

**Guidelines on Local Church Adult Chaperones with
Children/Youth/At-Risk Adults Attending
Events Sponsored by Boards/Agencies of
The Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church**

The Boards/Agencies of the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church suggest the following guidelines to direct ALL participating local churches in Conference events:

Each participating group from each local church should ensure that:

- 1) No adult chaperone has been convicted of any illegal conduct involving a minor. It is recommended that each church obtain a national criminal background check on all adult chaperones.
- 2) All adult chaperones have been a member or active constituent of The United Methodist Church for at least six months prior to serving as a chaperone.
- 3) Adults are a minimum of 21 years of age when chaperoning high school students and a minimum of 18 years of age when chaperoning middle school students or younger.
- 4) Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 21 be allowed to drive children/youth/at-risk adults. Furthermore, churches should be aware of and abide by their own individual church insurance policies (whereas some policies require a minimum driving age of 25 and a maximum driving age of 70).
- 5) When transporting participants to off-site activities, no automobile will contain only one adult (driver) and one child/youth/at-risk adult. Automobiles will contain either one driver and two or more participants or two adults and any number of children (within the seat belt limitations of the vehicle, whereas seatbelts are ALWAYS required). Use of child safety seats which meet federal standards is required for children under 6 years of age. Drivers and passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines.
- 6) A minimum of two adults per group are present as chaperones throughout any event. A minimum of TWO males and TWO females are required for groups of mixed gender wherever adults WILL be in same sleeping quarters as participants for overnight events. A minimum of one male and one female adult are required for groups of mixed gender where adults will NOT be in same sleeping quarters as participants. The following ratios will apply for each group beyond the initial two-adult rule:
 - One adult to three children, zero to twelve months of age.
 - One adult to four children, ages twelve to twenty-four months
 - One adult to six children, ages twenty-four months to thirty-six months

- One adult to eight children/youth/at-risk adults ages three to eighteen years. The specific needs of individual children, youth, or at-risk adults may require a change to these guidelines.
- 7) Any one-on-one mentoring or consultation between an adult chaperone and a child/youth/at-risk adult is conducted in a room or area that is in plain view of others.
- 8) Adult chaperones receive orientation on the policies and procedures of their local church related to reducing the risk of abuse and the reporting of any such incident.
- 9) All participants have completed a signed Medical Release form and Covenant of Conduct for the event (Churches will be able to use their own forms for this purpose, but if the church does not have its own forms it will be required to have each participant complete and sign the Medical Release and Covenant of Conduct forms of the sponsoring Board/Agency of the event of the Virginia Conference). Example forms are attached at end of document.
- 10) The parents and legal guardians of each participant have been informed of the scope and nature of the event or program and its related activities.

Questions about these guidelines should be directed to the Conference program staff member working with the Board/Agency. Contact information for that individual:

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