# Springdale UMC Youth Protection Guidelines June 2022

**Volunteer/ Staff Selection Policies**

All volunteers and staff who work with children, youth, and other vulnerable people at Springdale UMC will be:

* At least 21 years old. Exceptions will be made for approved youth helpers;
* At least five years older than the oldest child/youth/other vulnerable people they will be supervising;
* A regular attendee at Springdale UMC for at least six months, and/or a verified friend or family member of a regular SUMC church attendee.
  + For bible school, volunteers could be a verified friend or family member of a regular attendee from another church.
  + Exceptions may be made only with advance approval from the Christian Education Committee and/or Ad Board.

All volunteers and staff who work with children, youth, and other vulnerable people at Springdale UMC will:

* Complete and sign a volunteer application and other documents as applicable.
  + Background checks may be done if one is not already required for the person's occupation.
  + Applicants may be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews shall be conducted by the leader of the program the applicant is interested in or a member of the Christian Education Committee or Ad Board. Church policy and guidelines will be discussed during the interview.

# Training

* Prior to working with youth, volunteers must complete and sign a volunteer application acknowledging, in part, that they have read and understand SUMC’s youth protection policies.
* Acknowledgments will be updated at least every 3 years or as policy changes are made.

# Ministry Supervision Guidelines

Whenever supervising activities involving children, youth, and other vulnerable people at Springdale UMC:

* At least two adults will be present.
* Children, youth, and other vulnerable people will be checked into and out of a church-sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or people authorized by the parent/legal guardian.
* Participants will have access to a telephone or cell phone when groups are at or away from the church facility.
* One-on-one interactions with children, youth, and other vulnerable people will be with an open door and visible to all. The pastor, parent or guardian, or another screened volunteer should be aware of any such interactions.
* Activities with children, youth, and other vulnerable people should be publicly accessible.
* All classroom and office doors will have a window or be visible from the hallway, or doors should remain open while the room is occupied.
* Windows will be kept free from adornment.
* For overnight events at the church and church-sponsored off-premise activities, two or more screened adults must be present. This arrangement must include at least one male and one female if the group is mixed gender.

Whenever Springdale UMC transports children, youth, or other vulnerable people away from the church campus:

* No youth shall drive to or from events;
* An adult should never transport a child, youth, or another vulnerable person alone;
* Drivers shall go through the same screening process as all other Volunteers.

The use of electronics or media communications may be useful tools in supporting ministries with children, youth, and other vulnerable people. However, in such circumstances, the following requirements shall be met:

* The volunteer or staff person is encouraged not to initiate a connection (friending, following, etc.) on social media.
* If a student initiates a connection, the child, youth, or vulnerable person’s parent or guardian will be notified.
* Adult leaders should post photos on social network sites only when permission is granted by a parent/guardian. When posted, photos must not be tagged with names or location indicators. All photos must be appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the ministry event.
* All youth protection policies apply to online platform meetings such as Zoom, Skype, Messenger, and so on. (For example, two adults should be present in a virtual room just as they would be in a physical room.)
* Communication about online meetings should be shared with parents/guardians as well as with children, youth, and other vulnerable people.
* Adult leaders and participants should use their real names as usernames.

Whenever Springdale UMC hosts an activity involving children, youth, or other vulnerable people from another church or community organization:

* Groups using the church facility will follow Springdale UMC’s child, youth, and other vulnerable people protection policies and procedures.
* Springdale UMC volunteers and staff will be given the opportunity for training about Safe Sanctuary policies, procedures, and child abuse issues. Volunteers will be rescreened at least every three years.

**If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs or is revealed to a volunteer/staff person at a Springdale UMC sponsored activity, the adult in charge of the activity will:**

* **Ensure the safety of the child, youth, or another vulnerable person.**
* **Call the ministry supervisor, the pastor, or another appropriate designee.**
* **Call the appropriate county/state hotline.**