

Safe Sanctuary Reporting, Response, & Age-Appropriate Healthy Touch

All incidents—including accidents, suspected abuse, and suspected thoughts of self-harm or harm to others—shall be documented in writing using the appropriate report and kept on file for 7 years from the date of the incident in the senior pastor’s office.

*Leader: Any adult-paid or volunteer- who has supervision or management responsibilities for the event, program, or ministry

A. Documentation and Reporting

1. If the event involves suspected abuse of a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult, then the “Abuse Form” should be completed. If the event involves an injury or suspected injury of a person, then the “Accident Report” should be completed. All other events should be documented using the “Incident Report.”
2. In the event of an accident or injury, one copy of the Accident Report shall be given to the parent or guardian of the affected Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult and one copy will be kept in the Church office for 7 years.
3. If an allegation of abuse or misconduct is observed, suspected, or shared that occurred outside of the Church or at a Church sponsored event, follow the guidance found in sections 6B and 6C, Mandated State Reporting and Response.
4. If an allegation of abuse or misconduct is made against a Volunteer or lay leader of the Church, a report shall be made to the ministry area leader who shall report it to the senior pastor and follow section 6C, Response Plan.
5. If an allegation of abuse is made against a clergy member or Staff, a report shall be made to the chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and follow section 6C, Response Plan.

B. Mandatory State Reporting

1. All reporting of alleged or actual incidents of Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult abuse must strictly follow Ohio law.
2. A Leader who has reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred shall immediately report the incident to the local Child or Adult Protective Services (“CPS/APS”) and the senior pastor of the Church.
3. It is never the responsibility of a Leader to investigate allegations.
4. For Volunteers who are mandatory reporters by profession, the first phone call may be to CPS/APS, then the Chain of Notification.
5. When making a report by telephone, it is advisable that it be conducted in the presence of an objective witness. The witness can verify the report

that has been made and who made the report. All reports should be documented and securely filed in the senior pastor's office for 7 years.

C. Response Plan

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to a reported incident of abuse is expected. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies. Some of these steps may be managed simultaneously.

1. **Take all allegations seriously.**
2. **Care for Victim:** If the victim is in immediate need of medical attention, appropriate medical care will be obtained.
3. **Attend to Alleged Perpetrator:** If the alleged perpetrator is onsite and danger is perceived, call local police authorities. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults and advise the accused there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of removal. In any removal of a Staff or Volunteer from a ministry activity or event, care should be taken to manage the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.
4. **Make the Report:** Every person covered by the Safe Sanctuaries policy is mandated by the policy to report known or suspected abuse up pursuant to the Chain of Notification. It is crucial that reporting be immediate, and the allegation (s) dealt with as soon as possible to the incident or disclosure. The pastor (or Church Leadership Council Chair) will ensure CPS/APS, respectively, is contacted. All clergy, Staff, and Volunteers are included in mandatory reporting in the cases of suspected abuse or neglect as required by United Methodist Church's Book of Discipline and Ohio law. For Volunteers who are mandatory reporters by profession, the first phone call may be to CPS/APS, then the Chain of Notification should be followed. Mandatory reporters by profession, in the State of Ohio, include: clergy, attorneys, occupational therapists, counselors, teachers, nurses, doctors, childcare workers, social workers and similar professions.
5. **Activate Chain of Notification:** Activate the "Chain of Notification" immediately to prepare the Church, its district, and conference to provide the best care and support to the victim and their family. The Chain of Notification is as follows:
 - The Staff member or Volunteer is to report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the ministry or event providing reason for suspected abuse and any other helpful information.

- The person in charge of the ministry or event will immediately contact the senior pastor or Leadership Council Chair. At this point in the Chain of Notification a report to CPS/APS should be made (see section 6B).
- If a pastor is the alleged perpetrator, the Leadership Council Chair will be notified in place of the pastor.
- The pastor (or Leadership Council Chair) will immediately call the District Superintendent in which the Church resides and report the allegations.
- The District Superintendent should immediately report the situation to the Assistant to the Bishop and Communications Director at the West Ohio Conference office, as set forth in the Crisis Communications Guidelines for the West Ohio Conference.
- The Staff person or Volunteer should then notify the parents or legal guardians of the victim. All necessary steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the victim should be taken until the parent or legal guardian(s) arrive. However, if one or both parents or legal guardians is the alleged perpetrator, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification.
- If notification of the allegation has not yet been communicated with the alleged perpetrator, do so at this point in the notification process. When it has been alleged that a member of the Staff or Volunteer has committed an act of abuse or exploitation, the staff member or Volunteer will be prohibited from all ministry activities and events with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate civil authorities and in accordance with The Book of Discipline.
- Further communication or steps taken with the staff, congregation, community, or media will only be taken after consultation with the District Superintendent and the Conference office.

6. Written Documentation: Document everything! The person in charge of the ministry activity or event will keep a written report of the steps taken by the Church in response to the reported abuse. The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation; written in ink or typed; and kept in the senior pastor's office for 7 years.

7. Media Requests: All media requests for statements should be directed to either the senior pastor or Leadership Council Chair who will work in conjunction with the District Superintendent and the Conference Crisis Communication Team. The spokesperson will update the District Superintendent of any media inquiries. The West

Ohio Communication Office is available at any time for consultation and to provide advice for handling media or other community inquiries.

8. **Continued Care and Healing:** Reach out and respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend pastoral resources as needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. The Church should seek to have a care and safety plan in writing.

Age Appropriate Healthy Touch

Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth or vulnerable/older adult. For example, it is generally appropriate for a 2-year-old to sit in a nursery worker's lap and give a kiss on the cheek, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and youth leader to behave this way.

Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child or youth's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional needs.

Ideally, touching and affection with children should only be given when in the presence of other children's ministry or youth workers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate, or misconstrued as such, when the touching is open to observation.

Vulnerable/older adults, in particular, usually lack the physical touch that was once so vital to their beings. As we age, people feel uncomfortable touching vulnerable/older adults and we tend to not touch at all. Holding a hand, resting a hand lightly on the back or shoulder would be appropriate for these adults.

- Touching behavior should not even give the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
- Any person's preference not to be touched must be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant person.
- Church staff or volunteers are responsible to protect children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.
- Church staff or volunteers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their ministry leader or a pastor.

Report any inappropriate touch to the ministry area leader who shall report it to the Senior Pastor and follow section the response plan.

Quiz link: <https://forms.gle/M4idBCKScNGEvtEm7>



SESSION 2: REPORTING, RESPONSE, & AGE-
APPROPRIATE HEALTHY TOUCH

SAFE SANCTUARY



Reporting & Response

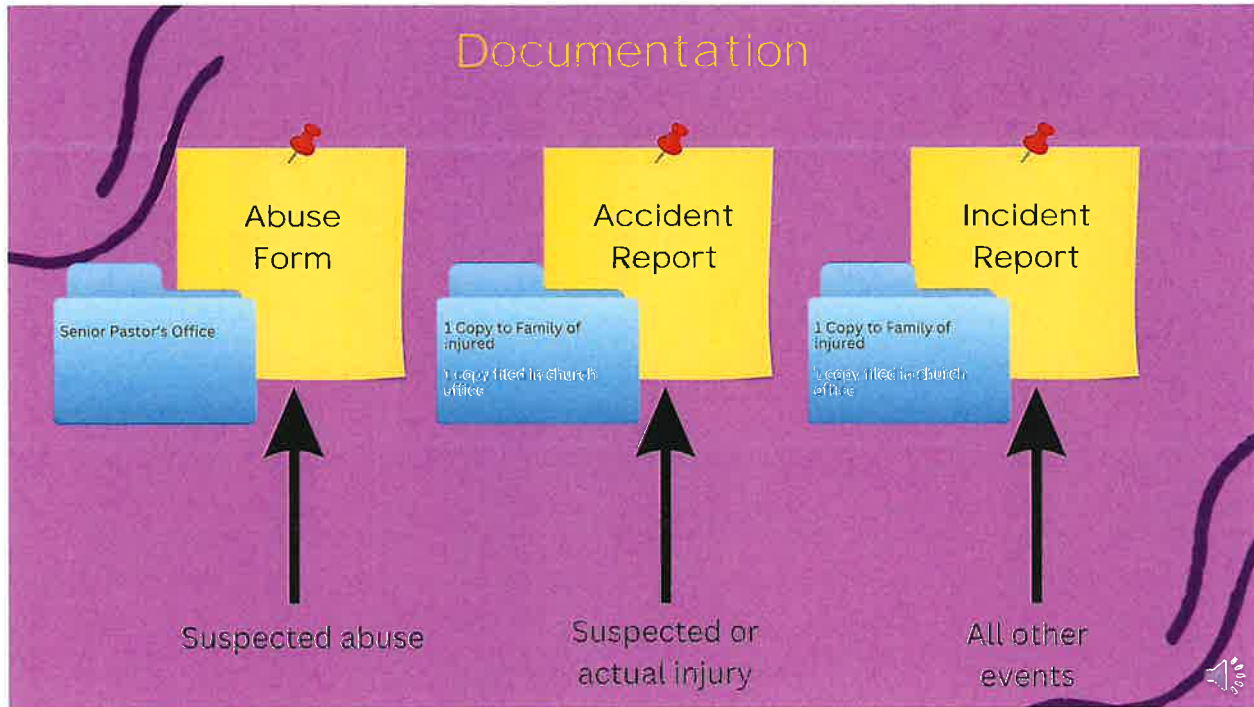
All incidents—including accidents, suspected abuse, and suspected thoughts of self-harm or harm to others—shall be documented in writing using the appropriate report and kept on file for 7 years from the date of the incident.

Leader

Any adult-paid or volunteer-who has supervision or management responsibilities for the event, program, or ministry



Documentation



Reporting Abuse

Mandatory state reporting strictly follows Ohio law



A LEADER WHO HAS REASONABLE CAUSE TO SUSPECT ABUSE HAS OCCURRED SHALL IMMEDIATELY REPORT THE INCIDENT TO LOCAL CHILD OR ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS/APS) AND THE SENIOR PASTOR.

1. No Internal Investigations

It is NEVER the responsibility of a Leader to investigate allegations.

2. Professionals Call First

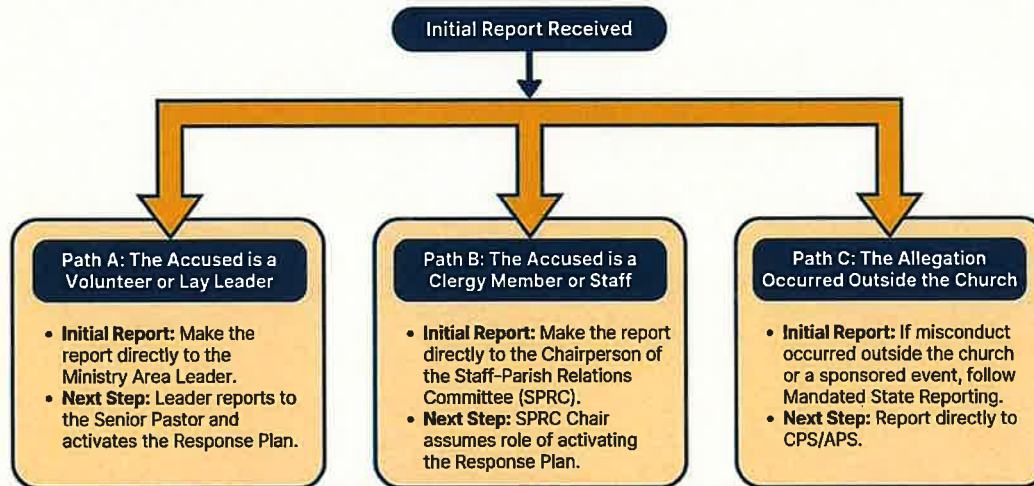
Volunteers who are mandatory reporters by profession (clergy, teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers) make their first phone call directly to CPS/APS before activating the church chain.

3. Use an Objective Witness

When making a report by telephone, do so in the presence of an objective witness to verify the report and the reporter.

Route of Reporting

Routing initial reports based on the identity of the accused



Response Plan

Take all allegations seriously

Care for Victim

- Secure immediate safety.
- Obtain appropriate medical care if the victim is in immediate need.

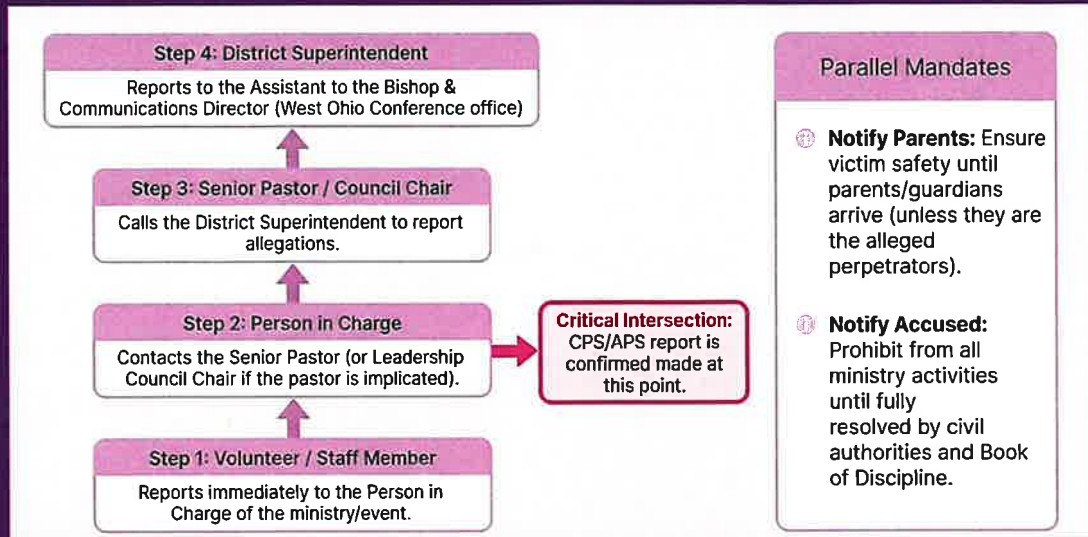
Attend to Alleged Perpetrator

- If onsite and danger is perceived, call local police authorities immediately.
- Discreetly remove the accused from further involvement with vulnerable populations.
- Treat with dignity and respect for their sacred worth, but do not discuss details of the allegations at the time of removal.

Make the Report

- Reporting is immediate and mandated by the Book of Discipline and Ohio law.
- Ensure CPS/APS is contacted.
- Trigger the internal Chain of Notification.

Chain of Notification



Media Requests

- **Strict Rerouting:** All media requests for statements must be directed exclusively to the Senior Pastor or the Leadership Council Chair.
- **No Unauthorized Comments:** Volunteers and staff must never speak to the media or post on social media regarding the incident.
- **Conference Partnership:** The spokesperson will work in conjunction with the District Superintendent and the West Ohio Conference Crisis Communication Team.
- **Expert Consultation:** The West Ohio Communication Office is available at any time to provide advice for handling media or community inquiries.

Reach out and respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.

Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend pastoral resources as needed.

The Church should seek to have a care and safety plan in writing.

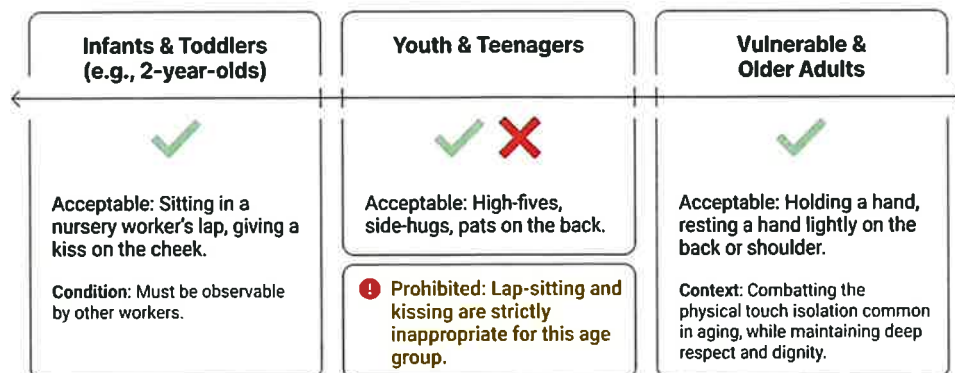
Continued Care and Healing

Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.



Age Appropriate Healthy Touch

The Age-Appropriate Touch Spectrum





✓ **Child-Initiated:** Touch must be a response to the child/youth's need for comfort or encouragement.

✓ **Peer Accountability:** Promptly discuss any questionable behavior by other workers with a ministry leader or pastor.

✗ **Adult-Driven Needs:** Touch must never be based upon the adult's emotional needs.

✗ **Appearance of Wrongdoing:** Behavior must foster trust at all times and remain above reproach.

✗ **Forced Affection:** Never ignore a child, youth, or adult's reluctance to be touched.



Safe Sanctuary 2: Reporting, Response, & Age- Appropriate Healthy Touch

REVIEW SESSION 2: TAKE QUIZ

