



## Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Blue Lake United Methodist Camp

### Statement of Covenant:

Blue Lake is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal."

This covenant informs Blue Lake's commitment to provide for the physical safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults attending Blue Lake Programs. In addition, we shall strive to prevent physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults that are under our care.

### Blue Lake's Mission Statement:

To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World, while connecting people to God's creation.

## Definitions, Standards, Criteria, Responsibilities, and Training Requirements

### Definitions

**Authority figure** is a person who is the primary leader of any youth, children, or at-risk or vulnerable adult activity and such person is required to be twenty-one (21) years of age or older.

**Assistant** is a person who gives help to and is directed by an authority figure in the course of any youth, children, or at-risk or vulnerable adult activity including, but not limited to, volunteers, interns, camp counselors, and Vacation Bible School workers.

**Adults** are all persons who have attained the age of majority (19 years in Alabama and 18 years in Florida).

**Floater** is an adult who acts as an assistant to an authority figure to monitor covered activities or events in order to comply with the two adult rule.

**Children** are all persons from infants through the fifth or sixth grade, as determined by each local church in order to conform with grade-level practices of its local area schools regarding classifications of elementary schools and middle or junior high schools.

**Youth** are all persons in the sixth or seventh grade through the twelfth grade, as determined by each local church in order to conform with grade-level practices of its local area schools regarding classifications of middle or junior high schools and high schools.

### Standards

#### Zero Tolerance

Blue Lake has a policy of zero tolerance when it comes to issues of sexual and physical abuse.

### **What is sexual abuse?**

Sexual abuse is a form of abuse that includes sexual activity. A child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity, period. Sexual abuse does not need to include physical contact. Some forms of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- Exhibitionism, or exposing oneself
- Obscene conversations, phone calls, text messages, or digital interaction
- Producing, owning, or sharing pornographic images or movies of children
- Sex of any kind with a minor
- Any other contact or touching of a sexual nature that involves a minor.

### **What is physical abuse?**

Physical abuse is any non-accidental act that results in a child's physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonably severe corporal punishment or unjustifiable punishment. This usually happens when a person is frustrated or angry and strikes, shakes, or throws another person. Some forms of physical abuse include (but are not limited to):

- Intentional, deliberate assault
- Hitting, slapping, beating
- Burning
- Biting
- Poking
- Shaking

If abuse is suspected by any adult at camp or disclosed to an adult, that adult must record the information they have witnessed or that has been shared with them in a written document. This incident report will then be given to the Executive Director or Program Director who will report to the necessary authorities.

Under no circumstances will abuse be tolerated or ignored. All allegations and suspicion of abuse will be investigated thoroughly by the Program Director and Executive Director. In instances that involve the Program Director and/or Executive Director the Board of Trustees Chairperson will be involved in supervising the investigation.

Any individual being investigated will be removed from the program they are attending, removed from the proximity of campers, and in some instances will be asked to leave the site immediately. If the individuals involved are employees it may be necessary to be put on a leave of absence until the incident has been fully investigated.

Under no circumstance will retaliation of any type be tolerated against those making the claim of abuse, those individuals reporting the abuse, or those investigating the abuse. Retaliation will result in immediate dismissal of individuals involved.

### **Background Checks**

Blue Lake United Methodist Camp shall obtain background checks that are a multi-state criminal and sexual offender check based on social security number. All persons serving with children, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adults shall be checked annually, at minimum.

### **Minimum Age**

Authority figures are defined as the **primary** leaders of youth and children's, or at-risk, vulnerable adult activities. Included are the Camp Deans, the Program Director, and other adults in charge of a specific

camp. An authority figure must be a minimum of 21 years old. Assistants must be at least 19 years old and this includes all summer camp and special event counselors and staff, both paid and volunteer.

### **Two Adult Rule**

A minimum of two adults – non-related, i.e. not married to one another - will be utilized in all programming with children & youth. In addition, a floater (adult not assigned to a specific task) may be available to observe and/or assist where needed.

### **Adults in Cabins or Rooms**

All adults in the cabins or rooms must be the same gender as the campers in their care. Adults are not to share beds with campers or be alone with a camper in a room.

### **Open Door**

No adults are allowed to be in a room alone with a child. If a confidential conversation needs to happen it should be done in a public area or with an open door.

### **3 Buddy Rule**

NO child is to go anywhere on camp without at least 2 buddies. One buddy must be an adult when traveling farther than the specific camp (Oakwood, Pinewood, and Dogwood) where you are staying. (To see Camp Nurse, for example)

### **Bathroom Policy**

There will be adequate time for bathroom breaks throughout each day. However, if a child needs to go to the bathroom during a class or activity, we will use the 3 Buddy Rule. Meaning, a child must have 2 buddies go with them. While you may be asked to monitor bathroom breaks (i.e. watchful eye in direction of bathrooms), **do not** escort a child to the restroom by yourself. If there is a medical emergency, ask another adult to escort the child with you. There should never be a child and adult alone together in the bathroom. Adults should always change clothes in a private area (bathroom stall, etc.)

### **Accident/Incident Reporting**

Should a child require medical attention during camp, please alert a Blue Lake Summer Staff member immediately for primary First Aid. A Camp Nurse will be available to dispense meds & for anything other than minor injuries. The Camp Dean should be informed as soon as possible of any required medical attention. The BL Camp Program Director and/or Executive Director will be notified if an injury or illness is severe (blood, broken bone, required hospital visit, allergic reaction, etc.)

### **Medication/Medical Assistance**

**The Camp Nurse will dispense ALL medications** - Prescribed or OTC. These must be logged for the protection of the child, administer, and camp. Blue Lake staff members are equipped with First Aid kits for bites, scrapes and minor bumps & bruises. Every camper, including Adult Volunteers, must have a medical form on file with the Camp.

### **Response Plan on Crisis**

If a crisis does happen then it must be passed to the camp dean and then the camp dean to the Program Director and then to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will be the contact person in a case where contact needs to be made with the parents or the media if necessary.

## **Mandatory Reporting**

Blue Lake staff, Deans, and adult volunteers are required by law to report any suspicion of abuse or bullying to the proper authorities. If abuse or bullying is suspected or if a child discloses to any adult at camp that they have been abused, that adult must gather as much information as they can and provide a written document to the Executive Director or Program Director who will report to the necessary authorities.

## **Signs of Child Abuse (from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence)**

Some signs that a child is experiencing violence or abuse are more obvious than others. Trust your instincts. Suspected abuse is enough of a reason to contact the Camp Director. You do not need proof.

**Unexplained injuries.** Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.

**Changes in behavior.** Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.

**Returning to earlier behaviors.** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.

**Fear of going home.** Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them.

**Changes in eating.** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.

**Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.

**Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

## **Training**

All staff and volunteers that are serving children, youth, or at risk adults are required to attend training annually in regards to this policy. Additionally, all staff and volunteers will signoff annually that they have read this policy, received training about this policy, and agree to adhere to this policy.

## **Safe Sanctuaries Procedures protect everyone.**

The AWF Conference Safe Sanctuaries Policy is in place and enforced to protect the children and youth in our care and the adults in charge. We all benefit from being mindful of these procedures during the week.