



# **Safe Sanctuaries Policies & Procedures**

# **First Rowlett United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee**

**Senior Pastor**

**Senior Associate Pastor**

**Associate Pastor/Minister of Children and Families**

**Director of Student Ministries**

**Children's Ministry Assistant Director**

**Children's Ministry Special Events Director**

**Weekday School Director (Wesleyan Christian Academy; WCA)**

**Children's Ministry Council Representative**

**Youth Ministry Council Representative**

Dear Children's/Youth Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to First Rowlett United Methodist Church!

At First Rowlett, we take our responsibility to care for children and youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children and youth can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of policies and procedures for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment and protect children, youth, and the mission of First Rowlett. The following policies and procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

First Rowlett United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee

# First Rowlett United Methodist Church

## Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures

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# Overview of the First Rowlett United Methodist Church Safety System

Because we love children and youth and we desire to protect them, First Rowlett United Methodist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or youth (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

## **STEP ONE: Screening Process**

Staff members and regularly scheduled volunteers are required to complete the First Rowlett Screening Process, which requires a staff member or regularly scheduled volunteer to:

- complete an Employment Application (employees only)
- complete the Volunteer Application (volunteers only)
- complete a face-to-face interview with ministry area leader (employees and volunteers)
- provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)

*For all persons seeking to work with children and/or youth, you shall have at least 6 months membership in this church; or provide a written recommendation from the senior pastor at the church most recently affiliated with, or provide a written recommendation from two current members of this church who have been members at least one year.*

## **STEP TWO: Criminal Background Check**

First Rowlett requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in Children's or Youth activities or programming undergo a national criminal background check at least annually. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required. Any check returned with a violation will be reviewed confidentially, on a case by case basis, by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.

## **STEP THREE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

First Rowlett policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the First Rowlett Safe Sanctuaries Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in grooming a child/youth for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the youth/child's trust (and the trust of the youth/child's parent or gatekeeper), manipulate the child/youth into sexual activity and keep the child/youth from disclosing the abuse.

To equip church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, First Rowlett requires all staff members and volunteers to complete an approved sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every two years.

## **STEP FOUR: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements. Staff members will be presented with any new manual revisions and will agree with and sign any revisions indicating that they agree to comply with the new policy requirements

## **Classification of Volunteers**

In order to screen volunteers appropriately to their responsibilities, the Department Head/Program Director responsible for each division will categorize volunteers into two categories: primary and secondary. These terms refer to the relative levels of responsibilities and risk, not to the ages of the children and youth being served.

**Primary volunteers:** Includes all volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk are classified as primary volunteers and should meet the primary screening standards, must be eighteen (18) years of age and must have at least six months experience working with children and youth at First Rowlett United Methodist Church.

**Secondary volunteers:** Persons who do not meet the requirements of primary volunteers and/or those who occasionally interact with children and youth and/or do so in less risky circumstances, i.e.: Sunday School teachers and volunteers who see children and youth only in a group setting, on church premises, or who interact with children and youth in the presence of an approved staff member or primary volunteer are classified as secondary volunteers. This category may also include parents of participants who help supervise activities. All volunteers under the age of eighteen (18) will be considered secondary volunteers.

## **MINIMUM AGE**

All primary volunteers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but may not take the place of adult staff members or volunteers. The church may employ responsible teens (under the age of 18) only in positions with and under the direct supervision of an approved adult staff member or volunteer.

## **VOLUNTEER APPLICATIONS**

Volunteer applicants must complete and sign a Volunteer Application Form (Form #1). Applications will be submitted to the appropriate Department Head/Program Director who will be responsible for the application process and reference checks. If an applicant needs additional confidentiality they may choose to submit their application directly to the appropriate minister in charge of their division.

The church keeps confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Such information will be stored with access afforded only to appropriate church staff on a need-to-know basis.

If the church learns of false, misleading or amended information on an application that could cause potential danger to children or youth or liability to the church, that person will be terminated.

## **Child/Youth Safety Policy**

First Rowlett is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and youth and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the First Rowlett Safe Sanctuaries Committee. Because sexual abusers groom children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report grooming behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or a member of the First Rowlett Safe Sanctuaries Committee.

### **ZERO TOLERANCE**

First Rowlett has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at First Rowlett to act in the best interest of all children and youth in every program.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

First Rowlett staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's /Youth Ministry's positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor and the Administrative Board.

### **SURVIVORS OF CHILD ABUSE**

Survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the church family. Their experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their work with children and youth.

Survivors of abuse may, if they choose, request confidential counseling either from the pastor or from a professional counselor. It will not necessarily disqualify them from service. The desire of the church is to assist and care for survivors of abuse as well as fulfill our obligation to protect the children and youth left in our care.

# Texas Child Protection Definitions and Laws

**Child abuse** is defined to include acts or omissions which cause or permit:

- Mental or emotional injury to a child.
- Physical injury or threat of physical injury to a child.
- Failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent action by another person that results in physical injury to a child.
- Sexual contact with a child.
- Failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent sexual contact with or in the presence of a child.

**Neglect** includes:

- Leaving a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of harm.
- Requiring the child to use judgment or take actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities.
- Failure to obtain medical care for a child.
- Failure to provide a child with food, clothing or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child.

## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Sexual misconduct claims include all crimes involving sexual conduct under the Texas Penal Code. They include indecent exposure, indecency with a child and sexual assault including rape. They also include conduct that may not violate a penal statute but is still sexually oriented such as sexual harassment and sexual suggestion. If this conduct is committed by agents of the church, either employed or volunteer, claims are often made against the individual and the church.

## DUTY TO REPORT: The Texas Reporting Statute

Any person who learns of or has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person must report that belief to a local or state law enforcement agency or the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.

An oral report must be made immediately upon learning of the abuse or neglect or the likelihood of abuse or neglect. A written Incident Report Form (Form #4) must be made within five days to the same agency or department. The report shall be non-accusatory, meaning the identity of the victim of the abuse or neglect must be identified but the person making the report is not required to speculate as to the person who committed the abuse or neglect.



## **LIABILITY FOR FAILURE TO REPORT**

A person failing to report child abuse or neglect commits a Class B Misdemeanor punishable by fines up to \$1000 and/or confinement for up to 180 days. Additionally, a person who is the victim of child abuse and his or her family may bring a civil claim against the church and/or its agent (the person who failed to report the crime) as required by law.

## **IMMUNITY**

A person making a report or assisting in the investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect is immune from liability, either civil or criminal, that might be incurred. This means that a person who reports child abuse and is later sued by any of the parties including the parents of the child or the accused perpetrator of the crime, can defend themselves on the basis that their actions were absolutely protected by this immunity statute and the reporter should not be liable for damages relating to the reporting.

## **CLERGY PRIVILEGE**

The Texas Rules of Civil and Criminal Evidence provides that communications between clergy and an individual consulting with him or her for the purpose of seeking spiritual advise in the clergy's professional capacity is considered privileged.

There is however, an express exception which provides that the privilege disappears in the event the clergy member learns of child abuse or neglect, and the clergy is required to report the information to authorities under the child abuse reporting statute.

## **CHURCH LIABILITY**

A church may be liable to civil action if, as an employer, it failed to make inquiries of past employers (where names and addresses have been disclosed) who employed the employee within the last five (5) years, concerning the possible occurrence of sexual exploitation by the employee.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by a volunteer of the church shall be cause for immediate dismissal.

The minister in charge, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children and youth from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified, but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

# Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children and youth, First Rowlett staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to the Associate Pastor/Minister of Children and Families, Director of Student Ministries, WCA Director, Senior Pastor, or Senior Associate Pastor.

## CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited or harmful act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child or youth will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's/Youth Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, youth or vulnerable populations at First Rowlett. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from First Rowlett.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, youth or vulnerable populations at the church.

## REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to the Associate Pastor/Minister of Children and Families, Director of Student Ministries, WCA Director, Senior Associate Pastor or the Senior Pastor.

In cases of suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is the responsibility of all staff persons to report the case to law enforcement agencies including, Texas Department of Family and Protective services (1-800-252-5400), and Texas Dept of Health and Human Services (Child Protective Services; 972-562-5832), or the police department. In cases of suspected abuse it is the responsibility of volunteers to report their observations to the Associate Pastor/Minister of Children and Families, Director of Student Ministries, WCA Director, Senior Associate Pastor or the Senior Pastor.

## **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

Reported cases will be directed by the Senior Pastor or the Senior Associate Pastor to the Safe Sanctuaries Committee. The First Rowlett Safe Sanctuaries Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

### **DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE**

#### ***Verbal Abuse***

Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades, or threatens any child or youth.

#### ***Physical Abuse***

Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. In case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth.

#### ***Sexual Abuse***

Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. incest
2. rape
3. prostitution
4. romantic involvement with any participant
5. any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of individual enrolled as a child or youth in sponsored activities of this church
6. sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content

Examples are not limited to: displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair, or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse.

# **First Rowlett United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, First Rowlett will appoint and maintain a Safe Sanctuaries Committee, which will meet annually to review policy and propose changes as needed.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee is to enable First Rowlett Children's/Youth Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

## **COMPOSITION**

The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Senior Pastor
2. Associate Pastor/Minister of Children and Families
3. Director of Student Ministries
4. Children's Ministry Assistant Director
5. Children's Ministry Special Events Director
6. WCA Director
7. Children's Ministry Council Representative
8. Youth Council Representative

## **MEETINGS**

Each year a representative of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee will be elected by the committee to be the chair person and represent the committee at Administrative Board meetings. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will meet annually and as needed to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing First Rowlett policies and procedures related to Children's/Youth safety and risk management issues. At the request of the Senior Pastor the committee can meet to review allegations of abuse and respond appropriately and record any actions taken.

2. Monitoring all Children's/ Youth Ministries for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the First Rowlett United Methodist Administrative Board regarding safety issues.
4. Be a single point of contact for all church groups on matters pertaining to Children's/Youth safety and risk management.
5. Each committee member will sign a confidentiality agreement annually.
6. At the discretion of the Senior Pastor, allegations of abuse against a staff member may be reviewed by the Safe Sanctuary committee and if appropriate, have the allegations reviewed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

## Children's/Youth Ministries Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff members and volunteer interactions with children. Monitoring will be documented.

1. **The Minister of Children and Families, Director of Student Ministries, and/or the WCA Director** conduct written performance evaluations annually for individuals in paid staff positions.
2. **The Minister of Children and Families, Director of Student Ministries, and/or WCA Director may** conduct periodic verbal performance evaluations of volunteer and paid staff that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
3. **The Senior Pastor** may conduct an unscheduled observation of a Children's/Youth/WCA Ministry program.
4. **The Senior Pastor** meets with the Minister of Children and Families and/or Director of Student Ministries monthly to discuss Children's/Youth Ministry.

**The Administrative Board** meets with the Minister of Children and Families, Director of Student Ministries, and WCA Director at least once each year to discuss their ministry area, including safety training and procedures.

# Building Safety

The Minister of Children and Families and/or Director of Student Ministries will be responsible for ensuring that the education wing is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in Children's/Youth classrooms. The WCA Director will be responsible for ensuring that the Education wing is monitored during WCA programming.

No child/youth will ever be left unattended in the Education wing or on the children's playground during children's/youth ministry programming or classes. Children's/Youth Ministries staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present).

After every programming event, Children's/Youth Ministries staff members and volunteers will check the church for participants to be sure they have all been picked up, prior to leaving.

On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas which are not easily seen from all viewpoints (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures). Any child in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

## Staff Member/Volunteer to Child Ratios

First Rowlett is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's/Youth Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child ratios will be observed:

Age Group	Adult to Child Ratio
Infant to 1 year old	2:8
2 and 3 years old	2:12
4 and 5 years old	2:18
Elementary	2:20
Youth	2:25

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Minister of Children and Families and/or Director of Student Ministries. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Safe Sanctuaries policy.

# Discipline

It is First Rowlett's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children/youth. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children/youth are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

1. Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
2. If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
3. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes"). In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out.
4. Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
5. Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
6. Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes").
7. Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Minister of Children and Families and/or Director of Student Ministries.

# **Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Procedures**

## **NURSERY CHILDREN**

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

### **DIAPERING**

1. Only nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children.
2. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
3. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
4. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash").
5. Children should be re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
6. Children should be changed on changing stations only.

### **TOILET TRAINING**

1. No child will be forced to toilet train.
2. Only nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
3. When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
4. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
5. Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go").
6. Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
7. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available from First Rowlett in the Children's/Youth area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

## **SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN**

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities). Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available



to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

## **Tobacco Use**

First Rowlett is a tobacco-free facility. First Rowlett requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during First Rowlett activities or programs.

## **Intoxicants**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any First Rowlett facility, while traveling with children or while working with or supervising children or youth.

## **Medication**

No medications may be given to a child or youth by a staff member or volunteer, with the exception of emergency medications such as an EpiPen (epinephrine auto-injector), or Asthma rescue inhaler. These medications may be administered if provided by the parent or guardian, per the physician's prescription, and if administration instruction is provided. The only exceptions to this policy are over the counter diaper ointment and medications provided by the parent or guardian, with administration instructions provided. (mission trips and overnight travel situations)

## **Nudity**

Staff members and volunteers in First Rowlett's Children's/Youth Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children or youth in their care. Plans should be made to have separate bathing and changing schedules for staff members and volunteers.

# One-on-One Interactions with Children and Youth

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-on-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children or youth.

## Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children/youth. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children/youth:

1. Children/youth should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Only one adult is necessary to transport, but two are preferable if possible. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child/youth in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while operating vans or vehicles owned or rented by First Rowlett or while operating any vehicle being used to transport children or youth unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive First Rowlett owned or rented vehicles.
5. State child safety seat and seat belt laws must be followed.

## Parental Contact

Parents who leave a child/youth in the care of First Rowlett staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child/youth becomes ill, is injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's/Youth Ministries programs.

## Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child/youth is involved at the church. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their Children's/Youth programs at First Rowlett will be required to complete the church volunteer application and screening process.

## Physical Contact

First Rowlett is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, First Rowlett has

implemented a “physical contact policy” which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children’s/Youth Ministries while protecting children/youth.

The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children’s/Youth Ministries programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for Children’s/Youth development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Minister of Children and Families and/or Director of Student Ministries or the Senior Associate Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Children’s/Youth staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children’s/Youth Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child/youth. A child’s preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Children’s/Youth staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children and youth under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to the Senior Pastor or Director of Administration.

## **Verbal Interactions**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children and youth should be positive and uplifting. First Rowlett staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

## **Sexually-Oriented Conversations**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children or youth, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child or youth in the program. This policy is in effect with the exception of information relative to teaching Human Sexuality courses and Bible studies that may have sexual content.

## **Sexually-Oriented Materials**

Staff members and volunteers in Children's/Youth Ministries at First Rowlett are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children. This policy is in effect with the exception of information relative to teaching Human Sexuality courses and Bible studies that may have sexual content.

## **Release of Children and Youth**

At any time that a child/youth has been entrusted to First Rowlett staff members or volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child/youth. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children/youth in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. Youth Ministries Staff and volunteers are responsible for making sure all youth have been picked up following any youth related church activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or youth has authority to pick up the child/youth. Children must be signed in and signed out of childcare and Sunday School per guidelines implemented by Children's Council. Youth come and go from youth programs on their own.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact the Minister of Children and Families and/or Director of Student Ministries before releasing the child/youth.

# Emergency Safety Procedures

1. **Tornado Warnings:** In case of a tornado warning—find your safe room according to the sign by the door, line up the kids, count them, grab the first aid kit and sign-in sheet, a flashlight if it is dark/evening, and march them to their safe room, count them again as you have them curl down on the floor and cover their heads. Notify the directors to let them know you are all there and all accounted.

*Keep them with you there until their guardian comes to them; do not allow them to leave you otherwise.*

2. **Fire or other building evacuation:** In case of a fire or evacuation—find your exits on the sign by your door, line up the kids, count them, grab your sign-in sheet and go out the exit as it is marked. Do NOT allow kids to find their parents, keep them with you and march them out and away from the building, count them again when you get there. Notify the directors to let them know you are all out and all accounted.

*Keep them with you outside until their guardian comes to them; do not allow them to leave you otherwise.*

3. **Lock Down:** In case of a lock-down situation—make sure your kids are all in your room—notify the directors if there is one out to the restroom, etc. and the director or closest teacher will get that child into that closer room and let you know. Lock your room, get the kids down on the floor and as far away from the door as you can, and if told to do so, turn tables on their side to create a barrier. Have your first aid kit beside you. Keep the children as quiet as possible.

*Keep them with you there until an all-clear is sent out over the radio and their guardian comes to them; do not allow them to leave you otherwise.*

## **DIRECTORS AND PARENTS SHOULD BE CONTACTED IMMEDIATELY IF:**

1. A child experiences any kind of allergic reaction.
2. A child experiences any kind of injury.
3. A child has diarrhea.
4. A child is vomiting.
5. A child has a temperature above 99.5 degrees.
6. A child has a skin infections or infestations (rash, head lice, ringworm or shingles).
7. A child has pink or red eye or an eye with discharge.
8. A child has excessive nasal discharge that is greenish in color.

# Supervision

Staff members and volunteers in Children's/Youth Ministries are expected to provide adequate supervision for children/youth in their care while working in church programs.

An adult is defined as anyone 18 years of age or older. A youth assistant is anyone under the age of 18 who may work with children and youth only when supervised by at least two adults over the age of 18 years. Youth assistants cannot be in charge of, nor left alone with children and youth. Background checks on youth under the age of 18 are inaccessible, so choose youth with great care.

To achieve compliance with this policy it may be necessary at times to combine groups, recruit, train, and reference additional volunteers, or cancel an event. Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, children and youth will be instructed to use the "buddy system."

Observation of activities in rooms is essential, whether it is done by windows, open doors, glass doors, electronic technology, etc.

## **SUPERVISION FOR NURSERY/CHILDCARE/WEEKDAY SCHOOL**

- There shall be a minimum of two (2) adults per room or within line of sight.
- Texas State Childcare Minimum Standards should be followed, particularly in relation to the number of adults to child ratio.

## **SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

- *The Two Adult Rule* shall be observed: Two (2) adults per group or two (2) adults within line of sight.
- Any one-to-one mentoring or consulting shall be conducted in sight of another adult.
- Understanding that there is safety in numbers, one adult can be in contact with multiple youth (6th-12th grade) as long as they are in line of sight of other adults.

## **OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS**

At events that require overnight accommodations:

- We strongly recommend that groups stay in one large room such as a gymnasium with females on one side and males on the other and adults in the room.
- Recognizing accommodations may be restrictive in some cases one adult is adequate, so long as any one adult shall NOT be alone with any one child/youth.

# Authorization of this Manual

The Administrative Board of First Rowlett United Methodist Church approved this policy to ensure that we have procedures in place to provide a safe church environment for children and youth. To the extent any matters/procedures listed in this manual change, from time to time the manual will be updated to reflect those changes, and the dates of any changes will be documented. In addition all employees/volunteers that are affected by the changes will sign a revised statement of acknowledgement and agreement for the files.

# Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of First Rowlett United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these procedures while serving or working at First Rowlett.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by First Rowlett. I understand that if the policies and procedures are changed or modified, I must sign acknowledging receipt of the new policy revisions.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at First Rowlett at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and First Rowlett. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of First Rowlett Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures manual.

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

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Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to remain on file with the First Rowlett United Methodist Church office.]



# First Rowlett United Methodist Church Volunteer Application Form

This application is to be completed by all applicants for positions involving the supervising or custody of children and youth. It will assist the church to provide a safe and secure environment for all preschoolers, children and youth. The terms *child*, *children* and *youth* include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle) (Maiden or Other Name)

Phone (H): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (W): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (Cell): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Driver's License # \_\_\_\_\_

Have you lived outside Texas in the last three years?  Yes  No If yes, what State(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Employment/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Employment/School Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your age range: 18-21 21-30 31-40 41-50 50+

Position Applying for: \_\_\_\_\_ Days Available: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of First Rowlett United Methodist Church?  Yes  No  Active Visitor

If member, how long? \_\_\_\_\_ Years

Previous Church Name: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ ST: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of other members of First Rowlett United Methodist Church you know:

\_\_\_\_\_

List names, addresses and phone numbers of three references:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

# First Rowlett United Methodist Church Volunteer Application Form (page 2)

Have you ever been convicted of, plead guilty or plead no contest to, or received a deferral to any crime, misdemeanor, etc. (do not include traffic violations)?  Yes  No

If **yes**, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been charged, indicted, or convicted of having committed any act of neglect, abuse harassment or molestation against any person?  Yes  No

If **yes**, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any personal habits that might be stumbling blocks to team members' spiritual development (example: profanity, alcohol or drug abuse, temper)?  Yes  No

If **yes**, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Please share a little about your Christian faith:

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Do you feel comfortable sharing your faith with others?  Yes  No

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your experience leading devotions or small groups:

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Please include any other information you think we need to consider for your application as a Volunteer:

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# First Rowlett United Methodist Church Volunteer Application Form (page 3)

First Rowlett United Methodist Church seeks to create a safe place for children and youth. Because of the church's sincere efforts to keep children and youth safe and secure, a Volunteer Child and Youth Protection Policy has been drafted, and the Church shall operate under this policy as written until further amended and approved by the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee of First Rowlett United Methodist Church.

As a volunteer, I understand that the personal information provided in this application will be held confidential by the professional church staff. Applicant Statement

I hereby certify that I have read and completed the above application. My answers are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

I hereby authorize all persons, schools, organizations and law enforcement agencies to supply First Rowlett United Methodist Church with any information concerning my character or background in connection with working with children or youth and I hereby release them from liability or damages which may occur as a result of their response to this request.

I authorize First Rowlett United Methodist Church to supply my service record, in whole or part, to any prospective or future organization or agency with a legal and proper interest in them. I understand that if allowed to serve, that any misrepresentation made by me in this application shall be considered sufficient cause for my dismissal without advance notice. I have been appraised of and support the church's position regarding the problem of child abuse and neglect.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use Only:  Primary Volunteer  Secondary Volunteer

Detail Reference check information:

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# Incident Report Form

## First Rowlett United Methodist Church

(To be delivered directly to the Senior Pastor)

Reason for report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of incident: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Address of Person Responsible for care, custody or welfare of child or youth:

\_\_\_\_\_

Quote the child's first words about the incident **verbatim**:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe what happened:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What action did you take?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Has the incident been resolved?  Yes  No

If No, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Were there any witnesses?  Yes  No

If **yes**, please print the witnesses' names: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures of witnesses (if possible): \_\_\_\_\_

Report submitted to: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix I

## First Rowlett United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee

### 2010 Contact List

#### **Senior Pastor**

Jan Davis, jan.davis@fumc-rowlett.org

#### **Senior Associate Pastor**

Wes Magruder, wes.magruder@fumc-rowlett.org

#### **Associate Pastor/Minister of Children and Families**

Dretha Burris, dretha.burris@fumc-rowlett.org

#### **Director of Student Ministries**

Tim Jenkins, tim.jenkins@fumc-rowlett.org

#### **Children's Ministry Assistant Director**

Robin Simoneaux

#### **Children's Ministry Special Events Director**

Jana Cerra, jana.cerra@fumc-rowlett.org

#### **Weekday School Director (Wesleyan Christian Academy; WCA)**

Melissa Lawson, melissa.lawson@fumc-rowlett.org

#### **Children's Ministry Council Representative**

Crystal Groothuis, crystal.groothuis@fumc-rowlett.org

#### **Youth Ministry Council Representative**

Craig Price, cprice@bgcdallas.org