

# MPM

## Protecting Our People

# Screening Those in Charge of Youth

The tragedy of abuse of children, youth, and adults by religious employees and volunteers has received wide coverage over the past several years. The tragedy crosses denominational lines. Known occurrences include ones involving perpetrators working or volunteering in church-related, schools, ministries and camps. The question for us as United Methodists is not “if”, but “when” and how we work to prevent such tragedies.

## Church Schools Are Vulnerable

Our church schools are vulnerable to potential sexual and other child abuse. Most church-sponsored programs rely on lots of volunteers. Often, only minimal screening of volunteers occurs. Some programs have used youth in teaching roles with little training. Many staff members have not been as carefully screened as they should have been.

There is a long-standing assumption that church, school and youth program volunteers are motivated by a faith, commitment and desire to serve others.

Minimum volunteer application screening and supervision

procedures have resulted in violation of the trust given some individuals by pastors, church, school superintendents, parents and children. Some specialists who work with child abuse prevention suggest that, as other professional children and youth serving programs and agencies implement more effective screening techniques, church programs will be an attraction to chronic child abusers. The enthusiastic acceptance

the church has readily given to almost anyone expressing a willingness to work with children and youth is widely known both inside and outside the church family.

Jesus made the importance of children clear during his ministry. “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” Emulating His example, the church has recognized that education is important for nurturing children in the faith. Sunday, mid-week, vacation church school and other experiences are ways that Christian education occurs in our local churches. A variety of camps, retreats, conferences, trips and high-adventure experiences have enriched the faith development of our children and youth in settings beyond the local church. We keep children from growing in faith when we allow abuse to occur in any of the church’s education, recreation, and other nurturing programs. The broken trust, pain and suffering, which results from abuse, distracts from the mission and ministry of the church.

Responsible church leaders must use the utmost care in screening volunteers and employees who will be working with children and

youth in our programs. It is recommended that church leaders check the background, training and experience of individuals seeking to volunteer their services, in addition to those applying for paid positions. The encouraged practice is to require use of application forms with volunteers for teaching, child care, youth counselor and other roles providing access to children and youth. This practice is

## Ministry Protection Memo

“MPM” is a series on various topics relative to Church and safety. Send your comments and interests to PACT’s Director of Ministry Protection, at [umcpact@ajg.com](mailto:umcpact@ajg.com).

### PACT Service Center

Hours of Operation  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST

### Contact Information

Toll-Free: 1-877-UMC-PACT  
1-877-862-7228  
Fax: 1-866-221-4858

**“It is recommended that church leaders responsible for hiring employees and deploying volunteers check the background, training and experience of individuals seeking to volunteer their services, in addition to those applying for paid positions.”**



Go to PACT’s website ([www.umcpact.org](http://www.umcpact.org)) and click in “Ministry Protection” to reach the portal for PACT screening resources.



urged for several reasons. First, the significance of these positions is affirmed when persons wishing to serve must apply for the opportunity. Second, for everyone's protection, inquiries should be made about the history of those who volunteer for these positions. Previous incidents or allegations that could disqualify them may be discovered. You should request and contact references to learn more about applicants.

In 1996 the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. Safe Sanctuaries was developed to assist your conference and local church in fulfilling the goals of this resolution. Part of the Safe Sanctuaries program is aimed at reliably screening paid staff and volunteers.

Screening new hires, volunteers and current staff plays a vital role in protecting those your ministries seek to serve. Insurance companies formulate coverage exclusions based on which they will deny a claim if a background check has not been completed. It is important for you to review your general liability and umbrella policies for such an exclusion. We must seek to ensure that we are providing a safe environment for ministry and protecting the church's financial assets in the event of a claim.



### PACT Resources

The PACT Service Center had partnered with Trak-1, to develop and deploy a multi-state background check product. This product is offered to all United Methodist churches and affiliated organizations. If you would like more information on this product, please feel free to contact the PACT Service Center.

In the event you currently use a different product we can so a cost service comparison

for you, to ensure your current product includes all of the necessary screening checks at the lowest possible price.

### Screening of Staff Is Key

Screening of staff is a key step for developing a child abuse prevention program. There are additional actions that need to be taken by church leaders seeking to develop and implement prevention efforts.

#### Checklist for Administrators

- Evaluate screening and hiring practices, including volunteers.
- Review staff training procedures.
- Implement through staff supervision procedures.
- Evaluate supervision of activities at and away from the church-sponsored entity.
- Routinely document all personnel processes:
  - Hiring
  - Probations
  - Incidents
  - Dismissals
- Work with appropriate local church and conference committees to develop needed procedures.
- Ensure actual practice reflects written policies and procedures.

#### Checklist for Local Church, District, and Conference Groups

- Identify potential problems in advance.
- Develop procedures to:
  - Handle allegations
  - Handle known incidents
  - Handle offenders
- Prepare to work with parents and children in the event of a known incident.

The following pages contain a model Volunteer Application Form, which church leaders are encouraged to adapt for their own use. Please review the sample with a local attorney or other authority prior to using it with your volunteer applicants. Legal counsel familiar with your state's personnel laws must also be consulted when developing application forms for paid staff positions.



Many companies have developed helpful resources on child and sexual abuse/misconduct prevention. These resources can be useful as you review your present policies and procedures, and implement changes. The PACT Service Center is happy to provide website information to you for your reference.



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*The Ministry Protection Memo (MPM) series is offered as an educational tool in support of PACT's property and casualty insurance program to help you develop loss control procedures to suit your specific needs. With these publications, PACT does not seek to establish a particular standard of care or to provide legal advice. We encourage church leaders to consult with competent attorneys with regard to their specific loss control needs. PACT encourages reproduction and distribution of this MPM within the United Methodist denomination. Non-United Methodist groups may contact the PACT Service Center in writing at the Gallagher Centre, Two Pierce Place, Itasca, IL 60143 or via telephone at 877-UMC-PACT for permission to reproduce this memo.*



## SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT

Report Form

### VICTIM INFORMATION

VICTIM'S NAME:

AGE:

PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF VICTIM:

LOCATION OF INCIDENT:

DATE:

TIME:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT:

DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF INITIAL CONVERSATION WITH VICTIM:

NOTES OF CONVERSATION:

### ACCUSED INFORMATION

NAME OF PERSON ACCUSED OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT:

DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF INITIAL CONVERSATION WITH ACCUSED (if staff member):

NOTES OF CONVERSATION:

### PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S)

DATE/TIME/LOCATION OR PHONE CALL OF INITIAL CONTACT WITH PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S):

PERSON SPOKEN TO:

NOTES OF CONVERSATION:

### CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF CALL TO CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES AGENCY:

PERSON SPOKEN TO:

NOTES OF CONVERSATION:

### LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF CALL TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY:

PERSON SPOKEN TO:

NOTES OF CONVERSATION:

Report prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: USE REVERSE SIDE IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED



## INJURIES OCCURRING IN THE NURSERY

Report Form

TODAY'S DATE:

INJURED'S NAME:

AGE:

PRIMARY PHONE:

SECONDARY PHONE:

ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP:

DATE/TIME/PARENT/GUARDIANS CONTACTED:

### ACCIDENT

LOCATION OF ACCIDENT:

DATE OF ACCIDENT:

TIME OF ACCIDENT:

STAFF PERSON IN CHARGE AT TIME OF ACCIDENT:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT:

OTHER CHILDREN INVOLVED IN ACCIDENT:

OTHER ADULT OR YOUTH WITNESSES TO ACCIDENT:

### ACTION

ACTION TAKEN:

MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED:

TREATING MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND/OR FACILITY:

FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED:

### INSURANCE

INSURANCE-RELATED ACTION:

NAME OF INSURANCE COMPANY:

POLICY TERM:

AGENT:

ACTION TAKEN:

Report prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: USE REVERSE SIDE IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED



# VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

**SAMPLE ONLY: Please review with local attorney or other authority prior to**

*The information obtained on this form is for internal use by this local church only.*

NAME:		DATE OF BIRTH:	HOME PHONE:	
			BUSINESS PHONE:	
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	
POSTION APPLIED FOR:				

<b>CURRENT OCCUPATION</b>				
OCCUPATION:		CURRENT EMPLOYER:		
BUSINESS ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	
TIME AT THIS EMPLOYMENT: ___ YEARS ___ MONTHS				

<b>CHURCHES</b>				
LIST (NAME AND ADDRESS) OTHER CHURCHES YOU HAVE ATTENDED REGULARLY THE PAST FIVE YEARS:				
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	

<b>PASTOR, EMPLOYER, AND PERSONAL REFERENCES</b>				
NAME/ADDRESS/TELEPHONE NUMBER OF PASTOR, EMPLOYER, AND PERSONAL REFERENCES WHO MAY BE CONTACTED:				
PASTOR:		TELEPHONE NUMBER:		
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	
EMPLOYER:		TELEPHONE NUMBER:		
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	
PERSONAL:		TELEPHONE NUMBER:		
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	

<b>EXPERIENCE</b>				
DESCRIBE YOUR BACKGROUND WORKING WITH THE PROGRAM AND/OR AGE GROUP REQUESTED (include information about church-related, volunteer, and paid experience you may have):				

**NOTE: PLEASE COMPLETE REVERSE SIDE**



<b>GROUPS YOU ARE CURRENTLY ACTIVE IN:</b>

<b>PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:</b>
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Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have you ever been charged with or convicted of child neglect or abuse?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have any complaints or allegations of misconduct involving children ever been against you?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Within the past 30 days, have you abused alcohol, legal or illegal drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have you been convicted or plead guilty to a traffic offense within the last 5 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

Current Drivers License Number:
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Please explain fully any YES answers to the above questions. In addition to the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of young people? (Explain):
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The information that I have provided may be verified by contacting persons or organizations that my have information concerning me. I hereby release and agree to hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information and this release may be sent to any reference. I also agree to hold harmless the (name) United Methodist Church, and the officers, employees, and volunteers thereof from any use of this application or information. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf.

I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct; if it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for dismissal.

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