



**ALDERSGATE ACADEMY
SAFE SANCTUARY**

2023/2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement: Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our invitation. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God. Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones... it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that "...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse."

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse, occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Many annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its membership adult survivors of early sexual trauma. Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse. God calls us to make our churches safe places, by protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

(From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 1996. Copyright © 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission, [pp.384-386])

A. Purpose

The Aldersgate's Academy purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children.

B. Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a ministry of the Aldersgate United Methodist Church, the Aldersgate Academy pledges to conduct the programming in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children as well as all of the Academy Staff which includes paid employees as well as volunteers. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment Staff. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events. We will educate all of our Staff regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline). We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse/neglect that conforms to the requirements of state law. We will also be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

C. Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, the Aldersgate Academy is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "...surrounded by steadfast love... Established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal". ("Baptismal Covenant II," United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44)

2. DEFINITIONS

Child Abuse—any act committed by a person in a position of trust (Parent, Teacher, Caregiver or other) which harms or threatens to harm a minor child’s welfare, physical, spiritual or mental health.

We recognize child abuse may fall into these categories:

- A. Physical Abuse—Inflicting bodily harm to a child constitutes physical abuse. Instances of physical abuse include any physical act of undue force such as assault with a knife, strap or other implement. Also included are fractures, burns and bruises resulting from being beaten, pushed down, shaken, pinched, slapped or thrown. Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks.
- B. Sexual Abuse—Anytime a child is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older minor, abuse has occurred. The child is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes fondling, sexual intercourse, participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution, and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.
- C. Emotional Abuse—Emotional abuse deeply affects a child’s self-esteem by submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It does not always involve injuries we can see. The child receives the message that he/she is not good and never will be. Emotional abuse can include closed confinement (being shut in a small area), making racial remarks, excessive punishment, use of profanity, knowingly permitting drug or alcohol abuse, and/or ignoring or encouraging peer abuse.
- D. Neglect—Neglect is not hearing or addressing a child’s basic needs for health, welfare or safety, resulting in harm to the child. It can include any of the following acts of negligence or maltreatment.
 - Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing
 - Abandonment
 - Refusal to seek treatment for illness
 - Inadequate supervision
 - Health hazards in the home, school or church
 - Ignoring a child’s need for affirmation and nurturing

- E. Ritual—Abuse in which physical, sexual or psychological violence is inflicted on a child. Ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites. These acts are done intentionally and in a stylized way by someone (or multiple people) with responsibility for the child’s welfare. It can include cruel treatment of animals or repetitious threats of sexual or physical violence to the child or people related to the child.

Adults who have been convicted of abuse or neglect of children/youth or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with children WILL NOT BE EMPLOYED AND SHALL NOT VOLUNTEER service in any Aldersgate Academy activity or program for children.

3. STANDARDS

This includes all staff in the Aldersgate Academy Programs for Children

A. Leadership Role Definitions

The Aldersgate Academy adopts the following standards for Authority Figures and Assistants.

1) **AUTHORITY FIGURES** (Lead, Team, Assistant and Substitute Teachers)

- Primary classroom leaders of children’s activities.
- Will work with children infant through 5 years of age.
- Must be 18 with a High School Diploma to work with children 2-5.
- Must be 21 to work with infants and toddlers.
- Must be able to supervise volunteers with the approval of the Director.
- In the judgment of the Academy Administrator, must be competent to lead activities.

2) **ADULT ASSISTANTS** (Caregivers, Student Teachers and Volunteers)

- Will lend aid to an Authority Figure.
- Must be 18 with a High School Diploma to work with children 2-5.
- Must be 21 to work with infants and toddlers.
- Volunteers must be with an Authority Figure at all times.
- Will work under the direction of the Authority Figure or the Academy Administrator.
- In the judgment of the Academy Administrator, must be competent to assist in activities.

B. Staff to Child Ratios

- 1) May combine two or more groups as long as the ratio of the younger age group is met.
- 2) The Academy Administrator shall correct child/staff ratios immediately.

- 3) The Academy must have at least two adults present during all hours of operation.
- 4) The Academy shall make arrangements so that if only one adult is supervising a group of children, that adult has means available to communicate with other staff and summon assistance without leaving the children unattended.

Age of Youngest Child In the Group	Maximum Number of Children Supervised by 1 Staff Member	Maximum Number of Children in the Group
Infant	4	8
One Year	5	10
Two Years	5	10
Two and a Half – Three	7	14
Three Years	10	20
Four Years	12	24
Five Years	12	24

- 5) The Academy accepts children with special needs. The above ratios may be adjusted depending upon the nature and degree of the child’s special needs.

C. Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries and Staff Interactions with Children

Academy Staff must always be above reproach in their words and conduct. They are to behave in a manner demonstrating Christian conduct, respect, honesty, and trustworthiness.

- 1) Academy Staff must not in any way initiate any of the following activities with children: Lengthy hugging, kissing, or inappropriate touching.
- 2) In the event that a child approaches a Staff member, with the intent to hug or kiss, or unexpectedly does so, the Academy Staff should accept the affection, but should as quickly as possible, in a non-rejecting manner, encourage a more appropriate form of physical conduct.
- 3) Appropriate physical contact for infants through 3 years old include picking up the child under both of their arms, comforting the child, holding the hand of the child, changing diapers, sitting on laps.
- 4) Appropriate physical contact with children ages 4 and 5 could include a handshake, holding a hand, pat on the back, quick hug of encouragement, picking up the child while comforting, and a “high five”.
- 5) Staff will not initiate any horseplay with children which includes swinging the child by their hands or arms, hanging the child upside down, or any other aggressive active play (example-tickling).
- 6) Upon arrival or departure of a child, Academy Staff should not pick up or hold a child ages 4-5 unless the child is visibly upset. Staff should not hold a child ages 4-5 on their laps unless the child is visibly upset.
- 7) Children and staff will be visible at all times, and not appear hidden from view.

D. Discipline

- 1) Academy Staff treat children with respect. Keep in mind “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
- 2) The Academy uses positive discipline to teach children right from wrong, which behaviors are acceptable, which behaviors are not acceptable, and how to respect the rights of others.
- 3) Academy Staff will not use corporal punishment, humiliating, or frightening discipline techniques.
 - Discipline is never punishment. Discipline is teaching, done positively and with respect and is appropriate to the situation and age of the child.
 - In extreme circumstances, for example fighting, physical restraint may be necessary and must be reported immediately to the Academy Administrator.
- 4) Food or beverage is never withheld as a form of discipline.

E. Emergencies

- 1) Academy Staff will follow all Medical, Fire, Weather Emergency and Evacuation Guidelines.
- 2) Academy Staff will be trained in first Aid and CPR based on the Indiana State Licensing Guidelines.
- 3) Academy Staff shall follow all procedures for injury reporting.
- 4) First Aid Boxes and Defibrillators are accessible within the church and all Academy Staff will be familiar with their locations.

F. Field Trips

- 1) All outings must have a signed and dated parental waiver from each parent/guardian. The waiver must state the nature of the outing, the time of departure and return, the destination (including the name of the host, address and phone number), the mode of transportation, and the cost to the child, emergency contact information and medical information.
- 2) When an outing involves transportation, the Authority Figure must leave the name, address, and phone numbers of the Transportation Company with the Academy Administrator. The Authority Figure must also leave the names of the children involved in the field trip along with copies of permission forms with the Academy Administrator. The Transportation Company will ensure all children are wearing a seat belt and/or are using an age-appropriate car seat at all times.
- 3) The Authority figure will have copies of permission forms and emergency contact information for each child involved in the field trip.
- 4) The Academy Administrator shall ensure all Field Trip Guidelines are followed based on Indiana State Licensing.

G. Policy Instruction

- 1) The Aldersgate Academy Council accepts the Academy’s Safe Sanctuary Policy protecting children. It is implemented and publicized to both the Academy Staff and families.

- 2) The Academy Director shall schedule yearly training for all Staff.
 - a. All Academy Staff are required annually to review this policy, to attend a policy instruction session, and to sign a new participation statement, which will be kept on file with the Academy.
 - b. All new Academy Staff are required to attend a Safe Sanctuary Policy instruction during their 90-day probation period. They are required to sign the participation statement, which will be kept on file with the Academy.
 - c. Questions regarding this policy and possible exceptions should be sent to the Academy Council, in writing, for review. The Academy Council may make any changes and exceptions to this policy. Any changes will not violate state licensing guidelines.

H. Written Record of Non-Compliance

Academy Staff must provide a written record/report of any non-compliance of this policy, within 48 hours of the occurrence, to the Academy Director **and** to the Chair of the Academy Council.

4. HIRING SCREENING PROCEDURES

An essential component of preventing child abuse/neglect by Staff is careful screening. Although we recognize the integrity of an overwhelming number of the persons with discerned calling to ministries with children, we realize that child abuse/neglect may occur in the Academy. Therefore, we believe that all Staff must be properly screened. It will be the responsibility of the Academy Human Resources Committee to ensure compliance. The following steps are used for screening applicants:

A. Complete an application form

A completed application form will be required for all Staff and will be kept on file.

B. Conduct an interview with applicants

An interview will be conducted with all applicants. The interviewer should not ask for information about marital status or handicapping conditions as stated in Federal/State discrimination guidelines. The interviewer should also be sensitive to age and sex discrimination guidelines; however adequate information may be requested to ensure compliance with this policy's minimum standards. The interviewer should be aware of red flags. These could be indicators of issues that must be explored further, in order for the Academy to be assured that all information is collected concerning a prospective Staff member. Red flags might include but are not limited to:

- 1) Many addresses over a short period of time.

This could indicate that a person is trying to be anonymous, but it could also indicate that they were a college student who moved a lot to keep the rent low.
- 2) Wants to work with only one age group.

If someone would like to work with only one specific age group, it could indicate that the person has targeted that age group for child abuse/neglect. It might also mean that it is the age group for which they are trained and that experience has shown that they are not as gifted with other ages. Also be aware of anyone who seems overly committed to one age group. For example, someone who simultaneously leads a scout troop, coaches Little League, serves as a Big Brother, and now wants to teach, may be neglecting their own age-appropriate peer relationships in order to cultivate potential victims.

- 3) Does not want /need/like close supervision.
The interview may indicate that the person does not like to be closely supervised which might raise questions about motivation for applying for this work.
- 4) The interviewer needs to be able to explore issues as they arise during the interview and to depart from the set of prepared questions to do so.

C. Complete Reference Checks

A minimum of two references must be contacted on all applicants.

D. Complete Background Checks

Background checks, with written authorization, must be conducted on all Academy Staff that have contact with children and shall include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Academy Staff background checks will be initiated by the Academy Director.
- 2) A copy of the Consent to Release Information Form and the FBI Finger Printing Receipt Form from the employee/volunteer shall be kept in their personnel file.
- 3) The Consent to Release Information Form is done annually. The FBI Finger Printing is renewed every three years.
- 4) Concerns will be reported to the Academy Director. The Academy Director will report any concerns to the Chair of the Academy Council.

E. Complete Checklist for Paid/Volunteer Staff

Checklist for Paid/Volunteer staff will be completed and placed in the applicant's file.

F. Federal and State Law

The requirements of any and all Federal laws or State laws affecting or relating to employment or child abuse/neglect must be complied with, and in any case where there is a conflict between such laws and the procedure outline in this document, said laws shall prevail and the procedure outlined in the document shall be modified to the extent necessary to eliminate such conflict. This policy is subject to all Federal and/or State laws relating to employment and child abuse.

5. REPORTING ACCIDENTS/INJURIES

- A. Occasionally during the course of regular program activities, accidents and injuries occur.

- B. After appropriate support and assistance is given to the injured child or adult, the Academy Administrator shall be notified. The Staff in charge will fill out a written Accident Report when the accident occurred. A description of the incident, contributing factors and the treatment should be noted. A copy of this report is kept in the child's file plus a copy is given to the parent. The **PARENT MUST SIGN BOTH COPIES**.
- C. For any major injuries and/or reoccurring injuries, the Major Injuries/ Reoccurring Record must be completed. Witnesses to the incident should be listed with all addresses and phone numbers. This form is located in the Director's office. The Director will give a copy of this Record to the Chair of the Academy Council. A member of the Council will be appointed to investigate the incident and review this Record and bring recommendations back to the Council to help prevent a recurrence of the accident. These reports are to be kept in the Academy office for future reference.

6. REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

- Everyone should report abuse or neglect. The reporting and investigating of suspected child abuse and neglect are not discretionary matters. In accordance with Indiana State Law, specifically IC 31-33-5 Chapter 5, an individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect is obligated to make a report to the Department of Child Services (DCS) by calling the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-800-5556. Indiana law specifically states that notification of the Director, Administrator or the Chair of the Council **does not** relieve the first individual of the responsibility of seeing that the matter is reported. **Both** parties are responsible for seeing that a report is made to DCS.
- In the event of suspected abuse/neglect, the Academy Staff member shall notify the Academy Director. The suspected abuse/neglect could have taken place inside or outside of the Academy, or if the Academy receives a complaint from anyone regarding possible abuse/neglect of a child by an Academy Staff member. The Academy Director shall document the discussion and **either** the Staff member or the Director **shall** contact DCS (1-800-800-5556). The Academy Director will also notify the Chair of the Academy Council and the Pastor of AUMC.
- In the event the Academy Staff feels uncomfortable reporting to the Academy Director or another Academy Staff member, a report **MUST** be made to the Chair of the Academy Council. This number is located in the Director's office.
- If any Academy Staff **WITNESSES** any abuse/neglect to a child or staff, the Staff must either remove the abuser of the child from the situation if possible and then immediately report it to the Director, or the Administrator if the Director is not present. If the child's immediate safety is a concern call the local law enforcement agency without delay. This should be followed up with a report to DCS noting that law enforcement has been contacted.

- If any Staff/Director witnesses any adult-to-adult abuse, they should call 911. They should not attempt to separate or intercede in any way.
- After the Director, Administrator, or Staff member places a call to DCS or to local law enforcement to report suspected abuse/neglect, the Child Abuse/Neglect Form must be completed. The Director will inform the Chair of the Academy Council and the Pastor of AUMC that a phone call has been placed. The Director will also give a copy of the completed Child Abuse/Neglect Form to the Chair of the Council and to the Pastor of AUMC.
- Any call made to DCS by the Director, Administrator, or Staff member must be documented. This documentation and the completed Child Abuse/Neglect Form will be put in a separate CPS folder. This folder will be kept in a locked file.

G. State Licensing Responsibilities

- 1) The Academy shall at all times maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained regarding the suspected abuse/neglect.
- 2) All Staff shall receive documented training in recognizing and reporting child abuse/neglect.
- 3) The Director and all Staff shall refrain from questioning the child and suspected perpetrators beyond gathering information to report the suspected abuse/neglect to Child Protective Services.
- 4) The Aldersgate Academy **WILL** dismiss an employee/volunteer **if the Child Protective Services investigation found that an Academy Staff member was responsible for the abuse/neglect.**

H. Reporting Guidelines

- 1) Believe the child's story. Don't deny the problem or blame the child. Stay calm. Intense emotions will frighten the child. A quiet, unhurried conversation conveys calmness. Tell the child he/she is safe and will not be harmed.
- 2) If a Child Protective Services caseworker or law enforcement official comes to the Academy to interview a child, the Academy Director or in the absence of the Director, the Chair of the Academy Council or the Pastor of AUMC, shall be present if allowed by CPS. The Chair of the Academy Council must be informed of this meeting as well as the Pastor of AUMC.

I. Investigation

- 1) The Academy Director should make no attempt to investigate suspected child abuse, and shall not inform parents or staff of suspicions, or that a report has been made. At the point it is determined that DCS should be called, further questioning from Academy personnel must cease unless instructed otherwise by DCS.
- 2) At the conclusion of the investigation, appropriate actions shall be taken which may include the dismissal of an employee.
- 3) The Chair of the Academy shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse/neglect to the Aldersgate Academy Insurance Carrier and the Pastor of

Aldersgate AUMC. The AUMC Pastor will report the Alleged incident of child abuse/neglect to the District Superintendent.

J. Response Procedures

If a report is made to the authorities reporting suspected abuse/neglect the following guidelines will be followed.

- 1) The Official spokesperson for Aldersgate Academy shall be the Director or in the absence of the Director, the Chair of the Academy Council. If neither is available, the Pastor of AUMC will be the official spokesperson.
- 2) All inquiries or request for information from the media, attorneys, or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson.
- 3) No person, other than the official spokesperson, is to release any information regarding any alleged child abuse/neglect without the approval of the official spokesperson.
- 4) The care and safety of the child is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protective Services or law enforcement authorities.
- 5) We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse/neglect seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the child and the child's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed.
- 6) We will cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse/neglect.
- 7) We will treat the accused with dignity and respect.
- 8) All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
- 9) All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse/neglect shall be documented by the Director, or in the absence of the Director, the Chair of the Academy Council or the Pastor of AUMC and maintained in a secure and confidential file.

7. LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

LEVEL ONE:

The Academy Director, one Academy Staff member and two AUMC Staff members will receive a text informing them of an active event occurring (example-bank robbery). The Director or the Academy Staff will determine if a Lockdown is necessitated. If so, the director or the Academy Administrator will notify all staff members by walkie-talkie of a Level 1. A **GREEN** sign is to be posted at the Academy door stating that a Level 1 Security is in effect and the swipe card system has been turned off. All individuals wishing to enter must ring the buzzer and be admitted by a designated person. This person may be an Academy Staff member, and Aldersgate UMC Staff person, or an Academy Council member. Parents are not to let anyone in. All parents or authorized pick up persons will be required

to show a picture ID in order to gain admittance. Activities may continue within the building without restrictions. **NO OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES** will be permitted until an all-clear notice has been given.

LEVEL TWO:

A potential situation has been determined **within** the building. There could be an upset parent/guest in the building or a medical emergency is occurring. The Director or the Academy Administrator will notify the Staff and UMC Office Staff by walkie-talkie of a Level 2. If possible, a **YELLOW** sign will be posted on the Academy door stating that a Level 2 Security is in effect. The swipe card system has been turned off. This sign will state that **NO ADMITTANCE BY ANYONE IS ALLOWED UNTIL AN ALL CLEAR IS GIVEN**. Teachers are to discreetly lock their doors but continue normal activities **WITHIN THE CLASSROOM** until an all clear has been given.

LEVEL THREE:

Active physical aggression or strong likelihood of a violent event is occurring. Any Staff who sees the threat will use the walkie-talkie to announce a Level 3. The UMC Office Staff also must be notified. If possible, a **RED** sign will be posted at the Academy door. The swipe card system has been turned off. This **RED** sign will state that **NO ADMITTANCE BY ANYONE IS ALLOWED UNTIL AN ALL CLEAR IS GIVEN**. All doors within the Academy are to be locked. Children should be moved to a safe place away from windows and doors. Children should be seated on the floor and asked to be as quiet as possible. Lights should be turned off. Staff will have a pre-determined location for the safe place for each classroom. This safe place must be posted in each classroom so all substitute teachers are aware of the location.



2417 Getz Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46804

260-432-4507

Report of Suspected Child Abuse

Please print all information

Name of staff observing/receiving disclosure of abuse _____

Child's name _____ Age/Date of Birth _____

Date/place of initial conversation with child _____

Child's statement (detailed summary) _____

Name of person accused of abuse _____

Relation of accused to child (staff, volunteer, family member, other) _____

Reported to Department of Child Services (DCS) by calling the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-800-5556.

Spoke with _____ Date/Time _____

Summary of report _____

Reported to Director - Date/Time _____

Reported to Chair, Academy Council - Date/Time _____

Reported to Pastor - Date/Time _____

Signature of Reporter and Date/Time _____

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2417 Getz Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46804

260-432-4507

Major Injuries Reporting Record
(Person cannot immediately resume program activities)

Name of Injured Person _____ Age _____ male ___ female ___

Name of Parents (if injured is a minor) _____

Address: _____ Phone # _____

Date of Accident _____ **Time of Accident** _____ am/pm

Event accident occurred at _____

Location of accident _____

How did the accident happen _____

Nature of Injury _____

Witness(s) to injury: Name: _____ Phone # _____

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Was injured person given first aid? Yes ___ No ___ By whom: _____

Type of First aid given _____

Was family notified? Yes ___ No ___ Notified by whom _____

Name of person notified _____ Relationship to injured person _____

Reaction of parent(s), if injured is a minor _____

Was doctor contacted? Yes ___ No ___ Was injured person taken to hospital? Yes ___ No ___

By Whom: _____ Name of Hospital _____

Resolution

Major Injuries Reporting Record

Reporter Name (print) and Signature _____ Date _____

Staff/Director Name (print) and Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Name (print) and Signature, if person is a minor _____ Date _____

Follow Up Report by Director _____

Academy Council Follow Up Report: _____

Academy Council Rep Name (print) and Signature _____ Date _____

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