

# MZUMC Volunteer Child/Youth Worker Participation Covenant

One of the most important responsibilities of any local church is to provide a safe place for God to work. That includes creating a space where children and youth are welcomed, accepted, and protected. The following policies and procedures are simply practical steps to protect children and youth, workers, and the church.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
2. All adult volunteers who teach, lead, or transport children or youth (ages 0-18) of our church must be actively involved with the church for at least six months. [Adults who do not fall under these criteria may assist on a short-term basis with other adults who do meet these criteria.] No immediate family members may work together alone with children ages 5 and under.
3. The church will obtain permission to perform a criminal background check every three years from any adult who volunteers to serve with children and/or youth. The lead pastor will bring to the Safe Sanctuary Team any concerns from these checks in an anonymous manner to maintain confidentiality. The lead pastor will discuss any pertinent negative information obtained from this background check with the individual. If a person is charged with a crime (excluding minor traffic infractions) during the three year period between background checks, they are required to notify the Safe Sanctuary Chair and Lead Pastor.
4. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth should discuss his/her willingness with one of our church's ministry staff *before* accepting an assignment.
5. Adult volunteers and staff working with children shall never allow the occurrence in which they are alone with children or youth. Some applications of this principle include but are not limited to:
  - Classes/Sports Teams/Youth Group/Small Groups/Scouts: Two Safe Sanctuary Team trained adults, (for example: coaches, small group leaders, teachers, parents of athletes, chaperones, and leaders) must be present with the group at all times. Only during Sunday School sessions and Elevate Kids/Elevate Youth on Wednesday nights is one adult acceptable with the use of a designated roving monitor, who checks on classes.
  - Confidential discussions: Two adults should be present or in plain sight but out of earshot of others. Or if necessary, meet in a public location.
  - Supervision of children and youth on site: Children and youth should not be left alone in classrooms. Children and youth should not be outside of the activity area without the presence of two adults.
  - Touch: Physical touch should be appropriate. Behaviors that are generally considered appropriate are: side hugs, shoulder to shoulder hugs, handshakes, high fives. Behaviors that are inappropriate are: touching private areas, kissing on mouth, lengthy embraces, any form of unwanted affection.
  - Supervision of children/youth at all off-site events: Children/youth must be accompanied by adult chaperones during all activities of off-site events. If separation of the whole group into smaller groups is required during off-site activities, then each smaller group of children/youth must be accompanied by two adult chaperones at all times. *\*All parents and volunteer leaders must be given a copy of the safe sanctuary policy prior to each off-site and each overnight event. \*\* Scout groups will follow BSA/GSA Scout directed Children Safety Policy when offsite.*
    - a. Sleeping arrangements in any overnight settings, i.e. retreats/mission trips/lock-ins: Two adults must be present in sleeping rooms with children and youth. Children & Youth are not allowed to use sleeping rooms without adult supervision.
    - b. No attendees of events (children & adults) are ever to be completely unclothed in view of others.

c. All attendees must occupy their own, individual sleeping bunk, mattress, space, etc.

d. Arrangements will be made to ensure privacy during showering and changing of clothes.

e. The Children/Youth Ministers have the authority to dictate where attendees sleep.

f. When it is necessary for youth to break from the supervised large group for a brief period of time they must be in a group at least three. **(Examples of brief periods would be to use the restroom or get a drink.)**

g. When item (a) is not feasible the Travel Waiver Document must be utilized and prior approval must be received from the Lead Pastor and Safe Sanctuary Chair.

- Transportation: Two adults in each vehicle and/or all vehicles in visual contact with each other.

6. Mount Zion recognizes that God created two genders, male and female, and that these genders are set upon birth. Sexual sin is defined as sexual activity outside the biblical parameters of marriage between one man and one woman. Hence, any sexual activity between any attendees will not be tolerated.

7. Adults volunteering with children and youth shall participate in annual training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

8. In the event that any volunteer or staff member observes any policy violation, or suspects that any youth or child is being abused, it is his/her personal responsibility to confidentially report this to a member of the Safe Sanctuary Team. This Safe Sanctuary Team member will then report to the lead pastor, SPRC chairperson, and the chairperson of the Safe Sanctuary Team. Violation of these policies is grounds for disciplinary action.

9. Volunteers must be at least 5 years older than the children/youth they are assisting. Employees must be at least 18 years old and 5 years older than the age of the children/youth they are supervising. Interns of Mount Zion may work with children and youth that are less than 5 years younger than the Intern, but do not count as one of the two adults required for safe sanctuary policy.

**Please answer each of the following questions:**

- As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth?  Yes  No
- Have you ever been convicted of, suspected of, or in the process of being investigated for any form of sexual/violent crime, spousal or child abuse?  Yes  No
- Do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to the safe sanctuary team or ministerial staff?  Yes  No

***I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.***

Signature of Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Volunteer Printed \_\_\_\_\_