

# Susquehanna Conference

## Safe Sanctuaries Policies

### Screening, Recruiting and Selecting Procedures

Every ministry of the Susquehanna Conference that relates to children, youth, and vulnerable adults in its programming or oversight shall create procedures for implementing the Conference *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*. Administrative teams of Local Churches and Conference ministries and programs who give oversight to these ministries shall be responsible for implementing and monitoring the compliance of these minimum standard policies and its related procedures.

1. Every ministry and/or program of the Susquehanna Conference that relates to children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall have a *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*. These policies and procedures are required for Annual Conference ministries and shall include:
  - a. Reasonable safety measures and procedures in the selection and recruitment of both paid and volunteer workers who come in contact with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults, which shall include:
    - Written application (sample provided).
    - Experience and qualification for the position.
    - Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history, allegations of criminal history, and driver history.
    - Waiver of confidentiality allowing the conference to secure the background checks necessary for the position being applied for.
    - Listing of three non-related references. This list shall have complete contact information for all references. This portion of the application process is considered incomplete if full contact information for the references is not provided.
    - An interview process.
    - All employees (paid) need to complete the following background clearance:
      - o Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Report.
      - o Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance.
      - o FBI Criminal History Report (Fingerprint-based background check).
    - All volunteers need to complete the following background clearances:
      - o Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Report
      - o Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance
      - o FBI Criminal History Report (fingerprint-based background check)
      - o **NOTE:** The FBI Criminal History Report is not required for incumbent or prospective volunteers: (i) who have resided in Pennsylvania continuously for a period of 10 years prior to becoming a volunteer or applying for volunteer status and who sign a [Volunteer Affidavit](#) affirming that they have not committed certain crimes that otherwise would prohibit them from being a volunteer responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children; or (ii) who have received such Report at any time since establishing residency in Pennsylvania and provide a copy of the Report to the person responsible for the selection of volunteers.
    - Background clearances are valid for 60 months and must be obtained again after every 60 month period.
    - A current driver's license, registration, insurance, and completed Pennsylvania or state of residency, driving record, when transporting children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
    - Demonstration of an active relationship with a local church of at least six (6) months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in children, youth, and/or vulnerable adult activities.
    - Use of age and developmentally appropriate language in educating children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding definitions of abuse and procedures for reporting.
  - b. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of the persons file.
  - c. There shall be a specific person designated to be responsible for reviewing and following up on each application prior to service. All applications and related forms must be completed.
  - d. In the event that a reference follow-up is accomplished by phone, use of the Reference Check Form is recommended and should be included in the persons file.

- e. All records shall be kept in a locked file within the Conference Office. Access will be authorized by the chairs of the Response Team, *Safe Sanctuaries* Team, and the Cabinet.
  - f. When the Conference is hosting an event for which the local church is responsible for chaperones, the church shall provide the necessary paperwork listed above.
  - g. A method for reporting incidents of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse in accordance with the State Laws of Pennsylvania and/or New York and Maryland; the written guidelines of the Susquehanna Conference, and the written guidelines of the local United Methodist Church.
  - h. Measures to deal with the safety, protection, and ongoing emotional support of those who may have been abused.
  - i. Guidelines for communication with family members, the congregation, the district, the conference, and the public media.
2. Persons responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reviewing local church polices include but are not limited to: Pastor; Representative of Staff Parish, Representative of Trustees, Youth Leader, Children's Leader, Nursery Leader.
  3. A copy of Local Church *Safe Sanctuaries Policies* shall be on file in the appropriate District Office or the Conference Office.
  4. The Conference *Safe Sanctuaries* Team shall be responsible for training and resourcing the ministries and local churches covered by their *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*. This team reports to the Annual Conference thru Connectional Ministry Staff.
  5. Each conference ministry or program shall submit a yearly review of their implementation of the conference's *Safe Sanctuaries policies*. The Conference *Safe Sanctuaries* Team will be responsible for reviewing these polices and making recommendations.
    - A form will be provided for this purpose by the *Safe Sanctuaries* Team.
  6. The Conference *Safe Sanctuaries* Team will provide a Facilities Use Agreement for outside groups that gives information about the *Safe Sanctuaries Polices* for use by the group.
  7. Every elder, deacon, or local pastor under appointment, and every retired clergy or lay person assigned to lead a congregation in the Susquehanna Conference, shall:
    - a. Obtain the background clearances required by the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law every 60 months. The local church is responsible for this process and the report of this background check shall be included with Charge Conference reports.
    - b. *Safe Sanctuaries* training is required of all persons serving congregations within six months of their first appointment or assignment in the annual conference. The local church is responsible for this process, and the report of this background check shall be included with Charge Conference reports.
    - c. Clergy and lay persons serving congregations are required to attend *Safe Sanctuaries* training events mandated by the conference, and at least one other training event provided by the *Safe Sanctuaries* team every 60 months (five years.)
    - d. Clergy and lay persons serving congregations are required to attend at least one Continuing Education event every quadrennium. These events will cover topics such as: clergy sexual ethics, understanding the use and abuse of power in the ministerial relationship, cyber safety, and/or healthy boundary-setting in the ministerial relationship.
    - e. All clergy and lay persons in pastoral leadership in a congregation will be encouraged by the District Superintendent (DS) and Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) to practice appropriate self-care.