

Central United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Is this new policy in response to something that has happened at our church?**
No. We are simply trying to implement a system that will help to ensure the highest level of safety for our children, youth, and volunteers. The General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution in April 2004, aimed at eliminating the potential for child abuse in the church.
- 2. Is a criminal background check really necessary?** Yes. Unfortunately, the culture in which we live dictates that we must take appropriate preventative measures to protect the children and youth whose care we have been entrusted with. Furthermore, there are litigation issues. A church that hasn't performed background checks faces the risk of substantial financial penalties in the event that an allegation of abuse within the church leads to a conviction or out-of-court settlement.
- 3. Who needs to go through the application process and training?** Any church employee or volunteer who will have direct contact with any child or youth, either on or off campus, during any church-related ministries.
- 4. Who will see my application and the results of my background check?** Only those on church staff with a "need to know." All records concerning the application process and background checks will be kept in a locked location and kept confidential.
- 5. Should I fill out an application and go through the certification process even if I do not normally participate in children and youth ministries?** Yes. As our church continues to grow, so do our children and youth ministries. This increases the demand for volunteers. Even though this is not a current area of involvement for you, it may be at some point in the future, and we will already have done the work to certify you. You will not be able to work **at all** in the children or youth ministries if you have not been certified (i.e. substitute in a Sunday school class, etc.).
- 6. Why do I have to give my Social Security Number (SSN)?** Your SSN is the primary key for all databases affiliated with a background check. We will also use your SSN to verify if the SSN has been validly issued, to whom the SSN belongs, in which year and state the SSN was issued, the current known or previous addresses to that SSN, all names associated with the SSN, and if the SSN

is associated with fraud. Anyone can give a false ID by using another person's SSN. Having this information ensures that the individual is who he says.

- 7. What criteria from the background check will determine whether or not someone is approved for volunteer work, and who makes the decision?** The background check will cite felony and misdemeanor convictions. The most obvious reason someone would be denied the opportunity to work with the church's children and youth is any prior conviction pertaining to an offense against a child. In the event that a felony conviction turns up on the report that does not involve an offense against a child, the church's Education directors, along with the pastors, would decide whether or not to approve the volunteer for work with the children or youth. The background check is used only to protect the most vulnerable of our church family. It is not meant to embarrass anyone by bringing up past mistakes or wrong choices. It is impossible to implement a viable screening plan without a bit of scrutiny into some personal background information.
- 8. What does the certification process involve?** All persons working in a volunteer or paid staff capacity must do the following before being permitted to work with children or youth at Central United Methodist: complete an application form, undergo a background check and possible reference checks, sign the Participation Covenant Statement and Volunteer Worker Confidentiality Agreement, and attend a certification training class. Training classes will be offered at many different times (i.e. Sunday school classes, Wednesday Night Live, day and evening, Saturday, etc.) to accommodate many different schedules.
- 9. When will Central's Safe Sanctuary Policy take effect?** We hope to have full implementation by Summer 2008.