

SAFE CHURCH GUIDELINES AND POLICY

For Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults at
Fairwood Community United Methodist Church

Effective: 01/22/2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

Our congregation's purpose for creating this policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the education, spiritual growth and safety of our children, youth, vulnerable adults, and their adult leaders. As a church, we strive to educate our adult leaders in best practices for serving this ministry. These guidelines, policy and its provisions shall apply to all paid and volunteer staff, whether clergy or laity, who work directly or indirectly with children, youth, or vulnerable adults at Fairwood Community United Methodist Church. It is not the intent of this policy to create an implied or expressed contract with any person, nor to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation.

2. DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used throughout this document.

TERM	DEFINITION
Activity	Any event, program, or trip scheduled for children, youth or vulnerable adults.
Activity Coordinator	Adult Leader with additional responsibility for planning, organizing, advertising, executing and cleaning-up for an activity for children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
Adult Leader	Person of minimum 23 years of age, paid or volunteer, approved by the Policy Advisor and SPRC to serve in this ministry area.
Children	Person of three years of age through 5th grade.
The Church	Fairwood Community United Methodist Church
Driver	Adult Leader who has been approved to drive their personal vehicle or church owned vehicle for ministry activities.
First-Aid Provider	Adult Leader with additional current Basic First-Aid, Infant and Child CPR and AED certification.
Guardian	Parent, extended family member or other legally responsible adult(s) providing primary care and support of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
Infant	Person of two years of age or younger.
Mandatory Reporter	Adult Leaders in ministry with children, youth, and vulnerable adults with the responsibility to report abuse or suspicion of abuse in accordance with RCW 74.34.020(10).
Middle School Youth	Youth in grades six through eight for the current school year.
Ministry Area Leader	Person, volunteer or paid staff, laity or clergy, responsible for overseeing a specific ministry area at The Church.

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Outcry Witness	Any adult who hears a report of abuse from a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
Policy Advisor	Person appointed by the Church Council to execute administrative functions, facilitate training, and develop improved strategies for implementation and compliance with this policy.
Rover	Adult Leader not assigned to a specific classroom, responsible for checking in on ministry activities and providing assistance when needed.
Safety Advocate	Adult Leaders who have completed Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church sponsored Safety Advocate training.
School Year	Time between the earliest first day of school of the Issaquah, Kent, Renton and Tahoma school districts, through the latest last day of school.
Senior High Youth	Youth in grades nine through 12 for the current school year.
SPRC	Staff Parish Relations Committee at The Church.
Youth	Person in grades 6 through 12 for the current school year.

3. LEADERSHIP

3.1 Requirements

Adults wishing to serve in ministry with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must meet the following criteria:

- Minimum age of 23 years
- Pass a national background check (renewed every two years)
- Complete a Volunteer Application Form

NOTE: Adults who have suffered abuse or neglect as a child or youth are encouraged to meet with the Senior Pastor prior to applying to volunteer in this ministry area.

3.2 Volunteer Application Form

Adults wishing to serve as leaders in this ministry area must complete an application form containing the following information:

- Identifying numbers from government issued, photo identification
- Current home address
- Phone number
- Email address
- Date of birth
- Emergency contact information
- Availability
- Programs of interest
- Credentials and skills
- Three personal references

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3.3 Activity Coordinator

The Activity Coordinator is the single point of contact for a specific event for children, youth or vulnerable adults. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Safety
- Planning
- Recruiting volunteers
- Communication
- Registration
- Activity Leadership
- Incident Reporting
- Clean-up

3.4 Adult Leader

An adult providing supervisory support and assisting the Activity Coordinator as needed during an activity for children or youth. At least one Adult Leader at each activity must be a conference trained Safety Advocate.

3.5 Driver

An Adult Leader, minimum age 23, approved by the SPRC to provide transportation to and from activities for children, youth and vulnerable adults. Drivers for the Church must possess a valid driver's license, liability and comprehensive insurance. Copies of this information will be retained by the Policy Advisor. The Drivers driving record must be in compliance with church insurance requirements.

Drivers operating church owned vehicles must be approved by The Trustees prior to use.

3.6 Safety Advocate

Every activity outside of regular Sunday morning or afternoon programming, shall have at least one Safety Advocate who is not also serving in any other role. Safety Advocates are Adult Leaders who have completed Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church sponsored Safety Advocate training within two years of the scheduled activity. The Safety Advocate is responsible for promoting and maintaining a physically, spiritually, and mentally safe space for all attendees and enforcing applicable church and event policies.

The Safety Advocate shall be introduced at the beginning of the activity and their role explained to the participants.

In the event of an incident, the Safety Advocate is responsible for documenting incident details and interviewing involved parties and witnesses using a Church Incident Report Form. The completed form is submitted to the Activity Coordinator as soon as possible.

If a participant reports abuse that occurred in another setting, the Safety Advocate will consult with the Activity Coordinator, Ministry Area Leader and Senior Pastor as descriptive in Section 8, Incident Reporting and Response.

3.7 First-Aid Provider

All activities, on-site or off-site for children, youth, and vulnerable adults that are outside of regular Sunday worship and education must have at least one Adult Leader with American Red Cross current certification in basic first-aid, infant and child CPR, and AED usage. Equivalent certification from another agency may be accepted at the discretion of the Policy Advisor.

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The First-Aid Provider will ensure a fully stocked ANSI or OSHA compliant first-aid kit is present prior to ministry area activities.

The First-Aid Provider will keep a record of treatments and medication given during ministry area activities. The log will be submitted to the Activity Coordinator no later than the last day of the event.

During overnight events, the First-Aid Provider is responsible for collecting prescription and supplement medication for each participant and keeping them in a locked container until needed.

Emergency life-saving medications such as epinephrine, glucagon, glyceryl trinitrate, inhalers, etc., may be kept by the participant.

3.8 Leadership Disqualification

No person may serve as an Adult Leader who has not been cleared by a background check. Adults with a conviction on their record for certain felonies or misdemeanors are disqualified from ministry leadership with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Disqualifying convictions include, but are not limited to:

- Abduction
- Aggravated assault
- Child endangerment
- Crimes related to the possession, use, or sale of controlled substances, or illegal drugs
- Criminal homicide
- Driving while under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances, or illegal drugs
- Incest
- Injury to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult
- Possession or promotion of child pornography
- Sexual abuse or assault

If a person has been removed from a volunteer or paid position at another church, they are not eligible to volunteer in children and youth ministry at Fairwood Community United Methodist Church program without documented approval from the senior pastor.

4. VULNERABLE ADULTS

Adult Leaders serving vulnerable adults must follow the same code of conduct and supervisory requirements for working with senior high youth.

Washington state law, RCW 74.34.020 and RCW 74.34.021 define “vulnerable adults” as:

- a person 60 years of age or older with functional, physical, or mental inability to care for self; or
- and adult 18 years of age who:
 - has a developmental disability
 - has a Guardian per RCW 11.88

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- lives in a nursing facility, boarding home, adult family home, residential center or any facility licensed or required to be licensed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
- receives in-home services through a licensed health care agency, hospice or an individual provider
- self-directs their own care per RCW 74.39.060

5. SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Supervisory Ratios

Adults shall avoid being one-on-one with children or youth unless Guardian permission has been given in writing. Interaction with children and youth shall take place within the line of sight of at least one other adult. The following adult to participant ratios shall be in place at all church activities:

PARTICIPANT GROUP	ADULT TO PARTICIPANT RATIO
Infants (0 - 2 years)	1:4
Children (3 years - 5th grade)	1:6
Middle School Youth (6th - 8th grade)	1:6
Senior High Youth (9th - 12th grade)	1:8

When multiple participant groups are present, the ratio for the youngest group is in effect.

Rooms designated for primary use by children, youth, and vulnerable adults must have an uncovered interior window.

When conversations of a confidential or sensitive nature are necessary, the Adult Leader will ensure the conversation takes place out of hearing range but within line of sight of other adults.

When only one adult is required for supervisory ratios, a second adult, serving as a Rover will be available. If only two adults are required for supervision, they shall not be related by birth, adoption, marriage or partnership (i.e. partner, spouse, child, sibling, parent, etc).

Joyful Hearts Preschool supervisory ratios are determined by the preschool director in accordance with Washington State law and not addressed by this policy.

5.2 General Safety

A fully stocked ANSI or OSHA compliant first-aid kit will be placed in a clearly identified, easily accessible place in all rooms designated for primary use by children or youth. The church will provide ANSI or OSHA first-aid kits to accompany the designated First-Aid Provider for any off-site activities.

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5.3 Requirements

The following requirements apply to all activities for children and youth.

5.3.1 Groups of Three

The Activity Coordinator will ensure that all activities are designed to keep children and youth in groups of no less than three persons.

5.3.2 Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

There are no in and out privileges for children or youth participants at Church activities. A waiver may be granted only if written correspondence from the participants guardian is submitted to the Activity Coordinator prior to the activity start time.

5.3.3 Transportation

Whenever possible, children and youth should travel to and from activities in Church organized carpools. Written authorization from a guardian is required for all youth providing their own transportation. Upon arrival at the activity, youth will surrender their keys to the Activity Coordinator.

Youth may not drive other youth to or from Church activities. An exception may be granted for siblings or other family members only when written authorization from a guardian is received prior to the activity start time.

Drive time is limited to a maximum of 10 hours per day. Rest stops are required every two hours. When possible, drivers will rotate at each rest stop. When only one driver per vehicle is available, drive time is reduced to six hours per day.

5.3.4 Registration Forms

All participants and adult leaders for ministry area activities are required to submit a registration form prior to participating in the first event of each school year. Forms are updated prior to the beginning of each school year. Guardians may submit revised forms at any time. These forms shall accompany the Activity Coordinator to all off-site events. Registration forms must include the following information:

- Participant general and contact information
- Guardian general and contact information
- Medical and health insurance information
- Guardian consent to participation, emergency care, and media release.
- Liability waiver

5.3.5 Communication

The Ministry Area Leader is responsible for providing as much notice as possible for activities involving children and youth. Activity information will be provided electronically and printed media and include:

- Date and time of activity
- Cost (if any)
- Registration deadlines (if required)
- Transportation information and deadlines
- Activity Coordinator and contact information

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5.3.6 Activity Leadership

All activities, on-site or off-site, outside of regular Sunday Christian Education or Worship must have adult leaders serving in the following roles:

- Activity Coordinator
- First-Aid Provider
- Safety Advocate
 - Cannot combine service with either of the other two roles.

5.3.7 Insurance

All churches and locations for activities must be insured for abuse, liability, risk and facility hazards.

If any special equipment is used that requires special instruction, the instructions for its use will be posted and followed. Participants will also be instructed verbally in the use of the equipment.

5.3.8 Activities with Elevated Risk

Any activity with an elevated risk factor requires the presence of an experienced guide or certified instructor. When special equipment is used, the guide or instructor will ensure each participant fully understands instructions for use. The Activity Coordinator is responsible for acquiring a certificate of liability insurance with a minimum of one million dollars of coverage from the instructor or facility and submitting it to the Ministry Area Leader.

5.3.9 Overnight Events

A minimum of eight continuous hours of sleep must be scheduled for each overnight activity. Sleep hours begin with lights out and end 30 minutes before the first scheduled event of the following day.

When possible, sleeping areas will be separated by gender. When multiple genders share a space, a divider, either physical or made up of Adult Leaders will be used to create designated sleeping areas, no less than six feet apart. There shall be at least one Adult Leader of the same gender assigned to each sleeping area.

Transgender children, youth, and adults may sleep in the area where they feel most comfortable.

Medication must be turned into the First-Aid Provider in accordance with Section 3.7.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT

6.1 Physical Contact

Adult Leaders must stay cognizant of the imbalance of power between themselves and the children and youth they serve. Any physical contact must be initiated by the child or youth. The Adult Leader may respond to the child or youth's request for comfort and encouragement only after obtaining verbal consent. Past consent does not equal ongoing consent. A child or youth's preference not to be touched shall be respected by others.

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6.2 Restrooms and Showers

When activities require changing or showering, designated times will be established to prevent adults from occupying the same changing or showering space as children or youth. At no time shall adults be nude in the presence of children or youth. Children and youth shall not be nude in the presence of adults.

6.3 Direct Communication with Children and Youth

Adult leaders may initiate direct communication with children and youth regarding church and church sponsored activities. Communication should include guardians and at least one other adult leader.

Group communication is preferred. In the event a child or youth directly contacts an adult leader, the adult leader is responsible for notifying another adult of the nature of the conversation and keeping a record. When appropriate, guardians will also be notified.

7. PROHIBITED BEHAVIORS AND ITEMS

7.1 Prohibited Behaviors

The following behaviors, actual or perceived, are prohibited and may result in removal from an activity at the Participant or Guardian's expense, at the discretion of the Activity Leader in consultation with the Adult Leaders, Participants, Guardians, or church staff:

- Assault
- Bullying
- Endangering the emotional or physical safety of others
- Forgery
- Intimidation
- Lewd behavior
- Massage
- Non-Consensual contact
- Refusal to comply with directions given by Adult Leaders
- Sexual harassment
- Sexually suggestive or coercive communication or contact
- Shoulder rubs
- Unsolicited and unwelcome communication or contact
- Vandalism

7.2 Prohibited Items

Possession of the following items is prohibited and may result in removal from an activity at the Participant or Guardian's expense, at the discretion of the Activity Leader in consultation with the Adult Leaders, Participants, Guardians, or church staff:

- Alcohol
- Cannabis
- Explosives
- Firearms
- Illicit drugs
- Incendiary devices
- Knives
- Other weapons
- Tobacco products
- Vape products

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7.3 Sexual Harassment

Adult leaders must be aware of a potential imbalance of power, so it is not used in a harmful way. Any sexual or sexually suggestive behavior by an adult where an imbalance of power favors the acting adult over another person constitutes an abuse of power. Consent is not a defense to an abuse of power.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted sexual advance, physical or verbal demand, or sexually suggestive behavior, which is perceived as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Prohibited behavior includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual or coercive overtones, including:

Sexually suggestive or coercive communication of any kind such as notes, emails, texts, letters, invitations, comments, threats, slurs, epithets, propositions, or jokes about gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or gender traits or roles.

Any bullying or intimidating act whether it is physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, sexually suggestive gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or media (e.g. pictures, video, cartoons, posters, magazines); or verbal threats, name-calling, or any unwanted gesture.

8. INCIDENT REPORTING AND RESPONSE

8.1 Reporting an Incident

Anytime an adult thinks that their or another adult's behavior towards anyone either physical or verbal, may have been perceived as inappropriate, that adult shall notify the Activity Coordinator as soon as possible. If the behavior of the Activity Coordinator is in question, contact the next person on the following list who was not directly involved in the incident.

- Ministry Area Leader
- Senior Pastor
- District Superintendent
- Conference Bishop

Anonymous complaints of Code of Conduct violations are deemed unverifiable and therefore will not warrant further investigation.

Any Adult Leader accused of violating this policy or the laws of the city of Renton, King County or State of Washington shall be immediately relieved of duties relating to children and youth. The accused shall be isolated from further contact with participants, guests, and others who may be negatively impacted by the individual's presence until an incident investigation has been completed.

If the incident was not committed during a church sponsored activity, the person receiving the report will contact the Senior Pastor. Additional investigation will be done at discretion of the Senior Pastor.

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8.2 Physical Accidents

The First-Aid Provider is responsible for documenting all aspects of a physical incident requiring treatment on an Incident Report Form. The form is submitted to the Activity Coordinator, Ministry Area Leader and Senior Pastor within five days of the event. The Activity Coordinator is responsible for notifying guardians of any first-aid care provided. Additional notifications may be required at the discretion of the Senior Pastor.

8.3 Hindering the Mission

In addition to the Section 6, Code of Conduct, there are other prohibited behaviors that may hinder the mission and purpose of ministry area activities. Examples may include leaders who continually undermine program objectives, youth who intentionally disrupt activities, or leaders who do not attend required training. Incidents of hindering the mission will be reported and investigated as any other incident.

8.4 Incident Investigation

The person receiving the incident report is required to complete an Incident Report Form and report the behavior to the Senior Pastor within 24 hours of the incident. The Senior Pastor will assemble a team to launch an investigation that will include:

- Interview with person reporting the incident
- Interview with witnesses
- Interview with accused

Findings will be reported to the witness, accused and others as determined appropriate by the investigation team.

If the behavior of the Senior Pastor is in question, the investigation will be done by the next person on the following list who was not directly involved in the incident.

- SPRC Chairperson
- District Superintendent
- Conference Bishop

8.5 Incident Communication

The senior pastor, ministry area leaders, Policy Advisor and a delegate chosen by the Church Council are responsible for creating and maintaining an incident communication policy. This team is also responsible for designating and training a media spokesperson when applicable.

The District Superintendent and Bishop shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse.

9. ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

9.1 Reporting and Investigation

Allegations of abuse shall be treated with the utmost seriousness and confidentiality. The church is responsible for investigating all allegations of abuse, anonymous or otherwise in accordance with State of Washington requirements. When an allegation of abuse is received, the victims physical and emotional safety is the highest priority and will be secured first. The Adult Leader, child or youth accused of abuse will be immediately removed from the activity and isolated from further contact with participants or future involvement with children and youth until the investigation process is complete.

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Every effort will be taken to report and investigate the allegation with confidentiality and respect for both the victim and the accused. The Activity Coordinator or delegate is legally required to report allegations of abuse to Child Protective Services and the Senior Pastor, who in turn will notify the Ministry Area Leader, Chairperson of the Church Council, Policy Advisor, Guardians, District Superintendent and Bishop as it is safe and appropriate to do so. This investigation team will determine if additional reporting to law enforcement or other civil authorities is required.

Once the incident is reported to law enforcement or other civil authorities, they are responsible for the investigation moving forward. If there is no civil investigation or once the investigation by civil authorities is completed, the Policy Advisor in conjunction with other church leaders shall jointly review the incident to determine whether any further action is needed.

Adult leaders accused of abuse will be prohibited from participating in children, youth and vulnerable adult ministry events until reinstated by the senior pastor, regardless of where the alleged incident took place.

9.1.1 Role of the Policy Advisor During an Investigation

The Policy Advisor is responsible for retaining documents pertaining to the investigation and relaying that information to civil authorities and the church insurance company as requested. All files related to investigations must be kept in a secure location. Files may be kept either in locked physical storage or in a secured electronic folder.

The Policy Advisor is responsible for scheduling an in-person (when appropriate) meeting informing the accused of the nature of the investigation process and record their statement of the incident. During meetings with the accused, one other mutually agreed-upon witness shall be present (e.g., a local pastor, district superintendent, another leader, etc.).

After conducting a thorough incident review, the Policy Advisor shall report their findings to the accused. If the alleged incident is confirmed, the Policy Advisor and Senior Pastor (or delegate) will collaborate on a documented covenant addressing the incident and future behavior expectations at all levels of involvement within the church.

10. POLICY MANAGEMENT

10.1 Policy Advisor

The Church Council is responsible for appointing a designated Policy Advisor, responsible for executing administrative functions for this policy including, but not limited to:

- Implementation
- Training
- Compliance / Enforcement
- Strategy improvement
- Maintain of log and records for approved Adult Leaders
- Ensure background checks for Adult Leaders are updated every two years
- Run background checks for new volunteers and staff
- Collaborate with SPRC and other stakeholders on policy revisions

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- Facilitate training on this policy for new volunteers and staff every two years or upon release of a new revision
- Support Outcry Witnesses, Adult Leaders, Ministry Area Leaders, and Church Staff in response to policy violations and allegations of abuse.
- Records retention

Records relating to participants or volunteers in ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall be kept in a secure location, on church property, with access restricted to the Policy Advisor, Ministry Area Leader and a member of the SPRC and Church Council.

Files shall be maintained for three years after participation or service ends, or longer as required by Washington State law.

10.2 Accessibility

This policy shall be posted on the front page of the Church website. The Policy Advisor shall ensure printed copies of the current revision are posted in common areas of all church buildings.

10.3 Updates and Revisions

The Church Council is responsible for reviewing this policy as requested by church leadership or the Policy Advisor, at least every two years. The Church Council is the only committee that can approve revisions to this policy.

11. VISITATION GUIDELINES

11.1 General

- 11.1.1 Anyone making a visit to a parishioner on behalf of Fairwood CUMC must:
- 11.1.2 Be at least 18 years old
- 11.1.3 Have current background check (completed within the last 2 years)
- 11.1.4 Complete the Safe Sanctuary training provided by the FCUMC Safety Officer or through the Ministry Safe website (<https://safetysystem.ministrysafe.com>)

11.2 Visitation with anyone under the age of 18 (defined as a minor)

- 11.2.1 The visiting team may be a single individual as long as the requirement of paragraph is met.
- 11.2.2 Schedule the visit with the minor's parent or guardian.
- 11.2.3 Inform the parent or guardian the name of the individual(s) making the visit. Provide proof of identity if requested (a driver's license is sufficient).
- 11.2.4 Ensure the parent or guardian will be present in the room at all times during the visit. This should be made clear when the appointment is made. If for any reason this stipulation cannot be met, the visiting team should leave the premises.
- 11.2.5 The visiting team should document the visit, sign it and file it in a secured confidential file.

11.3 Visitation with anyone over the age of 18

- 11.3.1 Visits to homes of adults should be made as a team of at least two unrelated individuals, preferably of opposite sex.

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- 11.3.2** If the team is male and female, they should travel to the home individually (don't carpool).
- 11.3.3** If there is at least one adult present with the individual being visited who is known to the FCUMC person making the visit, it is permissible for the team to be a single individual unrelated to the person being visited or the caretaker.
- 11.3.4** Schedule the visit with the individual or their caretaker.
- 11.3.5** Inform the individual or caretaker of the names of the individual(s) making the visit.
- 11.3.6** Provide proof of identity if requested (a driver's license is sufficient).
- 11.3.7** The visiting team should stay together throughout the visit. If privacy is required (i.e. the individual wants a private conversation with one of the visiting team), the non-involved team member should move to another room close enough to hear unusual or distress noises.
- 11.3.8** The visiting team should document the visit, sign it and file it in a secured confidential file.

11.4 Visitation to hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, hospice centers, places of confinement

- 11.4.1** These environments are typically staffed by professionals who have visual and auditory access to the individual being visited. Their presence fulfills the requirements of the United Methodist Safe Sanctuary Policy.
- 11.4.2** The visiting team can be a single individual who meets the requirements of paragraph 11.1.2 and 11.1.3.
- 11.4.3** If the person being visited is in a private room, the visiting team should ensure the access door is open at all times.
- 11.4.4** The visiting team should document the visit, sign it and file it in a secured confidential file.

12. RELATED FORMS

- Children and Youth Ministry Registration Form
- Driver and Chaperone Form
- Volunteer Application Form
- Church Incident Report Form