

**Child and Youth Protection Policy  
St. Matthew United Methodist Church**

**General Purpose Statement**

St. Matthew United Methodist Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of St. Matthew United Methodist Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

**Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child”, “children”, or “youth” include all persons who are children or youth ministry participants.

In order to foster a safe and fulfilling environment for the children and youth attending St. Matthew United Methodist Church, the following policy has been established:

1. Volunteers must be regular attendees of St. Matthew UMC for a minimum of six months before being eligible to work with children and youth. However, a waiver of this time requirement may be made after the suitability of the applicant’s references and other background information are verified.
2. A person age 21 or older shall be present when children/youth are supervised. However, youth 5th grade and above may assist.
3. Volunteers and employees (age 18 years and above) working with minors will complete the following:  
Nursery, Child, or Youth Worker Application  
Confidential Background Check Authorization Form  
Each applicant will be screened and approved prior to being accepted to a ministry position with minors.
4. Adults or youth who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of children/youth, or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with children/youth involving actual or attempted abuse or sexual molestation of a minor, are not allowed to serve in any church sponsored activity or program with minors.
5. Suspicious behavior on the part of any child/youth worker should be reported immediately to an appropriate St. Matthew staff person. Each witness is to compile a written record independent of others. Staff persons shall begin a written record of the actual report and all subsequent activities pertaining to the people involved. Copies of all written reports are to be given to the Directing Pastor. These reports will remain confidential and be maintained in the church office. While respecting the rights and reputation of the accused, the St. Matthew Pastoral Staff may confront the accused regarding his/her observed behavior. If it is discovered a child or youth has been abused, the accused will be immediately removed from further work with children and youth. The victim and their family shall be offered immediate ministry from the church. The incident shall be reported to appropriate authorities (see Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act). The accused shall be offered appropriate ministry from the church. All inquiries or requests for information from parents, all authorities, media, attorneys, or any other parties,

shall be referred to the Directing Pastor.

6. St. Matthew staff shall attempt to maintain a good ratio of adult to children/youth supervision:  
Infants (Birth-1 year) 1:4                      Toddlers (1-3 years) 1:6 Pre-school (3-5 years) 1:8  
Elementary (K-Gr. 3) 1:10                      Pre-teen (Gr. 4-6) 1:15 Youth (Gr. 7-12) 1:15

7. Staff and volunteers who work with children and youth shall observe the “two person rule” or the “open door policy” at all times. The “two person rule” requires that every reasonable effort is made to avoid situations where an employee or volunteer is alone with children/youth without a partner. The “open door policy” requires that the doors to an occupied room be open. In rare situations, where this policy cannot be observed (such as counseling), another adult, who is present in the building, shall be informed that a staff/volunteer is alone with the minor.

8. In nursery and pre-school areas, the attending child worker will receive children into their respective areas. An adult shall register the child through the child check-in system provided. The worker shall issue to the child a tag which shall be affixed to the child’s clothing.

9. For each child or youth sponsored event or activity, a roll of children/youth participants and adult sponsors must be completed and dated. Computerized records should kept on file indefinitely.

10. An evacuation plan must be posted in each room or children/youth areas. The children and youth departments will go over procedures with the children/youth yearly.

11. Children/Youth parents must give annual written permission for transport. Additionally, for out of town trips, insurance information, medication/allergies information, and emergency contact numbers must all be provided annually. The designated leader must have access to information forms for each child/youth being transported.

12. Drivers for personal vehicles transporting children on behalf of St. Matthew, shall have a valid driver’s license (which has not been revoked in the past 3 years), a properly registered vehicle, and be covered by liability insurance of at least \$100,000 bodily injury, \$300,000 each accident, and \$100,000 property damage. Parents must give consent for their child to ride in a personal vehicle.

### 13. Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children and youth at St. Matthew United Methodist Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day. If a child/youth comes to church, and there is a question as to the safety and health of others, a nurse from the church may be consulted. In such a case, the determination of the nurse

consulted will be final.

#### 14. Medications Policy

It is the policy of St. Matthew United Methodist Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy (13. above) Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions).

#### 15. Allergies Policy

Parents should advise the Children's Ministry director or the Student Ministries Director respectively as well as the child's teacher of any allergies or changes to allergies (peanuts, latex, etc.) Parents of children with special circumstances should address their situation with either the Children's Ministries Director or Student Ministries Director to develop a plan of action.

#### 16. Discipline Policy

It is the policy of St. Matthew United Methodist Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or give permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with either the Children's Ministries Director or Student Ministries Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

In cases where the behavior of a child/youth becomes a disruption to others (biting others, kicking others, hitting others, running off, being disrespectful to the teacher and/or others, etc.), the leader has the discretion to remove them from the classroom or activity. If this happens, the parent(s) will be contacted.

#### 17. Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care. First aid boxes will be kept in the children and youth departments.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- Injuries or accidents that occur during any church sponsored event or activity should be documented on appropriate forms and retained in administrative files indefinitely.

#### 18. Restroom Policy

When escorting a child to the bathroom, the worker should stand in the doorway of the bathroom and not escort the child in the stall. If a child is in need of help, the worker should ask another worker to stand in the hallway while they assist the child in the stall. For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. If a child needs special help in the bathroom or requires frequent trips to the bathroom, it is the responsibility of the parent to inform the teacher or Children's Ministry director (so we understand there is a medical reason for the frequent use of the bathroom). Parents are encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to class if possible.

#### 19. Training

St. Matthew United Methodist Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

\*This policy shall be reviewed annually.

Policy Updated April 24, 2018