

Belin Memorial United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuary Policy

1. Definitions for the purpose of this policy:

Children:	ages birth through fifth grade
Youth:	ages sixth grade – 17 years old
Young adult:	ages 18-21
Approved Volunteer:	an unpaid adult, 21 years of age or older, who meets all required criteria to work with Belin’s programs serving children, youth or vulnerable adults.
Staff :	paid employees cleared to work with all programs serving children and youth
Floater:	An adult cleared, trained, and approved by a Program Director to meet the Two-Adult Rule
Program Director:	The church staff Directors of Christian Programs, Youth, Children, Worship Arts, Belin Creative Learning Center, and the Family Life Center
Vulnerable Adult:	a person 18 years of age or older who has a physical or mental condition which substantially impairs the person from adequately providing for his or her own care

2. Approved Adult Volunteers and Staff must meet the following requirements to be cleared to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults:

- Complete an application form providing social security and driver’s license numbers.
- Be 21 years of age and at least five years older than the age of the persons they are working to serve. Exceptions may be made by the director overseeing the program.
- Give permission for background and DMV check. Any concerns may prevent approval.
- Volunteers must be members or regular attendees of Belin Memorial for a minimum of six months before being eligible to work as a teacher or worker with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. However, this time requirement may be waived after the applicant’s references and other background information are verified. Any volunteers or paid staff under the age of 18 must have adult supervision at all times.
- Participate in Safe Sanctuary training with an approved staff member.
- Sign the Safe Sanctuary statement that the policy was received and read.
- Adults or youth who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable adults; or who have a history of inappropriate conduct involving actual or attempted physical or sexual abuse with individuals in these groups, are not allowed to work with or interact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

3. **All Activities** (Responsibilities, Reporting, and Recordkeeping)

A. Parent responsibilities

- Keep young children with you at all times when not engaged in organized activities
- Escort children 5th grade and under to and from planned activities
- Advise activity leaders immediately of any injuries, medical needs, or allergies
- In no case will children under 5th grade be allowed to leave activity locations unescorted or escorted by other children
- Require children to follow posted and announced safety guidelines

B. Church responsibilities

- Assure the safety of equipment and facilities. Report any concerns to the director.
- Provide training on the guidelines, reporting procedures, and indicators of abuse.
- Inform the congregation annually of the policies, guidelines, and practices in place to keep our children, youth and vulnerable adults safe.
- Provide age-appropriate education and information to children and youth on ways to recognize, avoid, and respond to situations that may be unsafe for them.
- Clearly identify approved adult volunteers (by name tag or other easily identifiable way)

C. Children and youth responsibilities

- No youth, under the age of 18, may be in the Family Life Center, Sanctuary, or Education Building when there are no adults present.
- Follow all posted and provided guidelines and instructions given by volunteer leaders and/or staff

D. Two adult rule

- Two approved, non-related adults are required to be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- When situations require physical intimacy, such as examining a child for injury or changing a diaper, two adults must be present.
- Workers should never be alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, including when transporting via automobile or church bus. If the passengers are of both genders, then the driver and approved adult assistant should be of different genders and unrelated.
- In certain circumstances, at the discretion of the Program Director, married couples, or “floaters” may be used to meet the 2-adult requirement.
- If the two adult rule is not feasible or practical, the open-view rule must be observed. The open view rule requires the interior of the occupied room to be visible to outside observers. An open door, a split door with one half open, or an observation window/opening meets the requirements of the open view rule.

E. Attendance records (use approved form)

- Rosters of those in attendance at any children’s or youth activity should be maintained and filed with the office of the program director.
- Adult names are to be recorded, also.

F. Discipline problems

If any child or youth becomes a discipline problem such that they become a danger to themselves or others:

- Parents will be contacted and, if necessary, requested to “pick-up” the offender.
- The program director and/or one of the pastors must be notified and any disciplinary action will be determined by the program director and/or pastor.
- Children or youth should never be removed or sent to an unsupervised area for time out.
- The two-adult rule provides an adult to accompany any children or youth who need to leave the supervised activity area for any reason.
- Corporal punishment of any kind is absolutely forbidden and is considered abuse. No discipline that employs the use of physical force such as spanking, hitting, or shaking, will be used. No one should scream in anger or threaten verbally or through bodily motions.

G. Emergency Cards (Use approved form)

- Required for all children, youth or vulnerable adults in attendance at church-sponsored activities detailing emergency contact and medical/allergy and insurance information
- Must be readily accessible to activity leaders and program directors during each activity

H. Accidents Reports (Use approved form)

- Are required to be submitted to the activity supervisor/director for any accident requiring more than minor treatment that has potential later complications. These reports should be turned in to the Church Administrator’s office for filing.

I. Reporting Incidences of Abuse

In the event of suspected, or a complaint of, child abuse:

- The employee or volunteer witness to the incident, along with the pastor or church administrator, will report the matter immediately to law enforcement and the DSS.
- The pastor/s and church administrator are the only persons approved to and responsible for reporting the incident to:
 - District Superintendent, if appropriate
 - Parents
 - Congregation
 - News media
- No other volunteer or staff member is authorized to discuss or make statements to the news media of others, unless required by the force of a subpoena.

J. Alcohol / Controlled Substances

No alcohol or non-prescribed controlled substances shall be consumed by any Belin participant (adult, youth, young adults, volunteer, or staff) at Belin church-sponsored events planned for children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

K. Communications and Social Media Policy

In order for a minor to receive a phone call, text message, email, or other forms of digital communication from adult employees or volunteers, a message communication form should be on file. Communication for the most part will be done in group messages that include other adults such as a youth minister or parent. However, this policy acknowledges the value and importance of the nurturing relationship between church staff and the youth within our programs. When deemed appropriate by church staff or volunteers involved with youth, an individual digital communication with a youth may take place when in the context of being supportive and nurturing to that individual youth.

4. On-Site Activities (all requirements of #3, plus the following)

A. Supervision

- Children and youth should never be allowed to roam the buildings or grounds unsupervised.
- Chaperones, teachers, and supervisor/leaders of activities need to be at least 21 years of age.
- Persons under 21 may serve as assistants if two other adult supervisors are present in the area during the activity.
- Children and youth under 21 who wish to assist with activities shall be approved by the activity director and assigned to work under the direct supervision of an approved volunteer over 21.
- Approved adults supervising an activity should be clearly identified.
- Staff and volunteers should never remove a child, youth or vulnerable adult from the church property or take him or her home without verbal or written approval of the ministry's director and the parent/guardian. Two ministry approved persons, of different genders and unrelated, will be on site until all children, youth and vulnerable adults have left an event.

5. Off-Site and Overnight Activities (all provisions of #3 above plus):

A. Supervision Guidelines

- Adult chaperones for trips off church property or overnight events on church property are required in a ratio of one adult for every 7 - 10 participants, when feasible.
- On overnight trips, adult chaperones are required to be housed in the immediate area with the children/youth under their supervision.
- Married couples will not be housed together but will observe assigned sleeping arrangements.
- Approved adult volunteers are encouraged but not required to obtain First Aid/CPR certification.
- It is recommended that children in 5th grade and under not participate in overnight trips. Exceptions may be made by the program director.

B. Permission and Transportation Guidelines

1. When the church sponsors overnight activities or provides transportation to off-site events:

- A written Parental Permission Form must be on file for each participant (use the approved form).
- Drivers must be at least 21 years of age, received Safe Sanctuary training, and have completed a background investigation to include driving record.
- Drivers of the church bus must be at least 25 years of age, received Safe Sanctuary training, and have completed a background investigation to include driving record.
- A list of all cleared participants and chaperones must be left with the church upon departure to off-site events.
- Approved restraints or seat belts for all children/youth must be used when available in vehicles.
- Two ministry approved workers, including the driver, and preferably of different genders and unrelated should be utilized unless the passengers are all of one gender.

2. Direct responsibility for transportation is held by the parent:

- To and from church activities held on-campus.
- When off-campus events are held within a 20 mile radius of the church, and youth are not reporting to the church.
- Exception requests for the distance traveled addressed by this guideline must be submitted to the Safe Sanctuary Committee.
- In an emergency, the attendee can be transported by two ministry approved workers preferably of different genders and unrelated.

6. Other

- Counseling: one to one counseling with children or youth will be done in an area where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others (such as behind doors with glass inserts for clear visibility). These activities should occur when others are in the building or immediate area. It is suggested that two adults and/or a same-gender counselor be present during counseling whenever appropriate.

Approved by the Safe Sanctuary Committee October 16, 2019

Approved by Church Council October 22, 2019