

**KANSAS WEST ANNUAL CONFERENCE POLICY  
FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH  
AND DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED ADULT DEPENDENT PERSONS**  
*As modified by Kansas West Focus Team to meet Sexual Ethics policy February 2009*

**PREFACE**

*“...Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.’” Luke 18: 16-17*

The innocence of children is what best enables them to seek out God with fearless enthusiasm. That innocence is also what leaves them most vulnerable to abuse. The Kansas West Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church recognizes that any abuse – physical, sexual or emotional – against any person is destructive to his/her development and well-being and most especially to a child, a youth or a developmentally disabled adult dependent person. Abuse of any kind violates a person’s wholeness and is an unjust use of status and power, and a sinful behavior against God and one another. Therefore, The Kansas West Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is determined to minimize the risk of abuse to participants in activities of the Kansas West Annual Conference and of its districts. Further we are called to be ministers of healing and wholeness in the midst of the brokenness that is caused by abuse. To that end we covenant to act justly in the interest of those who have been affected by abuse.

**STATEMENT OF POLICY**

No staff person involved in any event sponsored by the Kansas West Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church or any of its districts shall engage in physical abuse, sexual abuse or sexual harassment of any child, youth, or developmentally disabled dependent person. For purposes of this policy, any person under the age of 18 shall be considered a child or youth. Furthermore, each local church is encouraged to adopt a similar policy for local personnel and events.

**PURPOSE**

Our purpose for establishing this Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Developmentally Disabled Adult Dependent Persons is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical, sexual and emotional safety of all our children, youth, and developmentally disabled adults, as well as to their spiritual growth. This policy is not intended to supplant or replace the Sexual Ethics Policy for the Church Professionals of the Kansas West Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church or the Sexual Ethics Policy for the Lay Employees and Volunteers of the Kansas West Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, which remain in full force and effect.

1. **PHYSICAL ABUSE** – Physical abuse is any deliberate act or omission of an act that inflicts bodily harm to a person. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual’s age or condition.
2. **SEXUAL ABUSE** – Sexual abuse means physical conduct of a sexual nature, sexual contact, or sexualized behavior, and includes, for example: touching, fondling, sexual intercourse and other exploitation or use of another person for purposes of sexual desires.
3. **SEXUAL HARASSMENT** – Sexual harassment is any sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender.

4. **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT** – Sexual misconduct means a chargeable offense within the meaning of the *Book of Discipline*.
5. **STAFF PERSON** – Staff person means all persons, volunteer or paid, lay or clergy, (including all church professionals, as defined below), who have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth and/or developmentally disabled adult dependent persons who are participating in any activities or events sponsored by the Kansas West Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and its districts.
6. **CHURCH PROFESSIONAL** – Church Professional means Full, Associate and Probationary ministerial members of the Annual Conference, ordained deacons and elders, diaconal ministers and local pastors, in both the effective and retired relationships, and other persons serving the Conference or any local church under appointment of the Bishop or under the supervision of the District Superintendent, including persons keeping their membership in another annual conference or in another denomination and persons holding orders issued by these annual conferences while on Honorable or Administrative Location.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

All staff persons shall be provided a copy of this policy and shall receive training to assist them in the understanding and implementation of this policy, including boundary awareness training, before they are authorized to work with youth, children, or developmentally disabled dependent persons at Conference or District events. The Kansas West Annual Conference will take reasonable steps to screen all prospective staff persons by utilizing background checks with the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, and/or other appropriate law enforcement agencies, and by conducting periodic updated background checks not less than once every five years.

## **REPORTING**

When an incident of abuse occurs, the protection of children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities must be paramount. Except when necessary to protect confessional confidences imparted to a church professional, any person having a reasonable basis to suspect that a developmentally disabled person or a child or youth under age 18 has been abused shall promptly report it to the staff person in charge of the event (“event director”) and to the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, at **1-800-922-5330**. The event director shall take reasonable steps to protect abused persons and others from further harm, which may include removing the person accused from the site of the event, and/or suspending such person from working with children, youth, or persons with developmental disabilities, pending further investigation.

## **MAKING A COMPLAINT**

Persons who have knowledge of a possible violation of this policy by any staff persons, volunteer or paid, lay or clergy may report the same to any church professional, any District Superintendent or the Bishop. Upon any complaint against a church professional, the Conference will take action in accordance with the provisions of the current *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church. Upon any complaint against a lay person, the Conference will investigate, consider any response and take action to seek justice.

## **CONCLUSION**

In all of our ministries with children, youth and developmentally disabled adult dependent persons, the Kansas West Conference of the United Methodist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that all children, youth and developmentally disabled adult dependent persons will be “surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (from “Congregational Pledge 2,” “Baptismal Covenant II,” in The United Methodist Hymnal, page 44).