or sexual identity. We also recognize that communities of faith are places where persons come for sanctuary, for a visible witness to God's mercy and healing, and to participate in a community through which the Holy Spirit can inspire them toward service. Therefore we likewise recognize the need for all persons within our congregational life to work together to ensure that Unity is a safe haven for all persons – physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc. Child safety must therefore be a collective effort – a partnership between parents/caregivers, Unity staff, Unity volunteers, congregation members, and staff and volunteers of outside agencies who utilize Unity's space for events and programs.

We believe that parents, volunteers, and employees prefer a church with an established, caring protection program. Therefore, Unity commits to provide a safe environment and affirms the rights of children, youth, and adults to be protected from inappropriate treatment whether through neglect, discrimination, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

As a result of this commitment and belief, Unity implements a Safe Place policy within which contains the following Behavioral Guidelines. All groups that have direct supervision of children and youth under the age of 18 while utilizing Unity's facilities are expected to observe these Behavioral Guidelines. As a prerequisite to utilizing Unity's facilities, leaders of the group will acknowledge receipt of these guidelines and agree to their implementation with signature below.

Behavioral Guidelines

Members of my organization:

- Will not verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse children or youth or discipline children or youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care. Will use physical restraint only in situations necessary to protect the child or youth, other children or youth, or staff from harm.
- Are expected to observe the Two-Adult Rule and Open Door Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times, except in emergency situations, and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
- Will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children and youth from touching others in an inappropriate or unwanted manner.
- Should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children or youth entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the applicable Program Director, who will report to the Head of Staff or designee.

- Will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or be impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church-sponsored programs. Will not smoke or use tobacco during church programs.
- When transporting children or youth on Unity-sponsored trips and outings, will refrain from texting or using cell phones while driving and will identify a passenger designated to communicate with passengers in the other cars when necessary.
- If using a device while in the presence of children or youth, should be aware of the content on the device, making sure that children or youth in close proximity are not exposed to inappropriate images, language, or other inappropriate content.
- Will not i) use profanity, inappropriate language, jokes, or any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth or parents; ii) share inappropriate details of their personal life; or iii) ask children or youth to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal, or electronic. Adult volunteers may not have any romantic or sexual relations with program participants under 18 years of age.
- Will report to the Director of Christian Education and/or Head of Staff any situations where risk of inappropriate treatment exists or the policy is not being followed.

Name of Organization _____

Contact Person #1: _____

Contact Person #2: _____

Unity Presbyterian Staff Contact _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Group Leader's Statement

I am responsible for the activities of _____ organization.

I acknowledge that I have read Unity's Safe Place Policy Summary (attached hereto) and have received a copy for the use of my organization. A complete copy of Unity's Safe Place Policy is available on the church website at:

I agree that my organization will follow the Supervision and Behavioral Guidelines contained therein, including notifying Unity's Head of Staff about any incident of inappropriate treatment involving any person affiliated with my organization while using Unity's facilities. I further agree to follow my organization's established reporting procedures or, if it has not established reporting procedures, to follow procedures substantially like those set forth in the Unity policy: <https://unityfortmill.org/about-us/church-documents/policies-and-procedures/>

Signature #1 _____ Date _____

Signature #2 _____ Date _____



Unity Presbyterian Church

Safe Place Policy Summary

for the protection of children, youth and adults

Psalm 27:4-5

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

At Unity Presbyterian Church, (Unity) we take very seriously our moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe sanctuary for children and youth and support for those volunteers who participate in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity. This is an expression of our faith as we seek to be united in Christ's love, glorifying God through worship, nurture, and service to all people.

Unity maintains a commitment to extending the hospitality of Christ to all persons, regardless of race, gender, age, ability, or sexual identity. We also recognize that communities of faith are places where persons come for sanctuary, for a visible witness to God's mercy and healing, and to participate in a community through which the Holy Spirit can inspire them toward service. Therefore we likewise recognize the need for all persons within our congregational life to work together to ensure that Unity is a safe haven for all persons – physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc. Child safety must therefore be a collective effort – a partnership between parents/caregivers, Unity staff, Unity volunteers, congregation members, and staff and volunteers of outside agencies who utilize Unity's space for events and programs.

We believe that parents, volunteers, and employees prefer a church with an established, caring protection program. Therefore, Unity commits to provide a safe environment and affirms the rights of children, youth and adults to be protected from inappropriate treatment whether through neglect, physical, emotional, spiritual or sexual abuse.

This policy applies to:

- All Unity employees and any volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity
- All scout groups chartered by Unity and all non-Unity sponsored organizations that have direct supervision of children and youth and are using Unity's facilities

This policy is intended to: create an environment where:

- Children and youth are protected from neglect, discrimination, emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual abuse
- Employees and volunteers are educated on ways to prevent abuse and avoid situations which might result in allegations
- Employees and volunteers are protected from unwarranted allegations of child abuse

Components:

- Screening
- Training
- Supervision
- Online meetings, use of Social Media and use of Electronic Means of Communication with Children and Youth
- Behavioral Guidelines for Employees and Volunteers
- Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Suspected Child Abuse

Six Month Policy: Any volunteer participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity must have been a member of or regularly attending Unity for at least six months.

SCREENING AND ELIGIBILITY

Employees/Volunteers	Criminal Background Check	Reference Check	Training	Driver's License Check
All Employees	X	X	X	as needed
Adult Volunteers	X	as needed	X	as needed
Youth Volunteers	N/A	as needed	X	N/A

Unity will rerun criminal background checks on all employees and current volunteers participating in children and youth programs of Unity every three years and rerun Driver's License Checks on all current drivers for children's and youth programs of Unity annually. Current employees and volunteers will not be required to complete a new application for the renewal.

TRAINING

All employees and any volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries of Unity must complete training every five years.

Training includes:

- theological and legal need for the policy
- what constitutes child abuse and inappropriate treatment
- components of Unity's policy
- skills needed for supervising and chaperoning children and youth
- appropriate conduct and protocols during online meetings, use of social media, and use of electronic means of communication with children and youth
- how to report a suspected incident and how Unity will respond to reports
- behavioral guidelines for employees and volunteers

SUPERVISION

Two-Adult Policy:

At least two adults should be present with children and youth at all times and remain in sight of one another except in emergency situations. Youth may also volunteer as described below.

Open Door Policy:

Doors to rooms in which children and/or youth are present should remain open.

Youth Volunteers:

Youth volunteers in 6th grade or higher may care for children if they have been trained and are under the supervision of an adult.

BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Unity employees and volunteers participating in children and youth programs and ministries:

- Will not verbally, emotionally, physically, spiritually or sexually abuse children and/or youth or discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care. Will use physical restraint only in situations necessary to protect the children, other children, or staff from harm.
- Are expected to observe the Two-Adult Rule and Open Door Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times, except in emergency situations, and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
- Will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children and youth from touching others in an inappropriate or unwanted manner.
- Should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children and/or youth entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the applicable Program Director, who will report to the Head of Staff or designee.
- Will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or be impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church-sponsored programs. Will not smoke or use tobacco during church programs.
- When transporting children or youth on Unity-sponsored trips and outings away from the church, will refrain from texting or using cell phones while driving and will identify a passenger designated to communicate with passengers in the other cars when necessary.
- If using a device while in the presence of children or youth, should be aware of the content on the device, making sure that children or youth in close proximity are not exposed to inappropriate images, language, or other inappropriate content.
- Will not i) use profanity, inappropriate language, jokes, or any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth or parents; ii) share inappropriate details of their personal life; or iii) ask children or youth to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal, or electronic. Unity employees and adult volunteers may not date program participants under 18 years of age.
- Will report to the Director of Christian Education or the Director of Youth Ministries and/or Head of Staff any situations where risk of inappropriate treatment exists or the policy is not being followed.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

- The safety and security of children and youth are to be safeguarded before the accused person is confronted or other steps taken.
- Each employee and volunteer is required to document in writing any witnessed or suspected situation of alleged abuse.
- Such allegations will be reported to the applicable Program Director and/or Head of Staff as soon as possible and within 24 hours.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

- All persons will maintain confidentiality, including the identity of the individuals involved.
- Any person accused of inappropriate treatment will be treated with dignity and support.
- All reports will be taken seriously, but not judged prematurely.