

**Ridge United Methodist Church – Munster, Indiana**  
**Child Protection Guidelines**  
*Revised March 3, 2009*

Ridge United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment to promote the religious and social development of children and youth, and will strive to prevent the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of minors. **In our quest to provide a healthy environment where children and youth are safe, and believing that the key to conducting safe programs lies in the quality of adult leadership, the following guidelines for volunteers and employees working with children or youth have been established.**

Child Protection Guidelines

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**Effective Timeline of Guidelines**

While it is the desire and intention of Ridge United Methodist Church that these guidelines be implemented and followed by members, employees and volunteers of the congregation as soon as possible following their approval, certain aspects of these guidelines will, out of necessity, require a period of transition from previous church practices, or additional actions or effort by members and employees for their effective and meaningful implementation. Full compliance with these guidelines by all church employees and volunteers working with children or youth will be required following the transition period, and effective January 1, 2009.

**Purpose**

- To promote a safe and secure environment for the children and youth of our faith community.
- To train and support volunteers to achieve that goal

- To ensure compliance by the church and its staff and volunteers with all related laws, rules and regulations.

### **Staff and Volunteer Guidelines**

The key to child abuse prevention in any organization is its staff – both employees and volunteers. Careful selection, adequate training and sufficient supervision reduce the likelihood of abuse or neglect. Our goal is to recruit the best people possible to work with children and youth.

### **All volunteers, church staff, nursery staff, Sunday School teachers and youth sponsors must:**

- Complete the church's Volunteer Information Form
- Acknowledge (with signature) receipt and understanding of these Guidelines
- Acknowledge (with signature) receipt and understanding of the church's code of Ethics (attached)
- Attend initial training program which will be offered by the church, and by attending a refresher course every three years of service.
- Give written permission to the church for it to conduct a background check through the Staff Parish Committee (This consent form will be retained for three years as required by the Staff Parish Committee.)
- Whether disclosed voluntarily or as a result of a Criminal Background Check or other background check, any of the following will automatically disqualify any applicant from employee or volunteer positions working with children and youth.
  1. History of alleged sexual abuse of children or voyeurism
  2. Conviction for any crime in which children were involved
  3. History of any violent or sexually exploitive behavior, whether involving children or another adult
  4. Any other charges or convictions for other crimes not listed above, may be waived in writing by the church's senior pastor following an investigation by that minister, taking into consideration:
    - The urgency of and circumstances surrounding the conduct in question
    - The age of the individual at the time of the offense
    - The probability that an individual will continue the type of behavior in question
    - Whether any recurrence of the conduct has occurred

The basis(es) upon which an individual may be denied a voluntary or paid position with the church need not be disclosed by the church to that individual.

- Any person with a dispute concerning information that appears on his/her criminal history record should first address the issue with the senior pastor. An investigation may, at the discretion of the senior pastor or that individual be conducted to determine the facts. This may involve submitting fingerprints to verify that the record is or is not the applicant's own criminal record. If the issue is so investigated and is not resolved to the satisfaction of the church and that individual, the issue may be referred by the church or the senior pastor to the Staff Parish Committee.
- Confidentiality / record storage: All records obtained as a result of the Criminal Background Check will be treated as confidential, limiting the number of people who

have access to applicant information to only those who have a need to know, i.e., Senior Pastor, Staff Parish Committee, legal council of the church, provided, that the church shall be entitled to disclose and use such information in its discretion in any legal proceeding between the church and such individual or if such information is part of the public record.

### **Expectations for Training for Child and Youth workers**

- Workers that have otherwise been cleared for hiring by the church or to volunteer for the church should attend an initial training session to be conducted by or for the church at its discretion, before beginning work with children or youth on behalf of the church. This training session will include a review of these guidelines and other information deemed relevant by the church. In the event that a worker is unable to attend a scheduled training session and that session cannot be made up at another time, he/she should meet individually with the program director.
- Approved workers should make every effort to attend additional training events or appropriate program workshops when offered.
- All workers will receive a copy of this Ridge United Methodist Church, Munster, IN Child Protection Guidelines and must acknowledge in writing that he or she attended the training session and received a copy of these guidelines.

### **Youth in Service Positions (YIS)**

Ridge United Methodist Church believes that all members should be involved in ministry, including youth. In this document, the acronym YIS will be used to refer to youth who are volunteering to work with or care for children and youth. Realizing that the church has a responsibility to protect all children, including youth serving in the capacity of YIS, the following guidelines are established:

All YIS applicants will be required to attend and complete a church provided, or approved Safety Training program, or have an American Red Cross Babysitting Certificate.

- The minimum age for YIS assisting an approved adult staff member or volunteer is 6<sup>th</sup> grade. (Exceptions may be made in the discretion of the senior pastor or Staff Parish Committee as parts of a particular program.)
- When assigned YIS responsibilities, youth will be supervised by an adult who has likewise met the requirements of these guidelines.
- If a child must be disciplined, the adult leader will have the responsibility for administering appropriate disciplinary measure. In no event shall those disciplinary measures include corporal punishment or other physical contact with, or confinement of that child, which could reasonably be expected to embarrass or demean that child or to place that child in harm's way.
- Adults should monitor leadership techniques used by YIS to ensure that they are appropriate and positive.
- Youth must be 18 (and meet adult staff/volunteer requirements to be assigned in a lead position working with children or youth. Exception: Youth under the age of 18, but no younger than 13, may serve as childcare providers for small group meetings where:
  1. Adults are meeting on church property; and with the consent of parents leaving their child in the care of YIS volunteers.
  2. YIS has attended the training session as proscribed above by the church
  3. A minimum of 2 YIS will serve together in such instances

## **Classroom and Event Guidelines**

### **Violation of Classroom and Event Guidelines should be reported to the Senior Pastor.**

- In order to plan age appropriate activities, Ridge United Methodist Church will place children according to their age. (There is room for some flexibility on an individual basis where pre-school children are concerned.)
- At least one approved worker should be present with children at all times.
- As often as practical, two adults will be assigned to supervise or lead all activities involving children and youth.
- All events will be open door whenever possible. This means that workers, parents, and church members have a right to observe any activity if they are able to do so without disrupting the activity.
- Periodic “spot checks” will be made by a pastor, education director, education chairperson or recognized leader of the church where practical. This method will be in general use but especially if it is necessary to have only one adult present with a group.
- If private conversation is required, the youth and adult may move out of earshot of others, but not out of sight.
- Adult leaders are expected to model Christian behavior.
- Adult leaders will not use abusive language
- Actions by adult leaders should be non-threatening, safe, gentle, kind, and should not make child/youth uncomfortable.
- Topical discussions should be appropriate to curriculum selected or approved by the church and to the setting and age of the children/youth.
- Adult leaders will respect the privacy of children and youth (particularly in overnight situations where changing clothes and showering are necessary). The reverse should also be true.
- At least two adults will supervise overnight activities. If the participants are male and female, then male and female chaperons must be present. If these conditions cannot be met, then the event should be postponed. It is never appropriate for an adult chaperon who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Males and females attending events must not share the same sleeping quarters and should have separate access to bathroom facilities. Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry.

## **Information and Authorization**

An authorization form must be on file for each child or youth. Forms will include the following :

- Permission to participate in events on and away from church property
- Transportation release
- Medical information and release
- Photo release
- The original copy will remain in the church office at all times

Forms will be reviewed each June and will be included in “New Member Packets”.

### **Guidelines for Drivers Transporting Children or Youth**

All individuals who serve as an approved driver for children or youth must provide documentation or proof of:

- Being 21 years old or older, being currently licensed to operate an automobile and having been licensed to operate an automobile for at least one year.
- Meeting the minimum state required liability insurance coverage.
- The individual's driver's license and insurance card (copy will be kept on file).
- No convictions or charges during the preceding three years for driving under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance or committing reckless driving.
- Using a safe, reliable and licensed vehicle.
- Shall use child restraint seats when transporting any children (as prescribed by law).

Note: Drivers are to obey all traffic laws and are to make every reasonable effort to assure the safety of their passengers, including requiring that seat belts be worn by every passenger. Indiana law requires that every minor wear a seat belt. Each occupant will be expected to wear the seatbelt provided. Every reasonable effort will be made to insure that an approved adult driver is the provider of transportation for official church events, departing from the church. Drivers must be given a copy of the Code of Ethics and sign an acknowledgement that they have read it and will comply.

### **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

Under laws of the State of Indiana, suspected child abuse is required to be reported. The church requires all youth and child workers and members of the congregation to report suspected abuse to the proper legal authorities as soon as suspected. Additionally, all members should also notify the senior pastor. All employees are required to notify the senior pastor. The senior pastor may assist any employee, member or volunteer in reporting suspected child abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

- All cases of suspected child abuse must be reported to the appropriate legal authorities.
- Reports of suspected child abuse that may have occurred inside the church or on a church sponsored event are to be made known as soon as possible.
- If a staff or a volunteer is reported, that person will no longer be considered an approved worker until the investigation has been concluded, and the senior pastor advises the director of the program the individual may continue as an approved worker.
- Reports of abuse must never be disclosed to anyone other than the perpetrators or the authorities.

**A Word About Appropriate Affectionate Behavior in the Christian Community:**

It is widely known that “good touching” is important to life. Numerous studies have shown the importance of holding and touching for infants to thrive. Likewise, children do not grow and thrive without the “good touches” of others. We have many examples in scripture where Jesus touched people to heal and to comfort them. The Christian community has a rich heritage of sharing a loving hug, an arm around the shoulder or a squeeze of the hand to say, “You are loved...I care about you”.

With good touching, the child feels as if someone has given to them or has shared with them rather than taken from them. Children should not be forced to kiss someone they do not wish to kiss. Nor do all children wish to be hugged by persons outside of their family. It is always wise to ask, “May I give you a hug?” By asking this question, the child is given permission to refuse if he/she is uncomfortable.

It is important in our concern about child sexual abuse that the importance of good touching is not lost. We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children. The healing, comforting and affirming aspects of good touch should be emphasized.

## **Ridge United Methodist Church Code of Ethics for Working with Children or Youth**

Any person working with the children or youth of the church is a role model. While acting in this capacity the following Code of Ethics will apply.

1. Smoking or using tobacco products in the presence of children or youth is prohibited
2. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances will not be tolerated.
3. Volunteers and/or employees shall not mistreat children or youth including, but not limited to:
  - Physical: strike, spank, shake, slap
  - Verbal/mental: humiliate, degrade, threaten, or
  - Sexual abuse: including inappropriate touching and exposure
4. Volunteers and/ or employees must treat children and youth of all races, religions, and cultures with respect and dignity.
5. Volunteers and/or employees must use positive techniques of guidance, including positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than comparison or criticism.
6. Volunteers and/or employees shall not tolerate profanity in the presence of children or youth.
7. Volunteers and/or employees will refrain from inappropriate display of affection toward others in the presence of children, parents and other employees.
8. Volunteers and/or staff must be free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's or youth's health, including, but not limited to contagious diseases.
9. Volunteers and/or employees will portray a positive role model for youth and children by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience and maturity.
10. Volunteers and/or employees will be expected to act and react with Christian love and understanding in all situations.
11. Volunteers and/or employees will be expected to safeguard and hold confidential any information gained through administrative duties involving supervision of children, youth, volunteers and/or any other information identified as being confidential.
12. Volunteers and/or employees will do everything in their power to avoid being put in a situation where they are alone with a child or youth other than their own.
13. Indiana state law requires that all citizens report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child or a youth to age 18 to the Indiana Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, 1-800-800-5556.



## **HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, you should call the Indiana Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, 1-800-800-5556 for the Child Protective Services (CPS) agency or the CPS agency in the state in which the abuse occurred. As you identify the appropriate agency for making a report, remember the following:

- Not every state has a toll free hotline, or the hotline may not operate on a 24 hour basis.
- If a toll free (800 or 888) number is available, it may be accessible only from within that state.
- Federal agencies have no authority to intervene in individual child abuse and neglect cases. Each state has jurisdiction over these matters, and has specific laws and procedures for reporting and investigating. In some states, all citizens are mandated reporters by state law and must report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

If you need to report suspected abuse in a state other than your own, please call

**Childhelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline**  
**1-800-4-A-CHILD**  
**(1-800-422-4453)**

Childhelp USA is a non-profit agency which can provide reporting numbers, and has Hotline counselors who can provide referrals.

### **NOTE: Legal Background**

Any individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect must make a report. In agencies in which there are established reporting protocols, the report may be made to the individual in charge or another designated agent, who also becomes responsible to report or cause a report to be made. This does not relieve individuals who make a report to another staff person of their own obligation to report directly to child protection services or law enforcement unless a report has already been made by the agency liaison. Anonymous reports are accepted. Failure to make a report can be a Class B misdemeanor.

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADDRESSING IMPROPER CONDUCT**

Any suspicion, observation or experience of any conduct deemed improper should immediately be reported to the senior pastor or highest authority present for investigation and evaluation.

**Volunteer information Form**  
**RIDGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**Children's and Youth Ministry Application**

This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position involving supervision, custody or care of children or youth. This information is used by Ridge United Methodist Church to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth that participate in our ministries and programs. All Workers will receive specific training on the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures of Ridge United Methodist Church.

Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last                                      First                                      Middle

List any name(s) that you have used in the last ten years. Include dates of use.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last                                      First                                      Middle                                      Dates of use

Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address                                      City                                      State                                      Zip Code

List previous address, if less than five years at present address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address                                      City                                      State                                      Zip Code

Telephone Number:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home                                      Work                                      Other

E-Mail Address

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_ List license number and state of issue \_\_\_\_\_

In what type of ministry are you interested? Please include age(s) of children or youth you would like to work with.

\_\_\_\_\_

What are your gifts, callings, training, or other factors that have prepared you for work with children and/or youth?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List three people who know you well who can be contacted as a reference. References can include people who know your gifts and talents with children and youth, past or present coworkers, past or present church members, and/or people who have known you for an extended period of time. References will only be contacted if there are questions.

Name of Reference	Telephone	Years Known	Relationship
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

All applicants must agree to obey the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures of Ridge United Methodist Church. All answers on this form will be treated in the strictest confidence. Any applicant that has ever been convicted of child sexual abuse, physical abuse, or domestic violence should not volunteer service in any church sponsored program or ministry for children or youth.

- Y**    **N**    Have you ever been convicted of, or plead guilty to, a crime?
- Y**    **N**    Have you ever been reported to a social service agency, law enforcement authority child abuse registry, or similar organization regarding abuse or misconduct involving children less than 18 years of age?
- Y**    **N**    Have you ever been subjected to expulsion, reprimand, or other discipline by a church, denomination, or other organization?
- Y**    **N**    Is there any circumstance in your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of minors?
- Y**    **N**    Were you abused as a child?  
(You may leave this answer blank and discuss your answer in confidence with a pastor. Any person who is a survivor of childhood sexual or physical abuse needs the love and acceptance of the church family.

Answering yes to this question does not mean you are not welcome as a worker with children or youth.)

I state that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand and agree that if any information is not true and accurate, Ridge United Methodist Church may determine that I am no longer qualified to be associated with volunteering for its programs involving with children and youth.

I authorize any references, listed on this application to give Ridge United Methodist Church any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with children and youth.

I agree to be bound by the Child Protection Guidelines and The Code of Ethics of Ridge United Methodist Church.

I understand that any violation of these guidelines may be grounds for dismissal as an employee or volunteer working with children or youth.

I further state that I sign this release as my own free act.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## Permission to Obtain a Background Check

*(This form authorizes the church to obtain background information and must be completed by the applicant. The church must keep this completed form on file for at least two years after requesting a background check.)*

I, the undersigned applicant (also known as “consumer”), authorize Ridge United Methodist Church to procure background information (also known as a “consumer report and/or investigative consumer report”) about me. This report may include my driving history, including any traffic citations; a social security number verification; present and former addresses; criminal and civil history/records; and the state sex offender records.

I understand that I am entitled to a complete copy of any background information report of which I am the subject upon my request to Ridge United Methodist Church, if such is made within a reasonable time from the date it was produced. I also understand that I may receive a written summary of my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Identifying Information for Background Information Agency (also known as “Consumer Reporting Agency”)

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First
Middle
Last

Other Names Used (alias, maiden, nickname): \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street /P. O. Box
City
State
Zip Code
County
Dates

Former Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street /P. O. Box
City
State
Zip Code
County
Dates

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver’s License Number: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

**Ridge United Methodist Church**  
**Munster, IN**  
Information and Authorization Form  
For Children and Youth

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Parent (s) / Guardian (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

(other) \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned parent or legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent to his or her full participation in the activities of Ridge United Methodist Church, Munster, IN whether on church property or away. I understand that accidents do happen and hereby release Ridge United Methodist Church, Munster, IN and its pastors, youth leaders and other staff members, agents or representatives from any liability, or other legal or financial responsibility for supervision of the above-named child, or for any such injury or damage suffered by that child or his or her parents, guardians or legal representatives by reason of such supervision or lack of supervision, or otherwise by reason of that child's participation in any event conducted or sponsored by that church, in each case absent the gross negligence or willful misconduct of that church. In the event of any such accident or other situation in which the above-named child may require emergency medical or dental care, I hereby authorize an adult representative of Ridge United Methodist Church, Munster, IN, in my absence, to seek out and consent to any necessary medical or dental care for the above-named child, when neither me nor my assignee can be contacted after a reasonable attempt to do so. I understand that reasonable effort will be made to contact me before such action. I assume financial responsibility for such emergency care.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent / Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Persons to contact in case of an emergency:

Name	Relation to child	Home Phone #	Other #
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Physician: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Medical / Hospital Insurance Carrier \_\_\_\_\_  
 Policy / Group Number \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies:    ( ) YES    ( ) NO  
 If yes, list allergies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of last tetanus shot \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are activities restricted in any way?        ( ) YES    ( ) NO  
 If yes, please explain

\_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs – any other information that will help us to better serve your child:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Transportation Release**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby give permission for the above-named child to ride with an approved adult driver.                    ( ) YES    ( ) NO

Ridge United Methodist Church, Munster, IN will ensure that an approved adult driver is the provider of transportation for official church events, departing from the church. Youth leaving the church property for impromptu gatherings or events, transportation and youth drivers and riders is between the parents of the involved youth and/or the youth themselves.

Signature of Parent / Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Photo Release for Minors**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned parent / guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent that any audio recordings, videotapes and/or photographs of above-named child may be used by Ridge United Methodist Church, Munster, IN, in what ever way they desire, including newspaper, television and website; furthermore, I hereby consent that such photographs, films and recordings, and the negatives or tapes from which they are made shall be the property of that church, and it shall have the right to sell, duplicate, reproduce and make other uses of such photographs, films, tapes negatives, and or recordings as it may desire free and clear of any claim on the part of that child whatsoever on my part.

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Add a form following training to document training and receipt of Child Protection Guidelines