



Greater NJ Conference Safe Sanctuaries Policy, approved June 2005

Safe Sanctuaries Policy: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Ministry with Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults

The following policies shall apply to all programs dealing with children, youth (under 18), and vulnerable adults:

1. Personnel policies for all programs, both church and non-church,

A. Shall require:

- i. The GCFA recommended volunteer application form, available from the GNJAC website, shall be used for screening all workers, regular and occasional.
- ii. A background check is required for all regular workers, lay and clergy.
- iii. Volunteer workers, regular or occasional, shall be regular attendees of a local congregation for at least six months before being allowed to supervise such programs.

B. May use the on-line GNJAC approved service for background checks as described on the GNJAC website.

C. It is recommended to the Board of Ordained Ministry that a background check to be completed for all clergy under appointment who have not previously had such check made.

D. The cost of all background checks is to be paid by the church, board or agency requesting them.

2. Screening forms and background checks:

A. Shall be reviewed by the Chairperson of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, the supervisor of the prospective employee(s) or volunteer(s) and the pastor.

B. Screening forms and background checks shall be maintained in the confidential personnel files of the church after the termination of any employee.

C. These screening and background checks shall be required of all persons unless a more stringent check is required to satisfy the standards of a licensing agency.

3. All such programs shall be clearly differentiated between those which are church operated, and those which are non-church operated.

Compliance with these policies and adoption of a Safe Sanctuaries Policy by a local church shall be reported through a written question to be answered as a part of the Charge Conference Report.

Basic Standards Assumed: The following are basic assumptions made as they relate to local church programs for children, youth and vulnerable adults.

1. All buildings in which such programs are housed shall have any necessary "certificates of occupancy."
2. All groups conducting such programs shall have the necessary certificates of insurance for both liability and workers compensation. They shall be displayed as required by law.
3. All such programs shall conform to Federal and State wage and tax laws for employees.

The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, through the Conference Children, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator and the Conference Media Center shall resource local churches with materials, persons, training opportunities, and guidelines for establishing effective measures that will reduce the risk of emotional, physical or sexual abuse of children and youth in the local church; and

Each district within the annual conference shall designate persons who will, in partnership with the annual conference, develop and implement measures that will reduce the risk of child /youth abuses in the local church; and

The resource **Safe Sanctuaries** by Joy T. Melton and/or **Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church** by Richard R. Hammar, et al. shall be the model by which churches shall develop their policy and that each policy while unique to each local church setting, shall contain at least the following six measures:

1. Screening, selection, and annual training of all paid and volunteer workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults
2. Supervision and procedures
3. Reporting to Allegations of abuse
4. Responding to abuse
5. Education of the entire congregation about the policy
6. Annual review of the policy by a designated group within the local church

The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference shall set the last Sunday in September as SAFE SANCTUARIES SUNDAY, and that the Annual Conference shall supply resources for worship for this Sunday.

Definition of Terms:

VULNERABLE ADULTS: Those adults with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.

CHURCH PROGRAMS/NON-CHURCH PROGRAMS AS RELATED TO INSURANCE: Programs relating to children, youth and vulnerable adults are covered under the conference-wide Property and Casualty Insurance Program so long as they are church operated. That is, the church must have control over starting and stopping the operation, hiring or firing the employees, and the management of the day-to-day operations. The decision to operate a program, as described above, should be a matter of record in the meeting minutes of the Administrative Board or Board of Trustees of the local church. This will lay to rest the question of whether it is a church operated or a non-church program that is using the church premises. The non-church program is not covered by the conference insurance and the church should be sure that these non-church programs carry a minimum of \$1,000,000 General Liability Insurance and are covered by Workers' Compensation insurance. Certificates of these insurance coverages should be requested and received by the church annually. The Annual Conference and the local church should be named as additional insureds on these policies. The employees of the church-operated childcare centers are covered under the Workers'

Compensation Program and as such should be reported on the annual Workers' Compensation salary audit of the local church.

SCREENING FORMS: Screening forms for use with volunteers are designed to assist the local church in gaining information on persons who are applicants for working in church programs with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Their use is designed to enhance the protection of those who participate in the programs. The use of the screening process should be required in both "church" and "non-church" programs.

BACKGROUND CHECKS: As with the screening forms, background checks are designed to protect those individuals involved in the programs offered by the church to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Co-sponsors: The Conference Youth Ministry Team, The Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty, The Board of Ordained Ministry and The Commission on Status and Role of Women