

# **First Episcopal District AME Church Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct**

## **1. Introduction**

The First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is committed to the protection, dignity, and well-being of all children and youth under our care. This policy outlines our standards for safeguarding practices and expected conduct for employees, volunteers, and chaperones participating in church-sanctioned events.

## **2. Employee and Volunteer Screening and Selection**

All individuals serving in roles involving direct interaction with children and youth must complete a comprehensive screening process, which includes:

- Criminal background checks (via Presiding Elder district verification)
- Personal and professional reference checks
- In-person interviews (facilitated by the local church)

## **3. Guidelines for Adult/Child and Youth-to-Youth Interactions**

- Adult/Child Ratios: Maintain supervision ratios that minimize one-on-one interactions.
- No One-on-One Contact: Adults must not be alone with a child in private settings (e.g., vehicles, hotel rooms, secluded areas).
- Code of Conduct: Clearly defines appropriate, cautious, and prohibited interactions between adults and minors.
- External Contact Prohibited: Adults may not engage with youth outside of church-sanctioned activities.
- Violence and Bullying Prevention: Youth-on-youth violence, harassment, or bullying must be addressed immediately.
- Observable Interactions: When necessary, one-on-one interactions must occur in spaces that are visible or easily interruptible.
- Supervision Requirements: Youth must be properly supervised at all times, especially in isolated or private spaces.
- Visitor Monitoring: Non-affiliated adults must wear identification badges and remain in approved areas only.

- Inappropriate Behavior Response: All violations, allegations, or suspicions of inappropriate behavior, including sexual abuse, will be addressed in accordance with established procedures.
- Mandatory Reporting: Allegations of child sexual abuse must be reported to law enforcement or child protection services in compliance with state and local laws.
- Caregiver Communication: Parents or guardians will be promptly informed of any allegations involving their children.
- Policy Violations: Disciplinary action, up to and including removal from service, will be taken for violations.
- Training: All staff, volunteers, youth, and caregivers must attend First District Responsible Leadership Training for Youth Supervision on reporting and responding to concerns.

#### **4. Volunteer Code of Conduct**

##### **I will:**

- Treat all individuals with respect, patience, courtesy, and dignity.
- Avoid being alone with a minor whenever possible; ensure interactions are visible and interruptible.
- Use positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than criticism or comparison.
- Refuse expensive or inappropriate gifts from youth without prior administrative and parental approval.
- Immediately report any suspected abuse to both administrators and appropriate legal authorities.
- Fully cooperate with investigations related to suspected abuse or misconduct.

##### **I will not:**

- Smoke, use tobacco, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances while volunteering.
- Endanger the health or safety of any youth.
- Engage in physical punishment or emotional abuse, including slapping, shaking, humiliating, or degrading behavior.
- Participate in or allow any form of sexual misconduct.
- Use profanity in the presence of minors.
- Privately communicate with minors via text, email, or social media without including a parent or church representative.

## **5. Transportation Policy**

- Approved Drivers Only: All drivers must be at least 21 years old, background checked, and approved by the organization.
- Two-Adult Rule: A single adult may not transport a minor alone.
- Seat Belt Usage: All passengers must wear seat belts, and appropriate child safety restraints must be used.

## **6. Behavioral Expectations**

All participants (adults and youth) are expected to:

- Conduct themselves with integrity, kindness, and mutual respect.
- Limit physical contact to appropriate forms (e.g., side hugs, high-fives).
- Avoid all forms of bullying, harassment, intimidation, or violence.
- Refrain from using profanity, alcohol, tobacco, vaping devices, illegal drugs, or engaging in sexualized behavior.
- Participate respectfully in learning, worship, and fellowship activities.

## **7. Overnight Stays and Lodging**

- Youth must be assigned to gender-specific accommodations.
- Adults may not share sleeping quarters with minors unless they are the child's parent or legal guardian.
- Authorized chaperones must conduct nightly curfews and regular room checks.

## **8. Social Media and Technology Use**

- Photography and Video: Parental consent is required for any media involving minors.
- Digital Communication: Private digital messaging between adults and minors is prohibited outside of sanctioned platforms.
- Device Monitoring: Conference leadership reserves the right to monitor device usage as necessary for safety.

## **9. Medical and Emergency Preparedness**

- Medical Forms: Required for all youth, including allergy information, medications, and emergency contacts.
- First Aid: Staffed by CPR and First Aid certified personnel.
- Emergency Procedures: Clearly posted protocols for fire, weather, and security emergencies will be reviewed and practiced regularly.

## **10. Sick Policy**

To protect the health and safety of all participants:

- Any attendee with a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher—or associated symptoms—will be isolated and asked to return home.
- Emergent medical issues must be reported immediately to the Health Commission.
- All attendees are required to bring health insurance cards.
- Onsite Health Commission staff will provide minor first aid and triage support.

## **11. Incident Reporting**

- Mandatory Reporting: Staff and volunteers must report suspected abuse immediately to:
  - Local child protection authorities
  - Conference Safeguarding Coordinator
  - Episcopal District Christian Education Director
- Incident Documentation: All incidents must be documented within 24 hours.
- Protection for Reporters: No retaliation will be tolerated against individuals who report in good faith.

## **12. Policy Enforcement**

Consequences for policy violations may include:

- Immediate removal from the event
- Notification of legal authorities, where applicable
- Disqualification from future volunteer roles
- Annual policy review and revision by Episcopal leadership

## **Youth Participant Behavior Covenant**

As a youth participant in the First Episcopal District Congress, I recognize that I am a representative of my church, family, and faith community. I agree to conduct myself in a manner that reflects Christian values, promotes safety and respect, and upholds the mission of this event.

By signing this covenant, I commit to the following:

### **I will:**

- Show respect to all leaders, chaperones, peers, and facility staff.
- Follow all instructions given by adult leaders and abide by the conference schedule.
- Participate fully in all workshops, worship services, and group activities.
- Treat others with kindness, dignity, and inclusion.
- Remain in designated areas unless granted permission to leave.
- Dress modestly and appropriately for all activities.
- Immediately report any unsafe behavior, bullying, or harassment to an adult leader.

### **I will not:**

- Use alcohol, tobacco, vaping devices, or illegal drugs.
- Possess weapons or items that could be used to harm others.
- Engage in any romantic, sexual, or inappropriate physical behavior.
- Use profanity, racial slurs, or hateful speech.
- Leave the premises or event areas without permission.
- Damage or deface property belonging to the church, facility, or other individuals.

### **Understanding and Consequences:**

I understand that failure to uphold this covenant may result in disciplinary action, including loss of privileges, parental notification, or early dismissal from the Congress at my family's expense.

Youth Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### **15. Acknowledgment of Policy**

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct of the First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

By signing below, I agree to:

- Abide by all policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the safeguarding policy, including behavioral guidelines, transportation rules, and reporting obligations.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries with all minors and serve as a role model in alignment with the Christian values of the AME Church.
- Immediately report any observed or suspected incidents of misconduct, abuse, or policy violations to the designated authorities.
- Submit to all screening and background check requirements as a condition of my service.
- Participate in required training as communicated by the conference leadership or local church representatives.

I understand that failure to comply with the policy may result in disciplinary action, including removal from my role and notification of appropriate authorities, if applicable.

Volunteer/Chaperone Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Conference/Regional Official (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Congress/Youth Event Name: Christian Education Congress/ASPIRE  
Location: DoubleTree Hilton Cherry Hill, NJ  
Date(s): July 14-17, 2025

## **Youth Participant Permission Information**

### **Participant Information**

- Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_
- Church Name & Location: \_\_\_\_\_
- Parent/Guardian Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### **Medical Information**

- Allergies (food, medication, etc.):
- Medications (name/dosage/schedule):
- Medical Conditions or Concerns:
- Insurance Provider: \_\_\_\_\_
- Policy/Group Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Emergency Contact**

- Primary Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Relationship to Participant: \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone Number (day): \_\_\_\_\_ (evening): \_\_\_\_\_

## Parental/Guardian Consent

I hereby grant permission for my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in the above-named event. I understand that my child will be under the supervision of approved adult leaders and chaperones.

I authorize the adult leaders to administer basic first aid or seek medical treatment for my child in case of emergency. I understand that all reasonable safety precautions will be taken and that the First Episcopal District AME Church, its staff, volunteers, and affiliates are not liable for any injuries or losses that may occur during this event.

## Photography/Videography Consent

I also grant permission for photographs or videos of my child to be taken during the event for use in church communications or promotional materials (please check one):

- Yes
- No

## Behavior Covenant Agreement

I have read and reviewed the Youth Participant Behavior Covenant with my child. We both understand and accept the behavioral expectations for participation.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Youth Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail signed document to: [office@fedamec.org](mailto:office@fedamec.org)