

**The Way | Woodstock  
Woodstock, GA Georgia**

**Safe Sanctuary Policy - Preventing Abuse in the Church**

**Introduction:**

The Way | Woodstock believes that the spiritual, emotion and physical well-being of our children, youth and vulnerable adults is imperative. We must do all we can to nurture and protect our children, youth and vulnerable adults. This policy is intended to provide a guide for that protection, as well as the protection of our adult workers and the church. This policy is enacted to ensure that the parents, members, servants and staff of The Way | Woodstock has a clear understanding of what the policies and procedures are regarding the safety of our children, youth and vulnerable adults. The leadership of The Way | Woodstock requests the cooperation of all in our church, as they must abide by the guidelines of this policy.

**Policy Standards and General Christian Moral Standard:**

Staff and/or servants of The Way | Woodstock who work in any area of the children and youth ministries and ministries with vulnerable adults that includes but is not limited to: Sunday school, preschool, sports, scouts, adult ministry trips, homebound visitations, etc., are required to adhere to these policies and standards as moral Christians. A signed covenant statement in support of this policy is required before a person may serve.

**Supervision of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy:**

The Senior Pastor will appoint the person or committee (staff or servant) with the responsibility of the oversight of the Safe Sanctuary Policy. These policies govern all activities held by the church that involve children and youth under the age of 18, and/or any adult vulnerable adult (persons with a mental age of 18 years or less, or over the age of 65.)

These policies must be reviewed annually, reapproved by The Way | Woodstock's Council and presented at church conference. These policies may be altered at any time with the approval of The Way | Woodstock's Council and the Trustees.

**POLICY BASIC PROCEDURES**

**The following are basic procedures that The Way | Woodstock will follow to reduce the possibility of abuse.**

**The "Two-Servant" Rule:**

The two-servant rule requires that no fewer than two servants be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children and youth. If this is impossible, "floaters" or "roamers" who move in and out of rooms will be assigned. To the best of our ability, the two servants will not be related.

**The "Five-Years Older" Rule:**

Those who are paid or unpaid to work with children and youth will be at least five years older than those in the class or program. Those under age 18 may serve as "assistants" but not as lead workers or teachers.

**Classroom Windows:**

All classrooms will have at least one window in the door, if possible. The window must *not* be covered at any time with decorations, etc. If a classroom has no window in the door, the door must remain open.

**6 Month Hospitality Rule:**

No person who has not been a member of or a regular attendee in the congregation for less than 6 months shall serve as a lead teacher or volunteer with children and youth.

**Open Door Counseling:**

Any one-on-one counseling session with any person will be done with the door open. If at all possible, it should be done when another servant is nearby but not necessarily within hearing distance.

**Transportation:**

Transportation to and from activities held at the church is not the church's responsibility. Church-approved servants may provide transportation to and from activities held away from the church. Church-approved servants must have a valid driver's license and an insurance card on file in the Church office. All participants should carry information regarding: (a) current medical condition, including but not limited, medications, allergies, etc.; (b) current physician; (c) a copy of any Advance Directive signed by participant; and (d) contact person, in case of emergency. **Remember, the contact person should not be on a trip.**

**Vulnerable Adults:**

While much of this policy addresses the need to protect our children and youth, The Way | Woodstock recognizes that abuse of impaired and older adults is a major concern. Many older adults are also subject to financial abuse. We must be vigilant for signs of abuse in our adult membership and report any suspected abuse, following the process outlined below. The local Department of Family and Children Services has a division with responsibility for supervising elder care.

**Reporting Abuse:**

The Way | Woodstock regard any form of abuse and evidence thereof as unacceptable and has a strict policy regarding the reporting of such abuse. This is a serious criminal allegation and will be taken seriously. As of January 2012, church servants are MANDATORY reporters. If a servant becomes aware of an abuse allegation, he or she must report it to the person responsible for the program **IMMEDIATELY**. If there is not a staff member on the grounds, then the Senior Pastor should be contacted or his or her designee must be contacted. Do not hesitate to contact a staff member if you feel there is abuse occurring. For ALL allegations, a report MUST be made within 24 hours by the Reporter by phone to the Department of Family & Children's Services in the county of the victim's residence or to 1-800- CHILDREN. In the case of suspected elder abuse, make a report to 1-888-774-0152. A copy of the incident report must be turned into the Senior Pastor within twenty-four hours. If any further reporting is needed, the Senior Pastor and/or designee will handle the future reporting, including a report to law enforcement. Should the press or TV become involved, only an approved church spokesperson should respond. It is better not to make any response. **DO NOT INTERVIEW THE VICTIM.** Leave that process to the proper professional law enforcement officials, who are better qualified.

**Background Checks:**

Any primary servant working with the youth, children or vulnerable adults must undergo a national criminal background check. The report must show no serious offenses, or they will not be allowed to become a servant. Servants will not be allowed to chaperone an event off church grounds until the background check has been completed and the report has been cleared by the Senior Pastor or his/her designee. A primary servant awaiting results may participate with on-site activities as long as they are supervised by another primary worker. A new background check should be done at least every three years.

**Training:**

The Way | Woodstock will provide yearly training for all servants on the policies and procedures outlined above. Each new servant must complete formal Safe Sanctuaries training provided The Way | Woodstock. Records of those volunteers successfully completing training must be kept on file.

## DIGITAL/SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS BEST PRACTICES

The following are best practices that The Way | Woodstock will follow to reduce the possibility of abuse as it relates to digital/social media interactions and postings involving minors and vulnerable adults:

### **Guidelines to Cyber Security and Photo/Videos Distribution:**

The internet and portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. However, following basic Safe Sanctuaries procedures can help to minimize those risks. There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. Consider anything and everything on the internet as public information.

#### **Receive parental/guardian permission:**

In addition to general permission to participate in a church ministry, it is advisable to receive advance parental/legal guardian permission for children, youth and vulnerable adults in writing for:

1. Posting photos of participants on any websites or sending them e-mail or cell phone messages or making videos for any use.
2. E-mailing, Messaging, calling, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by a digital device.
3. The sharing of any full name or contact information.

#### **Never post easily identifiable information online:**

1. If you communicate by e-mail, do not use "broadcast" e-mails. Use the "BCC" option so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information like event dates, times, locations, or participants.
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names. If someone must know the last name or the mailing address of the individual, have her or him call the church office or a designated contact person.

#### **Limit individual communications with children, youth and vulnerable adults:**

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. (Even though you may be a sounding board for a person having a bad day, the reverse is not true.)
2. Save all communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (i.e., texts, chat room conversations, e-mails, etc.). An electronic "paper trail" can be important.
3. If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an e-mail or an e-mail in general, send a blind carbon copy to a parent/guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.
4. If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.

#### **Safety Measures for Sharing Photos Electronically:**

1. Consider obtaining copyrights for any photo posted directly on a conference ministry website or shared electronically. Keep in mind that copyright laws are not necessarily universal and can get rather complicated.
2. When posting photos, refrain from using names and never use last names or identifiable information.
3. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission. Check to make sure nametags are not distinguishable.
4. Use low-resolution photos whenever possible and slightly blur/pixelate photos.
5. Block "save photo as" options on websites (ask a web savvy person for assistance)
6. Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.
7. Obtain additional permission to use photos elsewhere (i.e., a journal or website, local paper, etc.)
8. Consider or prefer using stock or purchased photos.

**Safety Measure for using Social Networking Sites:**

1. Set privacy settings to limit who can see your profile, otherwise people may still be able to view your full profile.
2. Restrict who can be your friend. It is prudent to use judgment in accepting requests from children, youth and vulnerable adults.
3. Use higher-level security features even if you have a restricted profile (such as requiring your approval of all comments posted to your site.)
4. Do not post anything to your social networking site that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church newsletter or bulletin. (The same goes for blogs.)
5. Remove or do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.
6. Encourage children, youth and vulnerable adults to follow these same guidelines.

**The Way | Woodstock**  
**Safe Sanctuaries Participation Covenant Statement**

The congregation of The Way | Woodstock is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, other vulnerable persons, workers, and servants who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy community of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a community in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No person who has been convicted of abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, or ritual abuse) should serve with children, or other vulnerable persons in any church-sponsored activity.
2. All servants working with children, or other vulnerable persons of our church have been involved in the congregation for at least six months before beginning a servant assignment.
3. Servants with children and other vulnerable persons shall observe the "Two Adult/Floater Rule".
4. Servants with children and other vulnerable persons shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep servants informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Servants shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer the following questions:

1. As a servant in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and other vulnerable persons?  Yes  No
2. As a servant in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Servant Rule" at all times?  Yes  No
3. As a servant in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the "Six Month Rule" before beginning a servant assignment?  Yes  No
4. As a servant in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Cyber Security and Photo/Video Rule" at all times?  Yes  No
5. As a servant in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church-related to your servant assignment?  Yes  No
6. As a servant in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisors?  Yes  No
7. As a servant in this congregation, do you agree to inform the clergy of this church if you have ever been convicted of abuse?  Yes  No

I have read this SAFE SANCTUARIES PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Full Name

**The Way | Woodstock**  
**Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse**

Name of worker observing/receiving disclosure of abuse: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Victim's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Victim's Age/Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Place of witnessed activity or initial conversation with victim: \_\_\_\_\_

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Victim's Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of person accused of abuse: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship of accused to victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Pastor/Ministry Supervisor to whom you reported: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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**The following should be completed by the Pastor/ Ministry Supervisor in charge:**

Name of parent/guardian to who reported: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Call to Department of Family and Children Services (if applicable):**

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Call to Local Law Enforcement (if applicable):**

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Other Contacts/Action Taken:** \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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**The Way | Woodstock**  
**NextGen Accident/Incident Report**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child/Youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: : \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Reporter

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

Copies to Parent/Guardian, NextGen Director/Pastor