



# Michigan Conference

The United Methodist Church

## **Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

*Effective June 6, 2021*

### **Preamble**

Christians are called to live according to the gospel of Jesus. All persons are created by God. God intends all persons to have worth and dignity in their relationships. We are a connected body, and when one part of this body is injured physically, emotionally or spiritually, the entire body is rendered less than God intended.

The scriptures witness to a God who brings about justice, mercy and grace. This policy is an act of hospitality to those who may be at risk due to their age, size, and mental and/or physical capacities.

The innocence of children is what best enables them to seek out God with fearless enthusiasm. That innocence is also what leaves them most vulnerable to abuse, bullying or neglect. Every 15 seconds a child is abused or neglected.<sup>1</sup> Often abuse occurs in settings where children, youth or vulnerable adults should have been able to feel safe -- homes, schools, camps, and sadly the church. In more than three quarters of the reported incidents of child abuse, the victim was related to or acquainted with the abuser.<sup>2</sup>

Although the practice of abuse, bullying and neglect, or the making of false accusations is not to be condoned, we will continue to acknowledge that God's grace is available to all. All persons are valued as human beings in God's image.

The purpose of this policy is to protect all who come to us, to protect both our paid and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of abuse, and to limit the extent of legal liability of the Conference. Therefore, this policy, prompted by the 1996 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, is designed to minimize the risk of abuse, bullying and/or neglect to children, youth, and vulnerable adults at Conference and District events.

<sup>1</sup> Joy Thornburg Melton, *SAFE SANCTUARIES: REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE IN THE CHURCH* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1998). Available through [www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org) and [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com). Rev. Melton is a deacon in the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. She is both a Christian educator and an attorney.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## Michigan Conference Protection Policy

### Section I. Care Provider Authorization and Re-Authorization

#### A. Implementation

1. The Michigan Conference Protection Policy Implementation Team (hence forth this shall be referred to as the MCPPIT) shall implement this policy and develop procedures to that end.
2. The MCPPIT is granted discretion to require additional screening including a personal interview.

#### B. Minimum Requirements

1. All care providers shall:
  - a. Be at least 16 years of age. Upon turning 18 years of age, applicant must re-apply for authorization as an adult.
  - b. Care providers must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child or youth receiving care.
  - c. Be active in a local congregation or ministry setting for at least 6 months at the time of application.
  - d. Complete the Authorization Application for all Conference and District events, programs and activities. All applicants under the age of 18 must also have their parent's signature on the application.
  - e. Provide no fewer than three (3) written references (non-familial, not of the same household).
  - f. Submit written permission and pertinent information for background checks of criminal and Registered Adult Sex Offender records to be pursued when possible with local, county, state and/or federal law enforcement agencies at the discretion of the MCPPIT.

#### C. Qualifications

1. No one shall serve as a care provider if she/he is known to have been previously convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to, any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act or conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior (molestation of a pre-adolescent child), incest, rape, assaults involving vulnerable adults, children or youth, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the physical abuse of a vulnerable adult, child, or youth. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the crime occurred.
2. Applications will not be accepted from anyone who has acknowledged or admitted that she/he has participated as a perpetrator in any previous act of sexual abuse of a vulnerable adult, child or youth. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago or whether a civil or criminal verdict was rendered.
3. If the MCPPIT determines that the person is unsuitable to serve, the application shall be denied and the applicant shall be notified. The MCPPIT reserves the right to not accept any person for volunteer or paid service. If at any time the applicant is found to be unsuitable, the MCPPIT has the authority to review or revoke participation.

#### D. Confidentiality And Document Access

1. All documents and information obtained on all care providers shall remain confidential except as noted below.
  - a. All consents by parents or guardians will be accessible to leadership in the Conference for use in promoting the health, welfare, and safety of participants at Conference related functions and events.
  - b. All documents and information obtained during the screening process may be disclosed when there is a duty to inform and/or it is reasonably necessary in the context of any criminal or civil litigation involving the care provider, whether authorized or an applicant, of the Conference.
  - c. Names of authorized care providers will be available to Conference ministry leaders unless otherwise instructed by the care provider in writing.

**Section I. Care Provider Authorization and Re-Authorization [cont.]**

E. Records Retention

1. All applications and application documents will be retained digitally.

**Section II. Training and Education**

A. Training Care Provider Trainers

1. The MCPPIT shall be responsible for approving applicants and training the trainers of care providers. Training materials will be provided by the MCPPIT.
2. The intent of training the trainers is to provide consistent content and its interpretation. The content of training shall be consistent with this Policy. Additional material may be added at the discretion of the MCPPIT.

B. Care Provider

1. MCPPIT shall provide training of conference authorized care providers.
2. The intent of this training is to create a safe environment and raise awareness of and sensitivity to the issues of abuse, neglect and bullying.
  - a. The goals of the training are for trainees to
    - i. know, understand and be familiar with the Policy
    - ii. agree to implement the Policy of the Conference.
  - b. The content of the training shall be consistent with this Policy. Additional material may be added at the discretion of the MCPPIT.
3. Care Providers shall complete the training and education for authorization. Care Provider authorization must be renewed every 3 years.
4. The MCPPIT shall be responsible for maintaining a current list of all conference authorized Care Providers.

**Section III: Care Provider Supervision**

A. General Statement

1. Proper supervision is necessary for the duration of the event to avoid creating the opportunity for both actual abuse, bullying or neglect, and false accusations of abuse, bullying or neglect to occur.
2. Proper supervision includes providing care providers with Protection Policy training.
3. Supervision during the care provider's performance of their responsibilities shall give special attention to high-risk settings such as nurseries, restrooms, and overnights.
4. Pastors and staff in host churches not directly involved with the program, devotional leaders, event speakers, musicians, or other specialist providing services such as food or entertainment may be present, but may not be alone with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
5. Parents, legal guardians, and special needs care givers may be present with their children or care recipient, but may not be alone with other children, youth or vulnerable adults unless they are qualified as a Conference authorized Care Provider.

B. General Rules

1. Adequate staffing
  - a. All District or Conference-related functions, activities, and events involving children, youth and vulnerable adults shall be staffed to meet the standards of this Policy. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring agency to ensure standards set forth in this Policy are being met. The portion of the function, activity or event, which involves Care Providers, shall be cancelled when staffing required by this Policy is not provided.

**Section III: Care Provider Supervision [cont.]**

- b. Providing staffing shall be the responsibility of the event director of the Conference-related function, activity, or event.
  - c. All Care Providers under the age of 18 shall be at least five years older than those receiving care. Care Providers under 18 years of age shall comprise no more than 20% of the staff for an event, activity, or function.
  - d. Ratios of staff to children shall be in compliance with the rules and regulations of the State of Michigan.
2. Sleeping Accommodations. Sleeping areas, restrooms, and changing areas shall be separated by gender, and supervised by the same gender.
3. Two Care Provider Rule
- a. At least two Conference authorized Care Providers, one of which must be an adult, shall be present at each Conference-related function, activity, or event involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
  - b. The two-care provider rule in the preceding paragraph may be waived at the discretion of the event director or Care Provider in the following situations.
    - i. The Conference authorized Care Provider is an adult and there are at least three children over 13 years of age present.
    - ii. One adult Care Provider remains while the other Care Provider temporarily leaves the area or room for a medical, family, or other reasonable necessity, i.e., escorting a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to the rest room.
    - iii. One adult Care Provider remains when the other Care Provider must leave for an unexpected medical, family, or other reasonable necessity.
    - iv. A Care Provider is taking a child, youth or vulnerable adult to or from a Conference-related function, activity, or event. The waiver must be completed for each child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
    - v. A Conference authorized Care Provider temporarily remains with a child, youth or vulnerable adult while waiting for others to arrive or while the child, youth or vulnerable adult is waiting to leave a Conference-related function, activity, or event, providing there is another adult or older child present.
4. Participants will be released only to those indicated on a release form signed by the parent or guardian.
- C. Event Director Responsibilities
1. Secure a safe and appropriate location that is conducive to the health and welfare of the participants and appropriate for the objectives of the event.
  2. Provide adequate supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable adults by confirming the number of Conference authorized Care Provider leaders needed for the event.
  3. Ascertain the authorization status and suitability of leaders for the particular event.
  4. Implement these policies and related procedures, including reporting and documentation of alleged incidents.
  5. Establish and communicate to all staff expectations and procedures for the event, for instance, procedures regarding medications, medical situations (universal precautions) and emergencies and how they will be handled during the event.
  6. Establish a sign-in and sign-out procedure of participants.
  7. Establish a procedure to obtain copies of permission slips, release forms, medical permission and other necessary paperwork in compliance with applicable laws and regulations of the State of Michigan and other requirements of the Conference.

**Section III: Care Provider Supervision [cont.]**

8. Attend to the care of conference authorized care providers and young children including safe spaces, safe equipment and toys. Compliance with federal, state and county guidelines. Additional information may be available on the Conference website, michiganumc.org.

**D. Online or Virtual Ministry**

1. Always have at least two unrelated care providers in the on-line group meeting.
2. Use “ministry based” accounts instead of personal accounts.
  - a. The host must be a ministry leader or trusted background checked adult and should understand the platform they are using, including, but not limited to, knowing when and how to mute both audio and video.
3. Maintain the five-year rule (care providers are at least five years older than the people they are working with).
4. Use group pages – supervisors and parents included (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.).
5. Transparency is important. Ensure all digital meetings are logged with time, date, and attendance with district/conference administration.
6. Create a regular schedule so parents, youth, and children know when a ministry-based account is being used.
7. Require staff and volunteers to use their legal or common names and have a log of usernames. It is important for people to know who they are talking with. Encourage youth to use their legal or common name as well.
8. When using a virtual breakout room option, at least two care providers must be in each virtual breakout room. If at least two care providers are not available for each virtual breakout room, the use of virtual breakout rooms is not permitted.
9. Create a “Virtual Meeting Covenant” that includes behavioral expectations and consequences for violations.
10. Dress appropriately.
11. Be mindful of surroundings. (You may need to use a backdrop or background).
12. Consider recording the group time (transparency and accountability), if you have written permission from minors and parents.
13. Keep a log of any 1-1 sessions with specifics of time, length, conversation. Make sure to share these with supervisor (as confidentially appropriate) for transparency. This should be done for all digital and in-person 1-1 sessions.
14. Be aware of who has signed media permission and be mindful of what you have permission to share in social media, newsletters, and online.
15. Ensure that the virtual hosts are capable and knowledgeable of online platforms to ensure the safety of the group.
16. Leaders need to be mindful that online church ministry needs to have the same boundaries and language that is used with in-person meetings.

**Section IV: Policy For Reporting Suspected Abuse, Bullying Or Neglect Involving Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults**

**A. Persons Required to Report**

1. All Care Providers and Conference employees who have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult in compliance with state law shall report all known and suspected cases of abuse or neglect which (a) occur on the Conference premises; (b) occur at a Conference-related function, activity or event, or; (c) are disclosed during a Conference-related function, activity or event. All other persons may report known and suspected cases of abuse or neglect in accordance with this Policy and the laws of the State of Michigan. This Policy supports mandatory reporting in compliance with the State of Michigan.
2. If any child, youth, or vulnerable adult arrives at a Conference-related event with signs of abuse or neglect, the event director shall immediately implement this Policy's reporting procedures in compliance with state law.
3. The reporting requirements in this Policy are the minimum requirements. This Policy does not preclude anyone from reporting a known or suspected case of abuse or neglect to others for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Unless such protection requires otherwise, however, confidentiality of the information reported or received shall be respected to protect the rights and interest of the victim, the alleged perpetrator and their families.
4. Under Michigan law, anyone reporting in good faith a known or suspected case of abuse or neglect, to Children's Protective Services or Adult Protective Services is immune from civil or criminal liability which might otherwise be incurred thereby.

**B. Required Reporting Process**

1. The Care Provider shall immediately report the known or suspected abuse or neglect to the event director.
2. For the protection of all parties, if the suspected or alleged perpetrator is in/on the premises, he or she is to be isolated from the program and have no contact with the children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
3. As soon as possible and in all cases within 24 hours, the care giver who observed or received the disclosure shall telephone an oral report to Children's Protective Services or Adult Protective Services to the Centralized Intake TOLL FREE number for the State of Michigan (855-444-3911). This oral report shall be made in conjunction with the person who made the observations or received the disclosure. The following information is typically required in the oral report:
  - a. Name, age and gender of the alleged victim and other family members
  - b. Address, phone number and/or direction to the alleged victim's home
  - c. Parent's place(s) of employment (if known)
  - d. Name and address of alleged perpetrator
  - e. Description of the suspected abuse
  - f. Current condition of the alleged victim
4. Within 72 hours, the care giver who observed or received the disclosure, shall submit a completed State of Michigan "Report of Known or Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect" to Children's Protective Services, or its equivalent to Adult Protective Services in accordance with the directions given at the time of the oral report. The event director may be a resource for completing this form.
5. The event director and the entire staff of the Conference-related function, event, activity or program shall cooperate with Children's Protective Services or Adult Protective Services.

**Section IV: Policy For Reporting Suspected Abuse, Bullying Or Neglect Involving Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults [Cont.]**

6. Following contact with local Children's Protective Services or Adult Protective Services, the event director shall inform:
    - a. The chairperson of the group sponsoring the Conference-related function, activity or event.
    - b. Conference staff person assigned to the ministries of the sponsoring group. The staff person shall inform the Conference Director of Connectional Ministries, the Bishop, and the District Superintendent of the sponsoring District.
    - c. The facility director, manager or host church clergy person.
  7. Notification of a parent or legal guardian of the alleged victim of abuse or neglect shall be determined by Children's Protective Services or Adult Protective Services. The event director shall follow the parent's or legal guardian's wishes regarding the continued participation of the involved child, youth or vulnerable adult, unless otherwise instructed by Children's Protective Services or Adult Protective Services.
  8. Matters of known or suspected abuse or neglect are to be kept confidential, except as required by law, to assist appropriate agencies in their investigations, or as disclosed to Conference representatives with a need to know such information consistent with the requirements of the law. The incident is not to otherwise be discussed with persons other than those involved in the reporting.
  9. The Protection Committee may edit this process to be in compliance with applicable State laws. Such edits shall be included in annual reports to annual conference.
- C. Reporting When The Alleged Perpetrator Is The Care Provider Or Conference Employee
1. When the event director becomes aware of or receives a report of alleged abuse or neglect by a care provider or Conference employee, or the Care Provider is the known or suspected perpetrator, the event director or the person who received the disclosure or the one witnessing the abuse or neglect shall report the abuse or neglect as outlined in Section IV. B., in addition to notifying the corresponding District Superintendent.
- D. Reporting When The Alleged Perpetrator Is The Event Director
1. When anyone at a Conference-related function, activity or event becomes aware of or receives a report of alleged abuse or neglect by the event director, she/he shall follow the procedures outlined in Section IV. B.
- E. Reporting When The Alleged Perpetrator Is A Michigan Conference Pastor, Clergy or Diaconal Minister
1. If the suspected or alleged perpetrator is on the premises he or she is to be isolated from the program and have no contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
  2. The event director shall follow the procedures outlined in Section IV. B.
- F. Reporting When The Alleged Perpetrator Is Another Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult
1. If the suspected or alleged perpetrator is on premises he or she is to be isolated from the program and have no contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
  2. The event director shall follow the procedures outlined in Section IV. B.
  3. Unless instructed otherwise by CPS, APS, or the local enforcement agency, the event director may confidentially inform the contact person for the facilities hosting the event and the parents or guardians of involved parties.

**Section IV: Policy For Reporting Suspected Abuse, Bullying Or Neglect Involving Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults [Cont.]**

**G. Reporting All Other Suspected Cases of Abuse, Bullying Or Neglect**

1. In all other cases of suspected abuse, bullying or neglect, the event director and the Conference Director of Connectional Ministry or designee shall be immediately notified, and the reporting procedures referenced in Section IV.B or Section IV.H. shall be implemented.

**H. Section 380.1310b of The State of Michigan Law Addressing Bullying In Schools. Bullying is not a mandated reportable offense. However, it is behavior that must be reported to protect participants, care receivers, care givers and conference ministries. Reporting procedures follow:**

1. The event director will be notified of alleged bullying incidents.
2. The event director will determine what, if any, follow up steps are to be taken.
3. Together the event director, in consultation with the Conference Director of Connectional Ministry or designee, shall determine what notification, if any, is appropriate to give to the parent or legal guardian, or the victim and the perpetrator or others.
4. The event director will submit a written report of the incident and response to the Conference Director of Connectional Ministry, or designee, for information purposes.

**Section V. Follow-Up After Reports of Known Or Suspected Abuse, Bullying Or Neglect**

**A. General Goals And Objectives**

1. After reporting procedures have been completed, the following goals and objectives as prioritized below shall be addressed:
  - a. Protection for the alleged victim and other children, youth, and vulnerable adults from any continued exposure to abuse, bullying or neglect.
  - b. Care for the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
  - c. Respect and preservation of the legal rights of both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
  - d. Safeguarding the privacy of all parties involved.
  - e. Care for the spiritual and emotional well-being of the Conference.
  - f. Protection of the legal and financial interests of the Conference.

**B. Investigation**

1. In accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan, Conference workers (paid and volunteer) shall not conduct any investigation of reports or accusations of abuse or neglect.
2. Following the guidance of an attorney representing the Conference, the Conference shall cooperate in any proper investigations by the Children's Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, law enforcement agency, liability insurer and the parties involved.

**C. Additional Response Requirements**

When the alleged abuse or neglect involves (1) a Conference or District employee as the alleged perpetrator, (2) an abuse occurring on Conference property, or (3) a child, youth or vulnerable adult participating in any Conference-related function, activity, event or program, the following procedures shall be observed [For alleged abuse or neglect involving Michigan Conference United Methodist pastors or diaconal ministers see item 8 in this section]:

1. The status of the accused care provider (if applicable) shall be immediately suspended, and he or she shall not be permitted to continue providing any services for children, youth or vulnerable adults in any Conference-related function, activity, event or program. Authorization may be reinstated only after satisfactory completion of the screening qualifications set forth in this Policy.

**Section V. Follow-Up After Reports of Known Or Suspected Abuse, Bullying Or Neglect [Cont.]**

2. The Bishop or designee shall appoint a contact person to handle, oversee and/or represent the Conference in all communications with the Children's Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, law enforcement agencies, attorneys and investigators.
3. The Bishop or designee shall give written notice to the liability insurance carrier for the Conference.
4. If the alleged perpetrator is an employee of the Conference, the Conference Personnel Committee may discharge or place the employee on a leave of absence pending the completion of any investigations by the Children's Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, any responding law enforcement agencies and/or the completion on any legal proceedings. A leave of absence may be with or without pay, at the discretion of the Conference Personnel Committee. The employee may be reinstated after a leave of absence or discharge, only if approved by the MCPPIT with satisfactory completion of the screening qualifications set forth in this policy.
5. The Bishop or designee shall be the spokesperson solely authorized to respond to the media and general public. The designee may or may not be the same person appointed in item 2 of this section at the discretion of the Bishop. In all communications with media and the general public, the confidentiality of the victim and alleged perpetrator will be protected.
6. When appropriate the Bishop shall inform the Conference of the situation and how the Conference is responding to it. In all communications with the Conference, the confidentiality of the victim and alleged abuser will be protected.
7. Everyone involved in the response is strongly encouraged to document his/her activities and all communications regarding the suspected abuse or neglect.
8. When the alleged perpetrator is a Michigan Conference pastor, clergy person or diaconal minister, the Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy shall be implemented.

**C. Response To The Victim(s) And The Accused**

The MC PPIT recommends that appropriate sensitive care be expressed to the victim, and the accused, as well as their families. Although the practices of abuse, bullying, neglect, or the making of false accusations are not to be condoned, we will continue to acknowledge that God's grace is available to all.

**VI. Revisions**

- A. This policy shall be reviewed regularly. When the MCPPIT determines a change is appropriate or timely, the edits or change shall be presented to annual conference for action.
- B. The MCPPIT may edit any part of this policy at any time to be in compliance with applicable State of Michigan laws. Such edits shall be included in annual reports to annual conference.

**Conclusion**

As Christians, we are called to live according to the gospel of Jesus. All persons are created by God. God intends all persons to have worth and dignity in their relationships. We are a connected body, and when one part of this body is injured physically, emotionally or spiritually, the entire body is rendered less than God intended.

While the vast majority of those who work with our programs are of the highest moral and spiritual character, and are deeply committed to the needs of those to whom they minister, the reality is that the potential for abuse, bullying or neglect is present. The conference insurance policies require a consistent policy of screening, training, supervising and reporting. Further, we live in a litigious society which mandates the need for a conference-wide policy that is clear and consistently enforced.

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We understand that those with clear backgrounds and records might find this process burdensome or offensive. Yet if we are to take seriously our responsibility for children, youth and vulnerable adults, all applications for workers and volunteers must be treated in the same manner. This policy is an act of hospitality to those who may be at risk due to their age, size, and mental and/or physical capacities. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we endeavor to make our programs safe and secure for all who participate.

### *APPENDIX*

#### **Definitions of Terms**

1. **Abuse:** Abuse means harm or threatened harm to an individual's health or welfare through physical abuse, bullying, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, maltreatment, and/or sexual harassment. For the purposes of this policy, 'hazing' is considered a form of abuse.
2. **Adult:** means a person at least 18 years of age.
3. **Applicant:** a person who is applying to be an authorized care provider.
4. **Appropriate:** conduct that one could reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible by the child's parent or guardian.
5. **Bullying:** Intentional behavior that is meant to hurt and dominate another person or group of persons. It is characterized by an imbalance of power between the individual who bullies and the target. Bullying can be physical, verbal, emotional, social, spiritual, or sexual. Cyberbullying is the use of technology for the same purpose. This includes, and not limited to, the following:
  - a. Substantially interfering with their opportunities, benefits, or programs involving the Conference, its districts, or its agencies.
  - b. Adversely affecting their ability to participate in or to benefit from the programs or activities of the Conference, its districts, or its agencies by placing the individual in reasonable fear of physical harm or causing substantial emotional distress.
  - c. Having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on their physical or emotional health.
  - d. Causing substantial disruption in, or interference with, the orderly operation of the programs or activities of the Conference, its districts, or its agencies.
6. **Care Provider:** anyone (including employees, volunteers, lay and clergy) charged with the supervising of children, youth, and vulnerable adults during a Conference or District related function, event or activity. An authorized Care Provider has completed the Michigan Conference. Protection Policy requirements for all staff members (paid or volunteer) who will work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults at Conference and District ministry settings.
7. **Conference:** refers to the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church.
8. **DHS:** means the Department of Health and Human Services in the state of Michigan which guards the safety and welfare of children, youth and vulnerable adults.
9. **Event Director:** refers to the person overseeing all personnel and programming at a Conference or District related function, event, or activity.
10. **Event Site:** the location of a Conference or District related function, event, or activity. This does not exclusively apply to a United Methodist facility.
11. **Leader:** anyone responsible for overseeing a specific activity during a Conference or District function, or event.

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12. **Negligence:** failure to act as a reasonably prudent person would do in the same or similar circumstance. It can include failing to prevent an act of abuse or omission of an act that would ensure the health, welfare, and safety of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
  - a. Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care and protection from abuse.
  - b. Placing a child, youth, and vulnerable adult at an unreasonable risk to the health or welfare of a vulnerable adult, child or youth by failure of the parent, legal guardian or any other person responsible for the health or welfare of a child, youth, and vulnerable adult to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so, and has or should have knowledge of the risk (see State of Michigan Compiled Laws Act # 238, Public Acts of 1975, 22 Sections 722.622.2d).
  - c. Placing a child, youth, and vulnerable adult at an unreasonable risk to the health or welfare of a vulnerable adult, child or youth by failure of the parent, legal guardian or any other person responsible for the health or welfare of a child, youth, and vulnerable adult to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so, and has or should have knowledge of the risk (see State of Michigan Compiled Laws Act # 238, Public Acts of 1975, 22 Sections 722.622.2d).
13. **Parent or Guardian:** means any parent, step-parent, foster parent, grandparent or appointed guardian who has the general responsibility for the health, education or welfare of a child, youth, and vulnerable adult.
14. **Participants:** Participants are children, youth, or vulnerable adults, as well as all others, who are registered, enrolled, attending, or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by or under the auspices of the Michigan Conference.
15. **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is any non-accidental act or failure to act that results in bodily harm. Physical abuse may result from punishment to a person that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition.
16. **Protection Policy Committee:** Committee is the group elected by the Conference to oversee the implementation of this Policy.
17. **Sexual Abuse:** any conduct of a sexual nature which violates or attempts to violate the free choice and consent of another person, and includes any criminal sexual act defined by any federal, state, or municipal law, which includes but is not limited to rape, sexual molestation, sexual battery, aggravated sexual battery, lewd and lascivious behavior, enticement of a child, indecent solicitation of a child, aggravated indecent solicitation of a child, exhibiting sexually explicit material, or indecent liberties with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
18. **Sexual Misconduct:** the intentional touch of the intimate parts or the clothing covering the immediate area of the intimate parts of a child, youth or vulnerable adult.
19. **Sexual Exploitation:** means allowing, permitting or encouraging children, youth, and vulnerable adults to engage in prostitution or in the photographing, filming, creating electronic or computer generated images or any other form of depicting a child, youth, and vulnerable adult engaged in actual suggestive sexual conduct (see Michigan Compiled Laws Act # 238, Public Acts of 1975, Section 722.322.2 (1)).
20. **Sexual Explicit Material:** means any printed, electronic or computer generated matter, picture, sculpture or sound recording which can reasonably be construed as being produced for the purpose of stimulating sexual excitement, arousal or gratification.

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21. **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment is any sexually related behavior that is unwelcome, offensive, or which fails to respect the rights of others. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome advance, a request for a sexual favor, and any other verbal, nonverbal, or physical contact of a nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
22. **Shall, Should, May:** were carefully chosen terms used in this Policy, giving recognition to their different meanings. “Shall” is to be considered as mandatory, “may” is to be considered permissive, and “should” is to be considered a term of strong encouragement.
23. **Event Staff Persons:** authorized persons who provide leadership and/or care for events of the Michigan Conference and/or its districts whether they are volunteers or paid.
24. **Team:** the Michigan Conference Protection Policy Implementation Team (MCPPIIT).
25. **Volunteer:** any person receiving no salary or wages for providing any services, care, guidance, assistance or supervision for any children, youth, and vulnerable adults in a Conference or District related function, event or activity.
26. **Vulnerable Adult:** an individual who because of age, developmental disability, mental illness, or physical handicap requires supervision or personal care or lacks the personal and social skills required to live independently.