



**Manchester United Methodist Church
Safe Gatherings Procedures
(Revised 8/1/2020)**

The Safe Gatherings practices of Manchester United Methodist Church are designed to help ensure the safety of minors and vulnerable adults as well as clergy, staff and volunteers.

All clergy, church and preschool staff as well as volunteers who want to serve with minors or vulnerable adults at church-sponsored programs are required to become Safe Gatherings Certified by Manchester UMC or the Missouri Annual Conference.

A. Safe Gatherings Certification Eligibility

To be Safe Gatherings Certified, a person must have been active with one or more ministries (e.g. worship, small group, ministry team, etc.) of Manchester UMC over the past six months.

If a person has not been active with one or more ministries of Manchester UMC over the past six months, then they may choose from the following two options in lieu of this requirement:

1. Provide a written referral from the Pastor, Children's Ministry Director or Youth Director of their most previous church indicating their support of that person being permitted to serve with minors or vulnerable adults. This referral should be provided using Manchester UMC's referral form (See Appendix),

OR

2. Provide a written referral from a clergy, staff member or current ministry leader of Manchester UMC indicating their support of that person being permitted to serve with minors or vulnerable adults. This referral should be provided using Manchester UMC's referral form (See Appendix).

B. Safe Gatherings Eligibility Limitations

1. Any person under allegation or conviction related to any form of abuse, neglect or sexual misconduct, is not eligible to be Safe Gatherings Certified or serve with minors or vulnerable adults in any capacity.
2. Any person who is a registered sex offender is not eligible to be Safe Gatherings Certified or serve with minors or vulnerable adults in any capacity.
3. Any person currently under investigation for a formal Safe Gatherings complaint is not eligible to serve with minors or vulnerable adults in any capacity until the investigation is complete.
4. Any person who is denied Safe Gatherings Certification is not eligible to serve with minors or vulnerable adults in any capacity.

C. Safe Gatherings Certification Process

Any person wishing to become Safe Gatherings Certified by Manchester UMC must agree to a criminal background check and complete the following steps in addition to any other steps required by the Safe Gatherings Team:

- **STEP 1:** Read and agree to abide by current Safe Gatherings Procedures
- **STEP 2:** [Register online](#) (or login to your existing Safe Gatherings account)
- **STEP 3:** Complete **Online Training** using a computer
- **STEP 4:** Email recent **headshot photo** to [Linda Simino](#)

Two adult references (who are not related or living with the applicant or each other) must be provided as part of this process. One of the references will typically be a pastor of Manchester UMC.

Once the above steps have been successfully completed (and any questions or concerns have been addressed to the satisfaction of the Safe Gatherings Team), the applicant will be notified whether they have been approved or declined. If approved, the person will be contacted by a staff member or ministry leader to discuss serving opportunities.

Prior to serving, the applicant will submit a recent (within the past 3 months) headshot photo in order to receive a Safe Gatherings ID Badge. All Safe Gatherings Certified adults must wear their Safe Gatherings ID Badge whenever serving with minors or vulnerable adults at church-sponsored programs.

Safe Gatherings Certification must be renewed at least every three years in order for an adult to continue serving with minors or vulnerable adults. If a person's Safe Gatherings Certification expires, they will not be permitted to serve with minors or vulnerable adults until their certification is renewed. Persons will be notified when it is time to renew their Safe Gatherings certification (if actively serving at Manchester UMC).

Safe Gatherings information is stored in a secure system available only to authorized church clergy and staff.

D. Refusing, Suspending and Revoking Safe Gatherings Certifications

If clergy, staff or a ministry leader becomes aware of a situation that in their opinion could endanger the current or future well-being or safety of minors or vulnerable adults at Manchester UMC, that person will immediately notify the Safe Gatherings Administrator and the Executive Pastor of Ministry Leadership. The Safe Gatherings Administrator and the Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership will consult to decide if the person should be allowed to serve (or continue serving) with minors or vulnerable adults.

The Safe Gatherings Administrator and/or the Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership may refuse, suspend or revoke a person's Safe Gatherings Certification at any time. Such an action will be communicated in writing to the person along with the reason for refusal, suspension or revocation. A copy of the letter will be sent to the Safe Gatherings Coordinator for the Missouri Annual Conference and a copy will be kept with the person's Safe Gatherings records.

E. Procedures for Working with Minors and Vulnerable Adults at Manchester United Methodist Church

1. At least two Safe Gatherings Certified adults, who are not related or cohabitating, must be present at all times (within sight and sound) during church-sponsored programs where minors and vulnerable adults are present without a parent or guardian
2. For church-sponsored programs involving youth (6th grade and older), at least two of the Safe Gatherings Certified adults must be 18 years or older and 4 or more years older than the oldest youth participating in the program.
3. When related or cohabitating adults are serving together in the same space with minors or vulnerable adults, a third Safe Gatherings Certified adult, who is not related or cohabitating with either of the other two adults, must be present at all times (within sight and sound).
4. When in a space with attached restroom, a Safe Gatherings Certified adult may enter the room to assist a child (2nd grade or younger or a child with special needs) if necessary, but the door to the restroom must remain slightly open. This procedure also applies to the detached restroom in the nursery area when working with toddlers.
5. When in a space without an attached restroom, a child (5th grade or younger) or vulnerable adult may use the restroom after a Safe Gatherings Certified adult has ensured that the restroom is unoccupied by any adults. The adult will wait outside the restroom door, which must remain slightly open, and prevent any other adults from entering the restroom.

Children (5th grade or younger) should be directed to use multi-stall restrooms unless none are available. Adult leaders should only allow as many children (5th grade and younger) to use the restroom at the same time as there are stalls in the restroom (e.g. 3 stalls = 3 children at a time).

6. Youth (6th grade and older) are granted permission to use the restroom on their own. No more than 2 youth can leave at the same time to use the restroom unsupervised. This 2person limit does not apply to camps or mission trips.
7. Minors and vulnerable adults may use the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity with the consent of their parent/guardian. A minor or vulnerable adult should be allowed to choose the option that feels most comfortable to them with consent of their parent/guardian. Whenever possible, accommodations, such as using a single stall restroom, should be made for any minors or vulnerable adults who request it.
8. A parent, guardian or youth (10th grade and older) must check in children (5th grade and younger) for all church-sponsored programs where the church is providing care and supervision of the child.
 - a. For programs that issue a child pick-up tag, children (5th grade and younger) may only be released to the person presenting the matching pick-up tag. If the tag becomes lost (or is not presented), a parent, guardian, youth (10th grade and older) or an adult previously approved by the parent/guardian according to established procedures, must present a valid photo ID and sign a pick-up log before the child may be released to them.
 - b. For programs that do not use a child pick-up tag, children (5th grade and younger) may only be released to a parent, guardian or other person who has been previously approved by the parent/guardian according to established procedures. When releasing a child (5th grade and younger) to someone other than the parent/guardian, the person must present a valid photo ID and sign a pick-up log before the child may be released to them.
 - c. Clergy, staff and ministry leaders reserve the right to refuse releasing a minor or vulnerable adult in church custody to any person who appears intoxicated, under the influence, or who otherwise seems to pose a danger to the child's wellbeing. In such cases, clergy, staff and ministry leaders should contact local law enforcement to handle the situation. Any such incidents should also be reported immediately to the ministry leader, the Director of Safe Gatherings and the Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership.
9. Once a youth (6th grade and older) has checked in with an adult ministry leader at the start of a youth program or event, they are under the care and supervision of the church. At the scheduled end time, or shortly thereafter, all youth will be released from the program to locate their parents, guardians, ride home or to drive home. Verbal authorization from a parent or guardian must be provided to an adult ministry leader before a youth may leave early. The Director of Youth Ministry must be notified when a youth leaves early. If a youth program concludes before its scheduled end time, Church staff and volunteers will continue to provide care and supervision until the scheduled end time. Church staff and volunteers are not responsible for youth after the scheduled end time unless alternate arrangements have been made in advance.
10. With advance approval from the ministry director, parents, guardians and prospective volunteers may observe the ministry programs (e.g. Sunday School, Nursery, Preschool, etc.) Manchester UMC offers for minors and vulnerable adults.
 - a. The ministry director is authorized to require a person to become Safe Gatherings Certified before observing the same program more than once during a program year.
 - b. Observers who are not Safe Gatherings Certified must sign in upon arrival and will be given a temporary ID Badge they must wear when minors or vulnerable adults are present. This requirement does not apply to published events where minors or vulnerable adults will be performing.

11. When transportation is provided as an official part of a church-sponsored program, at least two Safe Gatherings Certified adults, who are not related or cohabitating, must be present (within sight and sound) of each vehicle in which minors or vulnerable adults are located.

- a. A current signed parental/guardian consent form must be on file with the church for each minor or vulnerable adult prior to travel.

12. To help prevent any type of “grooming” behavior, adults must obtain permission from a parent/guardian before having contact with a non-related minor or vulnerable adult outside of church-sponsored programs. Such contacts include, but are not limited to, text messages, email, social media, phone calls, giving gifts, and face-to-face meetings. Any face-to-face meetings must occur in a public space (e.g. coffee shop, restaurant, library, etc.) or in the Youth Center where both persons are easily visible by others who may be present.

Safe Gathering Certified adults will report such contacts within 72 hours to the clergy or staff member responsible for providing oversight to their ministry. The report should include the date, time, location, names of those present/participating, and brief description of the contact. A brief description includes, but is not limited to, a phone or in person conversation log, text messaging screen shots, or copies of e-mail communications or letters. The clergy or staff member will keep all reports in a log. The log must be available for review by the staff person’s supervisor, the Safe Gatherings Team or Senior Management upon request.

Clergy and staff who have contact with a non-related minor or vulnerable adult outside of a church-sponsored program will keep a record of those contacts in a log. The log must be available for review by the person’s supervisor, the Safe Gatherings Administrator or Senior Management upon request.

The aforementioned log requirements do not apply to the following:

- a. Contacts with clergy, staff or Safe Gatherings Certified adults that relate only to program logistics (e.g. timing, date, location, expectations, and other program specific details).
- b. Brief incidental encounters that occur in public places (e.g. grocery store, library, mall, etc.)
- c. Communications on official Youth Ministry social media platforms and messaging apps if they are visible to the group.
- d. Gifts purchased and provided by the church to a minor.
- e. Meetings or communications between Safe Gatherings Certified adults ages 18 to 20 and minors in grades 11 and 12 due to their closeness in age.
- f. Contacts where a parent/guardian is included in the communication or within sight and sound of the meeting.
- g. Contacts where another Safe Gatherings Certified adult, who is not related or cohabitating, is included in the communication or within sight and sounds of the meeting.

13. For all church-sponsored programs involving overnight events where minors or vulnerable adults are participants:

- a. At least two Safe Gatherings Certified adults, who are not related or cohabitating, must be present at all times (within sight and sound).
- b. Males and females should not share the same sleeping quarters and should have access to separate bathroom facilities. If separate sleeping quarters are not available, opposite genders should sleep on opposite sides of the room with at least two Safe Gatherings Certified adults, who are not related or cohabitating, present in the room at all times. Ministry leaders should seek to accommodate the sleeping requests of those who identify as gender non-conforming.
- c. In a hotel or dormitory setting, same-gendered minors or vulnerable adults will be assigned to rooms together; adults will be assigned to separate rooms. Ministry leaders should seek to accommodate the sleeping requests of those who identify as gender non-conforming. When

visiting or checking the rooms of minors or vulnerable adults, two unrelated non-cohabitating Safe Gatherings Certified adults must be present.

- d. Letters "a" to "d" apply to the self-identified genders of individuals with parental/guardian consent. Accommodations are also available for those who identify as gender non-conforming.
14. Groups that rent/utilize church facilities, but are not a ministry of Manchester UMC, are not bound by this Safe Gatherings policy so long as they have executed a group liability waiver through the Office Manager of Manchester UMC. In that situation, Manchester UMC assumes no liability for anything related to the outside group. However, if an outside group chooses to utilize Manchester UMC volunteers for an activity they must follow this Safe Gatherings policy during the activity.
15. Vendors and contractors who provide services or programming for Circle of Friends Preschool must be Safe Gatherings Certified. These persons will receive a Vendor ID badge that must be worn when minors and vulnerable adults are present. These persons must renew their Safe Gatherings Certification annually.

F. Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse

1. If you witness abuse taking place, call 9-1-1 immediately.
2. Any person with the responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter under Missouri law. Missouri law states that if such caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would result in abuse or neglect, that person shall **immediately** report or cause a report to be made to the Division of Family and Social Services (DSS). The 24-hour toll-free hotline number is 1-800-392-3738.
3. Any allegations of abuse or neglect occurring or reported during a church-sponsored activity, event or program, must be reported immediately to the staff member or ministry leader (if no staff is present) responsible for the activity, event or program. Staff members and/or ministry leaders will then notify the Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership immediately.

The person making the allegation as well as anyone else with relevant knowledge should complete and submit a signed "Incident Report" form (See Appendix). Forms shall be acquired from and returned to the ministry leader and a copy provided to the Safe Gatherings Administrator, Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership and Executive Pastor of Operations and Generosity. The Lead Pastor will inform the District Superintendent as appropriate.

G. Limited Access Agreements

Background:

Manchester UMC is committed to being open to all who wish to participate in the life of this church. We are also committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment. In certain situations, clearly defined restrictions are necessary to help safeguard families, minors, vulnerable adults and others who participate in the programs and activities of Manchester UMC. These restrictions will be defined in a Limited Access Agreement. The following section establishes the protocol for such restrictions.

Required Uses:

A Limited Access Agreement must be established in the following situations:

1. With any person known to currently be on a Sex Offender Registry
2. With any person currently under investigation for a formal Safe Gatherings complaint

Potential Uses:

With approval from the Leadership Board, a Limited Access Agreement may be established in the following situations:

1. With any person under allegation or conviction of violent or sexual criminal behavior.
2. With any person whose threatening, violent, inappropriate or disruptive behavior has been determined by Senior Management to pose a risk of harm to the church, clergy, staff, congregation or other participants.

Not Intended Uses:

1. Not intended for situations when any lesser form of confrontation or accountability would likely suffice. (Note: Persons on the Sex Offender Registry and persons under investigation for a formal Safe Gatherings complaint must have a Limited Access Agreement).
2. Not intended to substitute for pastoral support and care for those who desire help.
3. Not intended to curb awkward or socially challenging behavior, unless the behavior is threatening, violent, inappropriate or disruptive enough to interfere with the participation of others.
4. Not intended to address discomfort due to differences, appearances or interpersonal conflict.

Process:

1. A pastor or staff member notifies the Director of Safe Gatherings that a Limited Access Agreement may be needed because the person is a registered sex offender, under investigation for a formal Safe Gatherings complaint or one of the other permitted reasons described in this policy. The Director of Safe Gatherings reviews the situation to confirm if it falls within the permitted reasons described in this policy.
2. The Director of Safe Gatherings, in consultation with the Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership, drafts the Limited Access Agreement to fit the circumstance. The Executive Pastor of Operations and Generosity reviews the Limited Access Agreement with legal counsel.
3. The Limited Access Agreement must be signed by the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership, Executive Pastor of Operations and Generosity and the Leadership Board Chair before it is discussed with the person being limited.
4. When possible, the Limited Access Agreement should be delivered and discussed in-person with a staff member and pastor present. They should convey the seriousness of the matter while also explaining our desire to provide for the care and wellbeing of all parties. Pastors/staff should never have this conversation alone. During this conversation, the person being limited should sign their Limited Access Agreement acknowledging they have received the document and agree to its terms.
5. When an in-person meeting is not possible, the Limited Access Agreement will be sent through email (if available) and certified USPS letter. The person being limited will be advised that they must sign and return the document before they will be permitted to attend future church programs and activities or be present on church property.
6. If a person refuses to sign and agree to their Limited Access Agreement, they will be advised that this must occur before they may attend future Manchester UMC programs and activities or be present on church property.

7. If a person being limited feels their Limited Access Agreement is inconsistent with this policy, they may request a meeting with the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor of Ministry and Leadership and Staff Relations Chair. This person may be present on church property for the purpose of attending this meeting. After the meeting, the group will review the situation with the Leadership Board. Following this review, the group will issue a written decision and copy the person being limited. This decision will be final.
8. Whenever possible, Limited Access Agreements should include a timeline and/or a path to dissolving the Agreement. In situations involving persons on the Sex Offender Registry, the Limited Access Agreement will remain in place as long as the person remains on the Sex Offender Registry. However, the terms of the Limited Access Agreement may be updated as necessary.
9. Signed Limited Access Agreements will remain on file with Director of Safe Gatherings.
10. Once a Limited Access Agreement has been delivered to the person being limited, copies will be distributed by the Director of Safe Gatherings to Church Senior Staff members along with the Director of Preschool, Director of Children and Families, Director of Youth Ministry, Director of Children's Choirs, Director of Missions, Staff Parish Chair, Trustees Chair, Police Coordinator, Head Usher and Head Greeter.
11. In providing for the safety and security needs of the church, a Limited Access Agreement is not considered confidential, but should only be shared with careful discretion.

H. Terms & Definitions:

Abuse

Child abuse –

Physical or mental injury, sexual abuse of a child or youth by an adult or adolescent caregiver responsible for the child's or youth's welfare.

Emotional abuse -

Abuse which results in impaired psychological growth and development, including belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on a child's or youth's performance and isolation from normal social activities.

Neglect –

Failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care and supervision.

Physical abuse –

Non-accidental abuse which results in physical injury, including but not limited to bruises, burns, cuts, welts, fractures and internal injuries.

Sexual abuse/misconduct –

Includes but is not limited to any contact or interaction between a child or youth and an adult, or between a child and a youth, when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or youth, or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child or youth and an adult or between a child and a youth is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child or youth.

Adult

Any person age 18 or older. (If an 18 year old is attending a church sponsored youth program or event as a participant and is not serving as an approved youth volunteer, then they shall be treated as a minor for purposes of Safe Gatherings requirements).

Children

Any person 5th grade or younger.

Church-sponsored ministry

A program that is led or coordinated by Manchester United Methodist Church.

Cohabiting

Living in the same home with another person.

Leader

A Safe Gatherings Certified adult.

Minor

Any person age 17 or younger. (If an 18 year old is attending a church-sponsored youth program or event as a participant and is not serving as an approved youth volunteer, then they shall be treated as a minor for purposes of Safe Gatherings requirements).

Parent/Guardian

An adult who has legal custody or guardianship of a minor or vulnerable adult.

Relative/Related

Spouse, fiancé, partner, parent, child, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling or cousin.

Safe Gatherings Certified

An adult who has successfully completed the required steps for Safe Gatherings Certification and is currently approved to work with minors and vulnerable adults by Manchester UMC.

Vulnerable Adult

Any person 18 or older who is not able to protect themselves fully from exploitation or give consent to sexual activity due to intellectual or physical impairments or other incapacities.

Youth

Any person in 6th grade through 12th grade.

Youth Volunteer

Any youth assigned to assist in a ministry of Manchester UMC.

Effective Date:

This document is eleven pages in length and is effective 8/1/2020 until otherwise replaced. This version supersedes all previous versions. It is the responsibility of all Safe Gatherings Certified adults to read and comply with these revised Safe Gatherings procedures.

Contacts:

Please direct any questions, comments or concerns related to our Safe Gatherings procedures to:

Safe Gatherings Administrator: Sally Cleveland – sally.cleveland@manchesterumc.org

Executive Pastor of Ministry & Leadership: Rev. Jim Peich – jim.peich@manchesterumc.org

Appendix A
Report of Suspected Abuse Form
Referral Form



Manchester United Methodist Church

REPORT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

FAMILY INFORMATION		
Name of minor or vulnerable adult	Age	Date of birth
Address State		City
Phone	Grade level	
Name of parent or guardian		Phone (if different from child's)
Address (if different from child's)		

INFORMAION ABOUT SUSPECTED ABUSE
<p>In this section, indicate: the date of suspected abuse; the nature and extent of the suspected abuse; the persons thought to be responsible for the suspected abuse; evidence of previous abuse; any other pertinent information. Use the back of this form if necessary to complete the information requested above and to identify individuals who have been informed of the child abuse report, such as building administrator, supervisor, etc.</p>

REPORTER INFORMATION	
Name and title or position	
Address	
Phone	Relationship to child
Signature of reporter	Date

For Manchester UMC Office Use

Date Received: _____

Copy Provided to Parent/Guardian on: _____

Received By: _____

Print Name

Title



Manchester United Methodist Church
SAFE GATHERINGS CERTIFICATION REFERRAL FORM

_____ is currently a candidate for Safe Gatherings Certification at Manchester United Methodist Church. This authorizes the applicant above to be in ministry at Manchester UMC working with minors and vulnerable adults. According to the candidate, they have worked with minors and/or vulnerable adults at your church and followed specific safety procedures in accordance with your church's policy. In order for us to consider waiving our six month waiting period for this applicant, we ask you to please verify their previous service at your church. Thank you for your assistance.

Please complete the form concerning the applicant above and return to:

Sally Cleveland
Director of Nursery and Safe Gatherings
sally.cleveland@manchesterumc.org
636-200-4707

Date: _____

Your Name: _____

Your Church: _____

Your Position: _____

(Must be a Pastor, Children's Ministry Director, or Youth Ministry Director)

Candidate's Name: _____

Candidate's Years Served: _____

Position(s) Served By Candidate: _____

Additional information Manchester UMC should know about this candidate:

Do you recommend this person for serving in ministry at Manchester UMC? Yes _____ No _____

Your Signature: _____

Your Contact Information:

Phone # _____ Ext. _____ E-mail _____