Upland Community Church
Safe Place Child Protection Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

It is our responsibility to protect the children and youth in our care. Caregivers need to know that we are taking every reasonable step to ensure the safety of those to whom we are ministering.

It is our responsibility to protect those working in our ministry from being exposed to false accusations of inappropriate misconduct. To this end, we have screening and supervision policies in place to protect those working in ministry.

It is our responsibility to protect our church. By requiring Safe Place training, as well as implementing screening and supervision policies, we are modeling safety procedures which meet or exceed the standard of care.

WHAT WE REQUIRE

1. Waiting Period - we require all adults who are not students to be UCC attenders for six months before volunteering with minors.
2. Application – we require a written application for an individual to serve in our children's or youth ministry. We want to ensure that we are selecting qualified candidates for our ministry programs.
3. References – applicants must provide names and contact information for 2-3 references who meet the following criteria: should be 18 years or older; should be able to speak to applicant's ability to serve with children/youth; should have known the applicant for at least 2 years; should not be a relative. One reference should be from a pastor or ministry leader in one's former/current church or ministry.
4. Background checks – we conduct official backgrounds checks for all paid staff and volunteers who are 18 years old or older who serve with minors.
    a. For minors who volunteer, background checks will be completed once they become adults.
    b. For persons who will serve as drivers in their ministry service with minors, they must meet the standards of our insurance carrier.
    c. All active volunteers will be asked to resubmit information for a background check every 5 years or any time an allegation or concern arises
5. Training – all children's/youth ministry workers are required to successfully complete our Safe Place training conducted by the Safe Place Coordinator.
    a. Training includes viewing the Safe Place video and completing the online video response form available on our website. At least 11 questions should be correct with a requirement of reviewing and indicating understanding the answers of any missed questions.
    b. New volunteers will have up to 3 weeks to complete this training. If it is not completed, volunteers will NOT be allowed to serve.
    c. All active volunteers will be asked to update their training every 5 years
6. Compliance – all staff and children's/youth ministry workers are required to confirm acceptance of the Safe Place Policy. They will be asked to review and reaffirm the Safe

Place policy annually. In addition, each year we require all staff and volunteers to successfully complete ministry-specific training conducted by individual ministry leaders.

WHAT WE EXPECT

1. Physical contact – no one should feel uncomfortable in the way they are being touched. Appropriate contact is defined as offering a gentle touch on the shoulders, hands, arms, head, or back. Inappropriate contact would include kissing, demanding kissing or hugs, touching of the chest, waist, stomach, bottom, or private areas, or any physical contact that may feel uncomfortable or violating. (Exception – diaper changes in the church nursery).
   a. Babies and toddlers may sit beside you or on your lap or knee.
   b. Pre-school and older children should not be allowed to sit in your lap, covering your private area.
   c. School-aged children (and older) may only sit beside you.

2. Adherence to guidelines – staff and volunteers who work with children and youth shall observe the "two-adult rule", "three-person rule", and "open door rule" at all times. Our guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of child abuse in our program by reducing isolation with a minor and increasing accountability for our staff and children's/youth workers.
   a. The "two-adult rule" requires that all workers make every reasonable effort to AVOID situations where one adult is left alone with minors (see details below).
   b. In the event that there is only one adult present, the "three-person rule" is REQUIRED. NO adult is permitted to be alone with one child/youth. There must be either two adults and one child/youth or one adult and two or more children/youth present.
   c. The "open door rule" requires doors to be open at all times or the activities to be clearly visible through a window.

   The ministry-specific application of these 3 rules will be reviewed, updated, and subsequently included in the annual review and teaching conducted by ministry leaders.

3. Response to inappropriate or suspicious behavior – all staff and volunteers should report any inappropriate or suspicious behavior to a ministry leader and/or the Safe Place Coordinator immediately. This includes any suspected abuse being committed by another worker, peer-to-peer abuse, or any child who presents signs of abuse.

DETAILED GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE "TWO-ADULT RULE" –

1. LARGE and SMALL GROUP SETTINGS – context is important. We recognize two distinct settings with both children and youth.

   LARGE GROUP SETTING - events with 50+ people are present in the building
   These guidelines are consistent with school procedures where, during the school day, there are many people in the building coming and going.
   Examples: Sunday Core (Sunday School, Jr. Church, Nursery), Basics and Basics Jr., Faith at Home Summit
   Two Safe Place trained adults are EXPECTED in each "classroom."
   One adult is PERMISSIBLE in a classroom provided that:
   - One adult is not alone with one child; there must always be multiple children present
   - The ministry director is aware in order to actively monitor the area
   - The class is adjacent to other classes and not in an isolated in area of the building
   - Safe Place ratios are maintained

- All other safety procedures are maintained related to using the restroom or entering any room that does not have a window in the door

SMALL GROUP SETTING - events with smaller groups of 50 and under
This smaller group context requires two adults supervising any classroom or area of the building.
Examples: After School Workshops, Christmas Musical Rehearsals, Missions Projects, Basics Reward Events
Two Safe Place trained adults are required in each classroom or area of the church with NO EXCEPTIONS.
Additionally, the following is expected:

- Safe place ratios are maintained
- All other safety protocols are maintained related to restrooms or entering any room that does not have a window in the door

2. KIDS HOPE – one adult may meet with one student in an open and public area of the school building only during the school day. Open as defined by hallways or large rooms where doors are open, or windows that allow for the mentor and mentee to be seen at all times. Kids Hope does their own Safe Place Training and UCC does not keep a file on these volunteers.

3. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH MINORS – there should be no private one-on-one electronic communication between minors and volunteers or minors and church staff.
   a. All electronic communication, even if multiple minors are included, should include parents or two adults. This includes emails, texts, as well as all social media platforms. If a “solo” text is received, any response must include a second adult.
   b. No private online video gaming is allowed between staff/volunteers and minors

4. MEETINGS WITH MINORS – special meetings between volunteers/leaders and youth require two actively engaged adults who are aware of and can testify to the interaction to satisfy the two-adult rule. This INCLUDES transportation to and from the designated meeting place. When the presence of two actively engaged adults is not possible, the “3-person rule” and “open door rule” may be satisfactory provided that:
   a. The meeting is in an “approved” public setting: Ivanhoes, Boren student center, Bridge and others approved by the Youth Staff, where passively engaged adults are present
   b. There is a record of the date, time, and location of the meeting with the Youth Staff
   c. Transportation to and from the approved location does not violate the two-adult rule

GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING SAFE PLACE REQUIREMENTS –

1. ADULT-CHILD RATIOS – for purposes of maintaining appropriate ratios, 16 year-olds will count as additional “adults” when in a Large Group Setting.
   a. Birth to 3 years - up to 3 children per adult
   b. 3-5 years - up to 5 children per adult
   c. Elementary - up to 8 children per adult
   d. Middle and High school - two adult rule applies, ratios are set by the ministry leader

2. EDUCATING THE CHURCH – ministry leaders should communicate an age-appropriate educational piece of the two-adult rule for students and their parents to establish a culture of awareness and vigilance.
   a. The method of this communication is at the discretion of the ministry boards.
   b. Safe Place ministry-specific training should be discussed annually at the children’s and youth ministry boards to seek their input and to keep the policy fresh in the mind of the board members.
   c. Communication should extend beyond the ministries to the whole church to help make the culture of UCC aware and vigilant to protect those most vulnerable.

3. MINISTRY LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES –
   a. Updating the Safe Place coordinator (SPC) – ministry leaders will communicate to the SPC when annual training is complete. In addition, they will provide a complete list of trained volunteers at the initiation of each ministry season and provide updates as new additions are made.
   b. Permissions and Waivers – ministry leaders are responsible to file any parental waiver forms/permission slips for reference (either digitally stored or in a filing cabinet) for 5 years.
   c. Reporting – Ministry leaders should discuss with all volunteers and parents how to report suspicious or questionable behavior of a volunteer or leader. Reports should be directed to a ministry leader, a staff person, and the SPC. The Safe Place review team will review each report.

DEFINITIONS –

1. Adult – 18 and over; for purposes of ratios, 16 year-olds will count as additional “adults” when in a Large Group Setting
2. Minor – under 18
3. Youth – middle and high school minors
4. Children – birth through 5th grade
5. Safe Place approved –
   a. Applicant has a clean background check and supportive references
   b. Applicant has completed the training video and supportive materials
6. Ministry approved – applicant has completed all training required for age-specific ministry

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY MINISTRIES AND ACTIVITIES USING UCC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

1. Use by “Community Ministries” (as defined by Guidelines for UCC Building/Grounds Use)
    a. Community ministries are required to abide by Safe Place standards or “equivalent” standards adopted by their own organization. (Equivalency will be determined by the UCC Safe Place coordinator).
    b. UCC is willing to provide Safe Place training sessions where needed to facilitate educating volunteers and employees. UCC expects organizations to incur the cost of required individual background checks.
    c. UCC requires the signature of an authorized group leader on the Request for Building/Grounds Use Form stating that their group will:
        i. Utilize only Safe Place trained workers with clean background checks when children and youth are involved
        ii. Have a minimum of 2 adults present whenever working with children and youth
        iii. File and store the appropriate paperwork on their workers (employees and volunteers)
        iv. Maintain an appropriate adult (18 and over) to child ratio as defined in Safe Place guidelines
2. Use by “Community Activities” (as defined by Guidelines for UCC Building/Grounds Use)
    a. Community activities are expected to employ Safe Place standards including:
        i. Always have a minimum of 2 adults present whenever working with children and youth
        ii. Maintain an appropriate adult (18 and over) to child ratio at all times as defined by Safe Place guidelines
    b. UCC requires the signature of an authorized group leader on the Request for Building/Grounds Use Form stating that they are aware of and will maintain the above standards
3. Simultaneous use considerations –
    a. Ministries/activities utilizing different areas of the building and/or grounds need to account for one another’s presence to insure appropriate child-youth-adult interactions are maintained
4. One time user considerations –
    a. One time building users should abide by the requirements for regular “community activities” above
    b. Exceptions will be considered for weddings and other private family events
    c. The building/grounds will not be used for overnight events involving minors
5. Mission fit –
    a. The building should not be used by groups with a purpose contrary to the mission of UCC
    b. The building should not be used by groups unwilling to operate in general compliance with the UCC statement of faith