

# Safe Sanctuaries FAQ



## What is Safe Sanctuaries?

Safe Sanctuaries is an overt expression in making congregations safe places where children, youth, and elders may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith.

Safe Sanctuaries provides local church leaders with standards to develop, implement, and monitor their own abuse prevention and risk reduction strategies.

## Why do we need to do Safe Sanctuaries?

Safe Sanctuaries resources encourage the entire congregation to be familiar with and support the abuse prevention policies that you have in place. It is very important that everyone—adults, youth, children, and visitors—know and have simple access to your church's basic commitment to caring for children, youth, and others vulnerable to abuse. Find out more at [www.umcnic.org/safesanctuaries](http://www.umcnic.org/safesanctuaries).

## Who needs to be involved?

Any church employee or volunteer who will be supervising children, youth, or vulnerable adults during church or conference related ministries.

## How often do we need to have our volunteers trained and background checked?

Training is a continuous process. Each year, those new to work with children and youth should be trained and screened. Every three years, those volunteering should be trained again.

## Where do we go to get started?

Safe Gatherings is a training resource that has everything online in one package. It is a training tool approved by our conference insurance program. The Northern Illinois Conference has worked with Safe Gatherings on a discounted pricing scale. Find out more and view application and payment instructions at [www.umcnic.org/safegatherings](http://www.umcnic.org/safegatherings).

**\*\*\* Safe Sanctuaries Status can be accomplished without using Safe Gatherings Online Training but background checks and training approved by the NIC insurance carrier is needed for completion of Safe Sanctuaries.**

## How does the church go about creating their own policy?

Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church has provided a Development Guide for creating an Abuse Prevention Policy as well as sample policies and guidelines for both large and small congregations. Links to the resources can be found at [umcnic.org/safesanctuaries](http://umcnic.org/safesanctuaries).

## **Safe Gatherings**

### **What is Safe Gatherings?**

Safe Gatherings is an optional online training and screening program to help prevent abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in group settings.

### **Why use Safe Gatherings?**

Safe Gatherings offers comprehensive training modules, that the applicants may complete at their own pace, with an exam at the end to help with retention of information. It incorporates background and reference checks.

When using Safe Gatherings, upon successful completion of the application, background and reference checks, and the online training program, each applicant will receive documentation of approval valid for three years and will have continued access to the online training program for an entire year.

### **How are background checks completed?**

If using the Safe Gatherings online training program, background checks are a part of the process.

If choosing to do your own trainings, Trusted Employees is an option that the Northern Illinois Conference has partnered with. Find out more at [umcnic.org/safe-sanctuaries/background-checks](http://umcnic.org/safe-sanctuaries/background-checks).

## **“What If...”**

### **Is there an age requirement for trained and screened employees and volunteers working with children and youth?**

The United Methodist “**Safe Sanctuaries Handbook**” recommends that no worker under the age of 18 be put in charge of children. There may be teenage helps involved in children’s ministries, but there should always be a trained, screened, responsible adult giving supervision. The handbook also recommends the “Five-Years-Older” Rule for those working with teenagers. When working with a 15-year-old the person-in-charge should be at least 20, when working with a 17-year-old the person-in-charge should be at least 22. (*Safe Sanctuaries by Joy Melton page 47*)

### **Do groups using our building for events involving children and youth need to take our training?**

Most organized activities – Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Park District, After School Programs etc. have their own training programs and screening tools. When Trustees are negotiating use of the churches space for outside groups involving children and youth, they should ask for a proof of training and background checks.

**Our church partners with other congregations to provide children and youth programs. Sometimes these programs are in our church sometimes in partner churches. Do these other churches need to use our training when working in these joint ministries?**

Leadership in joint programs should review the training tools used by partner groups to ensure the training and screening meet the policies and practices of the host congregation.

**Our youth go on a mission trip each summer. Do all the adults on the trip need to be trained and screened or only those in charge?**

All adults who take on responsibility in a youth trip should be trained and background checked. In regard to drivers, they will need an additional DMV check as well as present the church a valid driver's license and proof of personal auto liability insurance coverage.

**Our church youth volunteer for an event in the community each summer, staffing a booth. Are all persons involved in the event to be trained and screened?**

There needs to be two adults present at all times when youth are volunteering. At least one of the adult volunteers should be trained and screened.

**Our youth will volunteer at our UMM supper – do all the UMM members need to be trained?**

Those leaders directly responsible for oversight of the youth should be trained.

**My church needs a Certificate of Insurance for an offsite/out of town event, who do I contact for the certificate of insurance?**

Contact Dwayne Jackson, Director Risk Management & Ministry Protection for the conference @ [djackson@umcnic.org](mailto:djackson@umcnic.org).

Provide the following information in the email request:

- Church name
- Church address
- Event name
- Event date(s) and time(s)
- Venue name and address

Note, completion of safe gatherings training & background checks is required in advance of issuance of the requested certificate of Liability insurance.

**Can the in person and zoom Safe Sanctuary trainings offered in the summer of 2022 by the Northern Illinois Conference be considered a train the trainer event?**

No, these trainings are designed to equip staff and volunteers in their work with children, youth and vulnerable adults. They are not designed to train trainers.

## **Additional Information**

### **What is a definition of vulnerable adult?**

The Illinois Department on Aging defines vulnerable adults as those abused, neglected or exploited age 60 years or older or adults with a disability age 18-59. Abuse, neglect or exploitation can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, confinement, passive neglect willful deprivation, or financial exploitation. [View the brochure](#) from the State of Illinois.

### **Where can I go to find other resources about Abuse Prevention?**

The Northern Illinois Conference has created a list of resources from both church organizations and government services to help provide additional information. Many books are also available. The resource list and a list of books and DVDs is housed at [umcnic.org/safesanctuaries](http://umcnic.org/safesanctuaries).

***More information about the process of training, cost, frequency and links to get started can be found at: [www.umcnic.org/safesanctuaries](http://www.umcnic.org/safesanctuaries)***

### **For questions or further information contact:**

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