

Pecometh Camp & Retreat Ministries

Safe Sanctuary Policy for Summer Camp Staff and Volunteers

INTRODUCTION

It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and also to protect those, whether hired or volunteers, from false accusations. It is also our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise.

Pecometh follows the guidelines provided by Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church by Joy Thornburg Melton. This resource is used by the United Methodist Church to lay out the “best practices” for preventing child abuse in ministries that deal with youth and children. Staff and volunteers need to understand that following Safe Sanctuaries also protects camp staff and volunteers from false accusations of child abuse.

PURPOSE

Pecometh Camp & Retreat Ministries’ (PCRM) purpose for establishing the Safe Sanctuary Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth who enter these sacred grounds.

PCRM STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with young people, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to young people in Jesus’ name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator. Therefore, we require our staff and volunteers to adhere to these same standards trusting that, in doing so, we are doing everything possible to protect the well-being of children and youth. Living with Safe Sanctuaries often requires creativity and flexibility, and we make it a priority because the young people at our camp are precious.

PROCEDURES

1. Requirements of Staff and Volunteers

- A. All paid staff are required to submit to a background check and a Maryland CPS clearance request, as well as sign this document to certify compliance with this document.
- B. All volunteers that are working with children and youth are required to submit a Voluntary Disclosure statement, as well as sign this document to certify compliance with this document.
- C. Anyone having a criminal history of any of the following offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity with children or youth:
 - Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglectful
 - Sexual abuse or guilty 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, incest, rape, assaults involving adults, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the physical abuse of an adult with special needs.
- D. No person shall serve as in a staff or volunteer role if there is reason to believe that s/he may represent a potential threat of committing abuse or of violating this policy.

2. Supervision: The key concept for staff and volunteers to know is the “three person rule.”

1. Staying in groups of at least three is key. In other words, 1 camper and 1 staffer/volunteer should NEVER be alone together!
2. If a camper needs to go somewhere, they should always have two buddies with them.
3. Volunteers who have not submitted to a background check should never be alone with campers without the presence or near presence of a Pecometh staff member.
4. In situations where it would not be appropriate for another camper to be present, a second staffer should be present to maintain the three person rule.
5. If you must talk to a camper one-on-one, pull them off to the side while staying in plain view and within sight of other campers and staff.
6. Remember that campers should be reasonably supervised at all times.

3. Reporting

- A. Information of suspected abuse will be reported immediately to the Program Assistant, Camp Programs Coordinator, Director of Programs, or Executive Director, at which point PCRM protocol for mandatory reporting will be carried out.
- B. A PCRM Incident Report shall be completed. PCRM will notify its insurance company of the alleged abuse.

**I affirm that I, the undersigned, will comply with
Pecometh Camp & Retreat Ministries’ Safe Sanctuary Policy:**

Signature

Date Signed

Printed Name

Staff or Volunteer Role

Staff or Volunteer Dates