

Safer Sanctuaries: Protecting Children, Youth & Vulnerable Adults

We are committed to a **nurturing, safe**, and **secure** environment for all.
Abuse, neglect, and exploitation are **never** tolerated.



Two-Adult Rule

- At least **2 Approved Adult Leaders** at all activities with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- The 2 adults must be **unrelated** (not related by birth or marriage).
- Adults must be **at least 5 years older** than the children/youth they supervise.
- If the group splits, **each subgroup** must still have **2 adults**.
- Youth (under 18) **never count** as one of the 2 adults.

Background Checks

- **All staff and volunteers** working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must pass a **background check**.
- No one may serve until their background check is **completed and cleared** of disqualifying offenses.
- Background checks are **repeated at least every 2 years** for ongoing or returning volunteers.

Annual Training

- All staff and volunteers must complete **annual training** on:
 - The Safer Sanctuaries Policy
 - Recognizing and responding to abuse/heglect
 - Safe supervision standards (Two-Adult Rule, ratios, etc.)
- **No one serves** with children, youth, or vulnerable adults until they complete required training.



Safe Supervision & Events

- **Approved Adult Leaders** supervise all events with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Leaders should be **gender-balanced** when possible (similar to the group participating).
- **Overnight events:**
 - Leaders must be **same gender** as those they supervise.
 - Adults **never share a bed** with a child or youth.



Transportation Safety

- Each vehicle should have **at least 2 adults**, unless everyone in the vehicle is related.
- **Drivers must:**
 - Be **21+** and have a **clean driving record** (checked)
 - **Not use cell phones** while driving
 - Never use alcohol, illegal drugs, or impairing substances when driving
- **Seatbelts for everyone** and **child safety seats** as required by law for under 8.



Digital Safety

- **Parent/caregiver permission** is required before digital communication with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Adults must keep communication **professional** and **retain records**.
- **No posting photos/videos** of minors or vulnerable adults online **without written permission**.
- Online gatherings follow the **Two-Adult Rule** or are **recorded and saved** if 2 adults can't be present.



Reporting

- **Clergy are mandatory reporters** under Virginia law.
- **Anyone** who suspects abuse **may report**.
- If you **see or suspect abuse**, protect the person and **notify appropriate leaders** and/or **Child/Adult Protective Services** right away.

NOTE: This is meant to serve as a **quick summary** only and does not replace the full policy.
The complete Safer Sanctuaries Policy must be **read, understood, and fully followed**.

Full policy available at: doc.vaumc.org/Children/ApprovedProtectionPolicy2024Sept19a.pdf