

Sunday School Policies

United Church of Christ, Millis

PURPOSE: The United Church of Christ, Congregational (UCC) seeks to share Christ's love and invite people into discipleship. We can only achieve these goals if we are indeed loving to all. An important aspect of loving is protecting children from harm. These policies were developed to insure the physical and emotional safety of all the children of Church of Christ, their friends, guests and visitors. These policies are also designed to ensure proper screening, define appropriate boundaries and ensure accountability for the staff and adult leaders involved in the ministry. This policy was developed specifically for the Sunday School (SS) and other programs such as Confirmation Classes for children nursery age through grade 12. Youth Ministry programs are addressed in a separate Youth Ministry policy.

CHILD PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION

1. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Church of Christ is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we will provide supervision for all activities and programs involving children and employ practices that provide for the safety of children, and those who care for them. All adults who work with children will be background checked.

2. SS ROLE DEFINITIONS

2.1 SS Superintendent:

The SS Superintendent is an individual approved by the Christian Education (CE) Committee and Pastor to oversee the SS program for Pre-K through Grade 12. The Superintendent works with the CE Committee to perform annual registration, plan the annual curriculum and develop the SS calendar. This individual recruits teachers, maintains weekly attendance sheets, and regularly visits SS classrooms.

To be an approved SS Superintendent, an individual must:

1. be a member or active participant of UCC for at least one year; and
2. be at least 21 years old and a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity;
3. have completed an Application and Disclosure Form
4. be approved by the CE Committee and have received two positive reference checks (reference checks performed by a member of the CE Committee
5. have received orientation regarding this policy.

2.2 Teacher/Leader:

A SS Teacher/Leader (including a Nursery Teacher or Confirmation/First Communion Class Leader) is an individual who works with youth on a regular and on-going basis. The Teachers/Leaders function in a supervisory role. Teachers/Leaders are responsible to prepare lessons based on the SS curriculum. Resources for lessons and class activities will be recommended or made available by the CE Committee and/or SS Superintendent.

To be an approved Teacher/Leader, an individual must:

1. be a member or active participant of UCC for at least one year; and
2. be at least 18 years old and
 - a. a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity;
3. have completed an Application and Disclosure Form;
4. be approved by the CE Committee and have received two positive reference checks (reference checks performed by a member of the CE Committee or the SS Superintendent);
5. have received orientation regarding this policy.

2.3 Helper/Assistant/Room Parent:

A Helper or Assistant is a volunteer in the SS who functions in a non-supervisory role, assisting a Teacher/Leader. Helpers must be:

1. a member or active participant of UCC at least one year
2. be approved by the CE Committee and/or the Pastor
3. at least 14 years old; and
 - i. at least 3 years older than the oldest child participating if the children are in grades 6 or under, and
 - ii. 5 years older than the oldest child if the children are grades 7-12.

2.4 Chaperone:

A Chaperone is a volunteer who helps supervise youth for a special activity, such as a party or field trip. A Field Trip is a youth event that is scheduled off UCC property, whether in town or out-of-town, one hour, one day, or overnight.

Approval of Chaperones: All chaperones will be approved by the CE Committee.

To be an approved chaperone, an individual must be:

1. a member or active participant of UCC for at least one year; and
2. at least 21 years old and a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity.

3. YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES

3.1 TWO ADULT RULE

No adult will be alone in the Church, or at a church approved activity, with a child(ren) that is not his or her own or a relative, without permission of the child(ren)'s parent(s). If the youth are to be divided into remote or closed off areas (such as classrooms) of the church or other location, then two unrelated adults should be with each isolated group of youth. Two adults, not married to each other, must be present with a child or children under 18 years of age at all times; should the supervisors be a married couple, then a third adult must be present. If a second (or third) adult cannot be located, the activity will be canceled, and the children will be returned to their parent(s) or guardian(s).

It is permissible to have one adult per car with each car carrying a group of young people on a field trip.

*See fieldtrip guidelines in section 3.4 of this policy.

If a Rotation Format is followed, the “homeroom” or “Shepard” teacher and the craft/game/music/etc. teacher can overlap sessions. When two adults are not available, SS classes will be combined or relocated as needed.

3.2 SS PROCEDURES

1. A child may not attend SS without their parent/guardian’s completion of the registration form(s). These forms will include allergy information, parent contact information, and photograph release (approval/disapproval of use of a child’s photo on the UCC website or in other forms of media).
2. Upon registration, parents should be provided a copy of these policies (section 3 at a minimum).
3. Parents may not allow their child(ren) to attend SS or other youth activities if the child(ren) is ill. The child must be symptom-free for 24 hours before they can be brought to SS.
4. Parents are required to retrieve their children from the classrooms immediately following the church service.
5. The Superintendent will visit each classroom in September and January to point out the fire escape plans posted in the classrooms. Teachers must familiarize themselves with the fire escape plans in each of the classrooms.
6. All Teachers and Assistants/Helpers should arrive 15 minutes early.
7. Attendance will be taken in each classroom. The Superintendent will provide the Teacher with an attendance sheet and keep the attendance list on file.
8. Should a child need to use the restroom during class, the child will be brought to the Superintendent who will accompany the child and wait outside the restroom. Alternatively, the Superintendent may go to the classroom so one of the two teachers may accompany the child and wait outside the restroom.
9. The CE committee is responsible to obtain volunteers to clean the toys in the Nursery at least annually.
10. If a child (particularly Nursery age) is distraught and inconsolable, one Nursery teacher or the Superintendent will locate the parent in the sanctuary. If a teacher leaves to locate the parent, the Superintendent will join the Nursery.

3.3 Medical Release Forms

1. All youth going on an out-of-town field trip must have a Medical Release Form on file before their participation.
2. Completed form will be kept on file in the Church School Superintendent’s office.
3. Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, the original must be taken with an adult leader while a copy remains in the Church School Superintendent’s office.

3.4 Field Trip Guidelines

1. The Christian Education Committee shall approve all field trips and special events before the activity can take place and before fundraising for the activity begins.
2. Approval of Chaperones: All chaperones will be approved by the CE Committee.
3. Parental Consent: Parents or guardians should be fully informed about programs, activities, leaders, chaperones, dates and times, cost, method of transportation, and purpose of the scheduled trip or activity. The appropriate signed Field Trip Consent Form should be completed and returned before any child can participate in the event.
4. Vehicle rules:

- a. Drivers for field trips must be 25 years or older and have a copy of their driver's license and registration on file.
 - b. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past five years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities.
 - c. If it was revoked or suspended more than five years ago, the CE Committee will make a decision as to suitability.
 - d. All occupants of a vehicle will use a seat belt.
 - e. Staff and adult leaders will not transport children between Church and home unless prior arrangements have been made between the leader and parent.
5. Ratios for appropriate supervision:
- a. The two adult rule applies for all church-related events.
 - b. Activities on church property: 2 adults for each group.
 - c. Day trips off church property: Ratio: 1 Adult per 6 youth.
 - d. Overnight activities: See Youth Ministry Policy.

3.5 Discipline

The purpose of discipline with youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect, and cooperation.

1. No child will be disciplined by the use of any form of physical punishment or threat of physical punishment.
2. Supervisors are encouraged to listen to the child, and clearly communicate expectations of appropriate behavior.
3. If a child is disruptive or otherwise inappropriate, a leader may use any of the following strategies: a verbal warning, time-out, discuss the situation with a parent, request parent to come get the youth, and possible suspension from future activities.

3.6 Appropriate Activities

1. Activities that involve inappropriate physical contact are not suitable activities.
2. Verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual harassment or abuse will not be tolerated between adults, adults and youths, or between youths.
3. Children may not engage in sexual relations regardless of whether or not such behavior is construed to be abuse, harassment, or by "mutual consent".

3.7 Expectations of Children during Attendance at Activities (*Same as Youth Ministry policy*)

1. Children are encouraged to use the Sunday School programs and events as an opportunity to practice and explore their faith. Practicing faith involves hospitality, compassion, forgiveness and service. Exploring faith involves a willingness to share honestly and appropriately and giving others the opportunity to do so as well.
2. All children are expected to remain with the group throughout the allotted activity time.
3. No pairing or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted. Unless part of an authorized activity (i.e: lost sheep game)
4. Children will show respect to their leaders and to each other.
5. Children will show respect to church property and other private and public property that they visit. Children will be held responsible (individually or as a group, depending on the circumstance) if they damage property.

3.8 Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol, Fireworks, & Weapons

1. The use of drugs, tobacco, alcoholic products, fireworks, or weapons on Church property or at all youth Church-sponsored events is prohibited.
2. Any violation of this policy will result in the parent or guardian being called and expected to pick the child up or make arrangements for suitable transportation home. A warning or suspension from future activities will result, depending upon the incident.

3.9 Responding to Concerns about Harassment, Abuse or Neglect

Any suspected incident of harassment or abuse that takes place at church, at a church sponsored event or between people who know each other because of their church affiliation, should be reported to the Pastor, Youth Pastor, Chair of the Christian Education Committee or Chair of Deacons, who will intervene according to policies established in the Church's Abuse Prevention Policy.

1. Any instances of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect that leaders become aware of in the course of their work with youth that is being perpetrated by a family member or someone outside the church, should be reported to Church School Superintendent, The Pastor or Youth Pastor who will work together with the reporter to insure the safety of the child. The Pastors will comply with all mandated reporting obligations.
2. Any youth leader who is concerned about the health and well being of a child is encouraged to speak with the Church School Superintendent, Pastor or Youth Pastor about their concerns.

4. Review and Approval Procedures

The Sunday School Policy will be approved and/or revised by the CE committee annually. After the policy is reviewed,

1. The last page will be signed and dated.
2. A copy of the policy will be kept in the Main UCC office.

By signing below we, the Christian Education committee chairperson (with 2/3 vote approval from CE committee) and the Sunday School Superintendent, approve the UCC Sunday School Policy on

Date

CE Committee Member

CE Committee Member

CE Committee Member