



# Diocesan Child Protection Sample Policy

The Anglican Church in North America



## Introduction to the ACNA Child Protection Sample Policy

Dear ACNA Dioceses,

On the following pages you will find a sample policy to use in crafting your diocesan child protection policy. A committee was commissioned to build this sample policy from common practices and legal expertise from across our province to serve as a starting point for conversation within your diocese.

This is, however, merely a sample policy. It must be modified to fit your needs; this is why it is offered in Word format. It is provided to model common practices, but it is understood that you must modify it following your own state guidelines, with your chancellor's approval, and according to your specific organizational needs. Therefore, we suggest:

- Areas most likely to require edit are listed in brackets. These brackets are placeholders to communicate the areas you have not yet edited. When you have edited that section, remove the brackets, along with any of our direct notes to you. Recognize this policy will be distributed to your churches, therefore, it should reflect your communication to them, not ours to you. It may be that you keep the majority of the language as is, which is fine. Remove the brackets when you have completed that section (and remove this introductory letter from the ACNA Committee). You may also choose to edit photos to reflect ministry specific to your diocese.
- Remember that everything mandated must be inspected. It is preferable, perhaps, to utilize language that reflects "the congregation should" and "the diocese recommends," rather than "the congregation must," or "the diocese requires," for this reason. This policy, when edited, should be reviewed by your legal counsel.
- Each diocese should have a team dedicated to crafting this policy, reviewing it, and ensuring compliance. It should not fall to one person.
- Admittedly, this document is long. We felt it best to give you all the information you might need. But we also provided a user-friendly abbreviated diocesan policy outline (section A.11) that is five pages in length for those that lead diocesan/church policy trainings. It is this abbreviated outline that we recommend you use in your trainings.
- Diocesan/church websites should be designed to include links to supporting resources and state and local guidelines.
- This sample policy is intended to be used with a Train-the-Trainer model, where the diocese has a lead trainer who holds training for a representative trainer from each church (see G.2).
- One additional consideration is an inclusion of adult sexual misconduct. Some dioceses have already experienced adult sexual misconduct (such as clergy sex addiction or addiction to pornography, clergy affairs, clergy sexual harassment, employee harassment, etc.). It is wise to either add a section, or to create an additional policy. Consider, also, how your required training for clergy and employees might incorporate these important topics.

Our prayers are with you as you continue in this good work for His glory,

The ACNA Child Protection Committee:

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## A: INTRODUCTION

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### A.1 Welcome from the Bishop

[The opening of the manual should include a letter from the Bishop setting the tone for the rest of the manual. In this section, the Bishop should begin with a biblical perspective, including grounding Scriptures regarding caring for the vulnerable, our witness to the world, caring for children, abiding in Christ, etc. It may also be helpful to close the biblical perspective with the importance of confession and redemption.

Sexual abuse can trigger a number of responses in people. It may help to include a section that demonstrates the Diocese understands this concern is prevalent and may be difficult for many to face, but that it is also necessary to bring it into the light.

The Bishop may choose to also include a theological statement regarding human sexuality. The catechism, our baptismal covenant, and the 2021 statement from the College of Bishops may be useful for this section.

A word about expectations on clergy should be included in the manual, and the Bishop's letter *may* be the best location for this point. Clergy are to lead the way, making the topic of protection of children a priority. Clergy are to set up accountability measures within their churches that enable the staff/volunteers/vestry to hold each other accountable as well as to hold the clergy accountable. Open communication without fear is imperative.

The letter from the Bishop should include a final statement regarding pastoral care for the people in the diocese. This section outlines the responsibility upon both the clergy and the church to protect and care for the people to the glory of God. Recognizing this is the primary charge, the justification for this policy is already part of their very calling.

The tone should remain one of care and support, without downgrading the severity of this topic.]

## **A.2 Principle of Subsidiarity**

The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) has as a founding philosophy the Principle of Subsidiarity. This principle seeks to place the greatest degree of ministry leadership, energy, and responsibilities to the most local level. In response to a request from the ACNA Executive committee (August 2018), a sub-committee of leaders and practitioners was formed to bring to the consideration of the Province, a Child Safety Sample document (CSS) as well as a resource library. In addition, some suggested resources were requested for the benefit of each diocese (and consequently, each diocese's congregations, clergy, and lay leaders) to use as they deem them helpful in their efforts to create and foster a safe ministry environment for children and teenagers.

This Child Safety Committee has finalized this sample plan which brings together elements of the many child protection plans that they reviewed and which can be considered as a helpful 'starting point' for each diocesan policy as well as a sample that provides space for necessary variance of implementation. This sample, our resource library, and the other ministry resources are all available on our [Provincial website](#).

This sample is not a suggested or required policy, as we do not seek (and do not have the canonical and legal authority) to mandate such systems for each diocese. But we do commend this sample for thoughtful and serious consideration as it represents the thoughts and amalgamations of some excellent practices already in use across our province.

*Resolved June 14, 2021 The ACNA Executive Committee*



### A.3 Biblical Foundation for Policy

[Your diocese] accepts with deep gratitude and seriousness the trust given us by God to nurture and care for his people, especially those who are most vulnerable and in need of protection. This is essential when caring for our children and youth.

Current statistics regarding child abuse are alarming. The effects of such abuse can damage children at the core of who they are, and often follow them into adulthood. Abused children are children at risk. They often become adults who suffer from low self-esteem, who are unable to form and keep healthy relationships, and who struggle to maintain healthy boundaries. As the Church, we declare that we will work together to see that the proper love and care are extended to the children entrusted to us.

Jesus teaches explicitly that children are of much value in Kingdom terms, and that to cause one to sin has the gravest of consequences. Caring for our children and youth is a sacred trust.

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:1-6 ESV)*

Mark, in his Gospel account, adds the dimension of Jesus taking the children in his arms and blessing them. (Mark 10:16)

As Christian adults, we are called to establish a secure environment where the perfect love of God works to cast out all fear (1 John 4:18) and the nurture and love of God are made known to all, and in particular to our children and youth. In this way we can fulfill the biblical mandate to train up our children in the way they should go. (Proverbs 22:6)

### A.4 Purpose of the Policy

This document provides guidance, information, instruction, and common practices to direct and inform the clergy and laity in the churches in [your diocese] as you craft your child protection policies. It also serves as a reference manual to inform your decisions and methods with regard to safeguarding the youth and children entrusted to you, providing minimum standards of care and vigilance.

### A.5 The Diocesan Committee to Protect Children

The Bishop in consultation with the [Standing Committee, Joint Leadership, etc.] appoints Child Protection Committee members. The Committee is responsible for the creation and promulgation of the Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children, under the authority and

oversight of the **[Standing Committee, Joint Leadership, etc.]** and the Bishop in accordance with the canons of the diocese.

From time to time, but not less than **[annually, biannually]**, the committee will review and, if necessary, revise the policy in light of practical experiences, medical and other scholarly research, legal developments, and other relevant considerations.

It is also recommended that each diocese and or church establish a Risk Management Committee (See Section H, page xv).

## **A.6 Responsibility for this Policy**

The rector, rather than the diocese or the Anglican Church in North America, has overall responsibility for the administration of this policy within the parish, mission, or church plant he/she leads and for providing all reports requested by the diocese. In the absence of a rector, the **[priest-in-charge, lay leader, or the senior warden]** will be responsible. Duties may be delegated, except in those areas specifically delineating action by the rector.



## **A.7 Pastoral Care of Children**

We are also committed to providing pastoral care to all affected by and involved with instances of child abuse. Pastoral care grows out of Christ-centered relationships and proceeds with an awareness of the spiritual and emotional needs of both the individual and the community. It may include providing guidance, support, consolation, and even confrontation to minister to each individual as we believe God desires.

*Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. (BCP, #66)*



## A.8 Diocesan Policy on Child Abuse

The diocese will not tolerate any form of child abuse involving our clergy, lay employees, volunteers or other persons. Everyone who serves the church through educational, pastoral,



recreational or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct against children. That commitment extends to sexual behavior.

No one in the employ or volunteer service of the diocese or its churches who has a civil or criminal record of child abuse, or who has admitted committing prior sexual abuse of a child, will be permitted to serve with children or youth.

## A.9 Child Abuse Defined

Child abuse, in practical terms, refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.<sup>1</sup> Each state and the District of Columbia has its own definition of what constitutes child abuse under civil and criminal laws, and each church in the diocese should be familiar with the relevant laws and legal definitions in its jurisdiction. In general, the definitions of child abuse and child neglect in all states include the following elements (among others):

- Physical abuse
- Neglect (both physical and mental)
- Sexual abuse/Exploitation

Child Abuse reporting laws that are specific to each state can be found on the **[your diocese]** website at **[url of your diocesan webpage for child protection]** or at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>.

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<sup>1</sup> Child abuse may also be a term defined by relevant state laws.

# MINIMUM STANDARDS

## FIVE-STEP APPROACH TO PROTECTING YOUTH



### A.10 Minimum Standards

[Your diocese] requires that, at a minimum, each congregation, mission, and church plant is expected to have in place the following policy procedures. These minimum standards apply even if there are no children currently in attendance at church events. The diocese and your congregation are committed to creating a positive and healthy environment for students through the 5-step approach:



[For your use and training purposes, an *abbreviated* version of these minimum standards is found in the next section (A.10). The abbreviated version is a policy summation and can be customized by churches to add additional, specific or unique guidelines. For this reason, the abbreviated outline, at minimum, should be included in the training materials every volunteer receives. Churches may choose to give just this summary rather than the entire policy to volunteers, though the training will cover all of the policy information.]

## A.11: ABBREVIATED POLICY OUTLINE

### FIVE STEPS TO KEEP KIDS SAFE IN [YOUR DIOCESE/CHURCH]

- 1 SCREENING** is an opportunity to prevent a molester from ever having contact with children and youth in our programs. Our careful screening of employees and volunteers in youth and children's ministries includes:
  - a. Reviewing signed standard applications for all paid staff and for all volunteers in youth and children's ministries;
  - b. Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry/Criminal Background checks and renewing them every two years;
  - c. Conducting personal and professional reference checks and a thorough social media search;
  - d. Conducting face-to-face interviews;
  - e. Requiring a signature stating that clergy, employees, volunteers and other adult members of their households have not been arrested for or convicted of child abuse or diagnosed with certain psychiatric conditions such as voyeurism or exhibitionism;
  - f. Requiring a six-month minimum attendance rule for all volunteers serving in children's and youth ministries.
- 2 TRAINING** puts the power to protect in everyone's hands and is an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize the warning signs of potential abuse, commit to the safe practices specific to **[your diocese]** and learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse.
  - a. Reading Requirements  
All members of the clergy, all members of the vestry, and those staff members with direct supervision over youth or children must certify that they have read, understood and accepted **[your diocese and your church]** policies on the protection of children and sign an acknowledgement form.
  - b. Workshop Attendance Requirements  
Every two years, clergy, vestry, staff and all volunteers who have contact with youth and children must complete a diocesan approved awareness training as well as diocesan approved training on the policy itself.
- 3 INTERACTING GUIDELINES** help children and adults feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse. Verbal interactions between clergy, staff members, or volunteers and children should be positive, constructive and encouraging. Staff members and volunteers should avoid talking to children or parents in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Clergy, staff members and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet. Online behavior is treated equal to in-person behavior including two adult rule, appropriate language, tone, attire, topics and obtaining parental consent for connections.

**[Your diocesan and church’s proactive policy for social media includes. . .]**

Photos of children will not be used contrary to the wishes of parent(s). **[Your diocese/church]** will refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior permission from parent(s).

Children’s staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch.

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child and never be based on the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. It is the diocesan policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for the behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

Appropriate interactions may include:

- Smiles
- Encouragement
- Handshakes and high fives
- Fist bumps
- Thumbs up
- Side to side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Arm around the shoulder
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Holding or picking up children who are 4 years old and younger
- **[Include any other interactions that are appropriate]**

Inappropriate interactions include:

- Spanking, slapping, or any form of physical discipline
- Shaming or belittling a child or youth
- Meeting alone in non-public or isolated places
- Swearing in the presence of children
- Engaging in sexually oriented communications with or in proximity to children
- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol, or any illegal drugs when in the presence of children
- Wrestling
- Tickling
- Sitting in laps (except for nursery-aged children)
- Kissing on the lips
- Full frontal hugs or “bear hugs”
- Commenting on children’s bodies
- Forcing unwanted affection

- Being nude in front of children (such as on overnight trips, changing at pool parties, etc.)
- Contacting or “friending” a child or youth social networking sites without the parent’s permission
- Showing favoritism or possessiveness
- Calling, emailing, or texting too often (singling a child out – “grooming” a child)
- Giving gifts to children without the parent’s permission
- Ridiculing the beliefs of a child or youth or those of their parents
- Allowing a child or youth to do things against the wishes of the parents
- Offering children or youth cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
- Allowing children or youth to view pornography or to visit inappropriate internet sites
- Asking a child or youth to keep “secrets” from his or her parents
- Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- Taking pictures while children are dressing or showering
- **[Include any other interactions that are inappropriate]**

**4 MONITORING** allows us to detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse when none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. Vestry, clergy, staff, and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising children’s and youth activities in all settings at all times.

Our monitoring practices include the following:

- **TWO ADULT RULE:** All children and youth activities shall be designed to be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals at all times;
- **SUPERVISORY PLANS:** An onsite or offsite written Supervisory Plan, that includes all items detailed in section **[G.3]** shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children. Those tasked with supervising youth or children for a specific program must understand their responsibilities as outlined and sign a copy of the specific supervisory plan;
- No child or youth will ever be left unattended during, or following, a church activity;
- Clergy, staff members, and volunteers should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children or youth;
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should occur in a public place or where other persons are present;
- Everyone is tasked with watching for, and responding to, policy violations;
- An open invitation for parents to visit at any time unannounced;
- A careful review of new programs and/or significant changes to a program structure;
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times;
- Keeping unused rooms locked;
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas.



The following restroom policy will be in effect during all children's programming:

- Children who require diapering will . . . **[Specific procedures that comply with policy, see D.9];**
- Children who are special needs or nursery aged and being potty-trained will . . . **[Specific procedures that comply with policy, see D.9];**
- Elementary aged children will . . . **[Specific procedures that comply with policy, see D.9].**

When children are present in the sanctuary, parent(s) are expected to accompany their elementary aged child to the restroom or send them with an older sibling; we ask this knowing that restrooms are often the most likely place for abuse to occur in an institutional setting.

**5 RESPONDING** quickly gives us the power to prevent or stop abuse and gives the child more time to heal. If a child discloses abuse, remember to:

- Respect the child's privacy by finding a private, non-threatening place to talk;
- Ask a staff member or trained volunteer to join in listening to the child or youth's account, if possible;
- Keep calm, listen and avoid expressing shock or outrage;
- Let the child or youth know that he or she is believed;
- Assure the child or youth that the abuse was not his or her fault;
- Tell the child or youth, if helpful, that they were brave to disclose;
- Avoid questions that could make the child or youth feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint their recollection and account; child victims are often vague in their initial disclosure;
- Write down as accurately as possible what the child or youth disclosed; this information can be used in filing the Report of Suspected Abuse Form for the diocese and the Child Protective Services report if warranted;
- Respect confidentiality: be careful afterwards not to discuss the information with, or in front of, other people who do not need to know what happened;
- Remember to:
  - Endeavor to ensure the safety of the child;
  - Report the abuse allegation to church authorities;
  - Report to Legal Authorities **[in accordance with applicable laws]**.

**STATE CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE NUMBER**

**[1-800-???-????]**

**LOCAL CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES NUMBER**

**[1-???-???-????]**

## B: SCREENING PROCEDURES

One effective means of reducing the incidence of child abuse is to screen carefully all clergy and all lay workers, paid and volunteer, working in youth and children's ministries. The diocese requires the following screening and background checks for all canonically resident and licensed clergy, and for all employees and volunteers who work with children:

### B.1 Screening Clergy

The screening of clergy is the responsibility of the diocesan office, not the Anglican Church in North America. Careful screening of clergy is conducted initially during the ordination and search processes and includes:

- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks through Oxford Document Management Company or other diocesan-approved screening providers. **[Delineate what level of background checks and who is responsible for ordering and paying for them. We recommend Level 2 at minimum.]** Checks should be renewed at least every two years. It is the responsibility of all clergy to cooperate fully in all aspects of the screening process and to submit in a timely manner all documents needed to complete such checks.
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks (three sources recommended).
- Conducting a thorough social media search.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews.
- Requiring the clergy person to state whether or not the clergy person and/or other members of the household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. A sample copy of this screening statement is found in Section G.1.
- Reviewing this policy with the clergy person and requiring clergy to sign and submit Policy Acknowledgment Form found in Section H.3.



Note: In addition, a full Oxford Document Management Company background check will normally be done every five years for all clergy in active ministry in the **[diocese]**.

## B.2 Screening Employees, Interns, Fellows, and Day Camp Staff

The screening of employees, interns, fellows, and day camp staff is the responsibility of the individual church, not the diocese nor the Anglican Church in North America. Careful screening of employees includes:

- Reviewing signed job applications for employees, interns, fellows, and day camp staff;
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks (checks should be renewed at least every two years);
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks (three sources recommended);
- Conducting a thorough social media search;
- Conducting face-to-face interviews; if the volunteer or staff member being interviewed is under 18, employers may want to ask the parent(s) if they have any concern about their child (the potential volunteer/employee) regarding sexual misconduct with children;
- Requiring each applicant to sign the screening statement found in Section G.1.



### B.3 Screening Volunteers

The screening of volunteers is the responsibility of the individual church, not the diocese or the Anglican Church in North America. Careful screening of volunteers includes:

- Requiring a six-month minimum attendance rule for volunteers in children's and youth ministries, except where the Bishop, in consultation with the Committee to Protect Children, has granted a variance;
- Reviewing signed volunteer applications for those working in youth and children's ministries;
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks (checks should be renewed at least every two years);
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks (three are recommended);
- Conducting a thorough social media search;
- Conducting face-to-face interviews; if the potential volunteer is a minor, it may be helpful to interview the parent; employers can ask the parent(s) if they have any concern about their child (the potential employee) regarding sexual misconduct with children;
- Requiring each applicant to sign the screening statement found in Section G.1.



## C: TRAINING PROCEDURES

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Training is also an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize the warning signs of potential abuse, as well as learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse. They also must become familiar with safe practices specific to their church designed to reduce the potential for abuse occurring.

### C.1 Reading Requirements

The diocese requires the following training: all members of the clergy, all members of the vestry, and those staff members with direct supervision over youth or children must certify that they have read, understood and accepted the **[your diocese]** Policies on the Protection of Children and sign an acknowledgement form.

### C.2 Workshop Attendance Requirements

Every two years, clergy, vestry, and those staff and volunteers who have contact with youth and children must:

- Complete an awareness training: Awareness training can be completed in person as part of the policy training, or it can be completed online through a diocesan approved curriculum (provided by programs such as *Ministry Safe*, *Protect My Ministry*, *Creating a Safe Environment*, etc., detailed in section G.2);
- Complete policy training: Policy training will cover the guidelines set forth in this **[diocesan]** document as well as any additional policies specific to **[your church]** (See Five Steps to Keep Kids Safe training outline in Section A.11).

Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office evidence of completed training every two years. Each church is responsible to track and document the training/retraining of its vestry, staff and volunteers. **[Add your required timeframes: Clergy, Vestry and staff must complete training within (number of) months of hire or election. Volunteers must complete training prior to serving with youth or children.]**

**[Include information regarding contracted companies that may provide background checks within your diocese, such as *Ministry Safe* or *Protect My Ministry*.]**



## D: INTERACTING PROCEDURES

These procedures are intended to help children and adults feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

### D.1 Addictive Behaviors

Clergy, staff members, volunteers and participants in youth and children's ministries, while traveling with or in the presence of children or their parent(s), during church-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children should not: use tobacco products, possess or use any illegal drugs, be under the influence of alcohol, or share / view pornographic materials while in church facilities. **[Bishops may include additional directives to clergy to refrain from viewing pornography completely.]**

### D.2 Communication

All interactions, verbal and non-verbal, between clergy, staff members, or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.



To this end, clergy, staff members, and volunteers should avoid talking to children or parent(s) in a way that is, or could be construed by any reasonable observer as, harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, clergy, staff members, and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children. Concerns about children should be directed to parent(s), legal guardian(s), the appropriate ministry leader(s), or the clergy.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers should avoid engaging in any sexually-oriented communications with children, (except as noted in abuse reporting contexts), and should refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit

information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child or youth.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers may employ (subject to limitations imposed by the rector or rector's designee) age-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality/sexual abuse prevention/sexual purity. Any prospective material should normally be made available for review for the parents of participants. Prior to introducing these materials,

notice should normally be provided to parents in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.

### D.3 First Aid & Medication

If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parent(s). Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer as authorized by the parent. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over-the-counter medication. When medically necessary, medication or first aid may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer consistent with the Supervisory Plan. Parent(s) should be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.



## D.4 Home Group Procedures

The diocese and its churches do not have, and therefore do not exercise, control over home groups. The care and protection of children in such settings is always the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child. The diocese provides some resources that may help empower and equip parent(s)/guardian(s) and the home groups of its churches as they exercise their care and responsibility. In home groups where children are present, even on an occasional basis, leaders are encouraged to read this policy, take the dual diocesan-approved policy and awareness training, and follow as closely as possible the provisions outlined in this policy, including the development of a Supervisory Plan (see Section E), which should consider the following:<sup>2</sup>

- Supervision by two screened and trained individuals (supervision by a single individual is never a good idea);
- Inspection and preparation of physical environment– the location should be inspected and prepared for child safety for the developmental age of those being served, keeping in mind outlet coverings, sharp corners, sharp objects, unsecured furniture, access to outdoors, toxic materials, etc.;
- Creation of restroom procedure– for any child who requires assistance, parent(s) should be responsible for diapering and meeting other restroom needs.

<sup>2</sup> Home group is defined for purposes of this policy as a small group meeting in a home for Bible study, worship, fellowship, etc. A church which holds its primary worship service in a home is, for purposes of this policy, considered to be a church and not a home group.

## D.5 Overnight Events

Certain youth ministry activities may require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for youth, staff and volunteers. As part of the Supervisory Plan required for all youth and children's ministry (including lock-ins, mission trips, retreats and other ministry that involves overnight stays), the following procedures must be considered and monitored.

- As always, the two-adult rule should be adhered to; a single student should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present.
- Overnight sleeping arrangements must be detailed in the Supervisory Plan and shared with those responsible for providing the supervision. An individual student should not be housed alone with another student or adult (in overnight cases, minimum of three is required).
- As long as any students are actively awake, two trip leaders must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
- Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn by all.
- Staff members and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.
- In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same biological sex.
- Staff and volunteers in youth ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care. Showering considerations and private areas for changing clothes must be thought through with rotation schedules.
- Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. R-rated movies require rector and parental approval.



## D.6 Photography

Photos of children will not be used contrary to the wishes of parent(s). Churches should refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior permission from parent(s). This is easily handled by including a consent statement on programming registrations that are signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

## D.7 Physical Interactions

Those who serve, whether as clergy or lay workers, paid or volunteer, maintain a powerful relationship of authority and trust with the people to whom they minister. Betrayal of that trust through violation of sexual boundaries causes great emotional and spiritual harm. Such misconduct is a denial of our calling as Christians and may be a violation of the law. We must take every step to prevent it, and to respond with swift justice should misconduct occur.



Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. It is the diocesan policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior

management. In some circumstances physical restraint may be used to prevent self-injury by the child and/or harm to others or to property. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents, Children's Ministry Director, Youth Pastor, and/or clergy.

Appropriate physical interaction between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's development and is generally suitable in the church setting. The following standards of interaction with children shall be carefully followed at all times.

- Appropriate interactions may include:

high-fives  
handshakes  
fist bumps  
thumbs up

head pats  
side hugs  
smiling  
pats on back

- Inappropriate interactions include:

wrestling  
kissing on the lips  
forcing unwanted affection  
sitting in laps (except nursery)

tickling  
full frontal hugs  
commenting on children's bodies  
massages

- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be

reported immediately to 1) an immediate supervisor, and 2) the senior warden and/or clergy.

- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in youth and children's ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected at all times.

Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

## **D.8 Release of Children**

Staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministry are responsible for releasing children in their care at the close of services or activities only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact their immediate supervisor before releasing the child.





## D.9 Restroom Use

### Nursery Aged and Special Needs Children

Because preschool, nursery, and special needs children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

#### *Diapering*

- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers; children should not be left unattended while being changed.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

*Note:* Churches are encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that nationally one out of every four women has been the victim of some form of child sexual abuse, typically by a male offender. To build trust and to minimize exposure based on statistical research, churches may determine that diapering, toilet training, and restroom monitoring will only be done by screened and trained female staff/volunteers or the child's parent(s)/guardian(s).

#### *Toilet Training*

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- When children are assisted in bathrooms the stall door will be left partially open.
- Preschool-aged children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- Accidents should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.



## ***Elementary Aged Children***

- Elementary-age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) A same-aged/biological sex-peer buddy system may also be used.
- Staff members and volunteers should take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom. If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try verbally to assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

## **D.10 Sexual Ethics in the Context of Youth Ministry**

We recognize that contemporary cultural trends and attitudes about gender and sexual ethics are complex and rapidly changing. You may find students wrestling with issues around gender fluidity, gender dysphoria, same-sex attraction or other situations which may challenge the existing policies. These situations may require specific knowledge or understanding so we can care for individual students, in a loving and caring community setting. In consultation with the Bishop, the rector is responsible for local adaptation around specific ministry situations and with regards to suitable protection practices that embody **[your diocese's]** guiding values.

## **D.11 Social Media Policy**

Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. A student's world is often constructed around social media. Having personal interactions in this venue allows adults to model appropriate behavior in social media, and it forms valuable connections with students.

The diocese strongly recommends that each church have a proactive policy for social media and other forms of electronic communication in the context of children's and youth ministry. Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (usually 13).

Sending sexually explicit or offensive communications (e.g., text messages, emails, social media messages or posts) is included in the definition of sexual harassment and will not be tolerated regardless of age.

Virtual spaces are to be treated the same as in-person spaces. This means two adults must be online with any youth (known as the two-adult rule), participants must be appropriately clothed,

and conversation should not be held in the adult's bedroom. The parents should be aware that the student is in conversation with the leaders.

Use group apps rather than private messages for ongoing communication. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present.

For those students younger than 13 years old, get parent permission for any communication and welcome the parents into that environment. All screening procedures should be followed and up-to-date for all online volunteers.



Remember that all social media church accounts or groups must model appropriate behavior and language. Student pictures should not be shared without parent permission in public groups, and membership into private groups should be monitored by both the church and the parent(s) closely. Use personal interactions on social media avenues to model appropriate behavior and language, both on and off social media.

## **D.12 Spiritual Direction & Pastoral Counseling with Youth**

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek discipleship opportunities. This frequently manifests in ongoing 1:1, 1:2, or 1:3 relationships where participants meet regularly for a long-term partnership. This is not the same situation as pastoral counseling, which is intended for a singular focus and therefore is limited in scope. Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, crisis counseling, and relationship counseling. If pastoral counseling requires more than **[number of, usually less than 6]** sessions, refer the youth to a professional.

If long-term spiritual direction with a youth is agreed upon, consider these safeguards:

- Ensure this relationship is brought into the light among the leadership team of the church by informing multiple people of this partnership; this includes obtaining parental consent and knowledge of discipleship meetings;
- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction to youth in your church (such as through the ACNA *Engage* program), consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the church, as well as accountability;
- Meet in a public place, not in one another's private living quarters;
- It is recommended that it be conducted by same biological sex participants;
- Follow guidelines regarding interaction and physical contact;
- Define the parameters of the relationship at the first meeting, articulating how one might discontinue the relationship without further explanation at any time;
- Communicate to whom the participant should report if they have any concerns (including the names and numbers of senior leadership, the Bishop, and a reporting hotline);
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together.

In order to protect the emotionally healthy spirituality of all, it is recommended that Youth Directors and Children's Ministry Directors also seek regular spiritual direction to ensure accountability and a strong support system.

### **D.13 Transportation**

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children and youth. The following guidelines should be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children or youth whenever possible:

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the church copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- Adult volunteer drivers must undergo an insurance approved background check including a DMV record check. Use of child safety seats that meet federal standards is required. Drivers and passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines. Churches are advised to consult with their insurance provider regarding the minimum age for adult drivers. Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 18 be allowed to drive children/youth as part of an event.
- At no time shall there be one adult and one child traveling in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). 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; seatbelts are ALWAYS required). If there is an extenuating circumstance causing only one adult and one child to travel together in an automobile, permission must be obtained by a parent or legal guardian of the child. This permission should be written and signed by the parent/guardian or documented by the volunteer if only verbal consent is obtainable. The child or youth should be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.
- No cell phones, including hands-free devices, may be utilized by the driver while driving church-owned vehicles, unless in an emergency, with the exception of GPS navigation.
- Transport children directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks should be done as a group. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No one under age 25 may drive vehicles rented by a church unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement; no drivers under age 25 may drive church-owned vehicles unless explicitly covered by the church's auto insurance policy.
- In special circumstances these may be altered for emergencies. In these cases, the children/youth director (or supervisor) should be notified immediately.
- If a family situation necessitates a special circumstance, the family may sign a waiver stating the deviance from the diocesan or church policy; this policy should note the family's acceptance of responsibility.

## E: MONITORING PROCEDURES

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Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. Vestry, clergy, staff, and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising children's and youth activities in all settings at all times.

**Monitoring procedures should include, but are not limited to:**

- Two-Adult Rule: All child and youth activities shall be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals, preferably not related to each other;
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a church activity;
- Clergy, staff members, and/or volunteers should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children;
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should take place in a public place or where other persons are present;
- All leaders are expected to watch for policy violations and report them;
- An open invitation should be extended to parents to visit at any time unannounced;
- A careful review of new programs and significant changes to program structure;
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times;
- Keeping unused rooms locked whenever possible;
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the church building;
- Supervisory Plans: An onsite or offsite written Supervisory Plan (see below) shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children.

The purpose of the Supervisory Plan for any given activity is to give direction to staff, both volunteer and paid, to ensure appropriate measures are in place to meet the diocesan standard for supervision. It is recommended that a copy of the Supervisory Plan be provided to and signed by those responsible for supervision and that the plan be posted in a visible location. Please refer to Section G.3 for a sample Supervisory Plan.



## E.1 Sponsored: On-site Supervisory Plans

Sponsored On-Site Supervisory Plans should include:

- Description of the nature of the activity;
- Details of the registration process and a sample registration form;
- Personnel responsible for running the activity;
- Recommended ratio of adults to children,
  - **[insert your guidelines based on your state(s) requirements, such as:**
  - **Infants: 2 adults for up to 8**
  - **Young toddlers: 2 adults for up to 12**
  - **2 and 3 years: 2 adults for up to 16**
  - **4 years: 2 adults for up to 20**
  - **School age: 2 adults for up to 40**
  - **Mixed age group: ratio for the youngest child in the group]**
- Standards for interacting with, and disciplining, children or youth;
- Description of the physical environment;
- Bathroom procedures, including showering procedures, if applicable;
- First aid and medication procedures;
- Procedures for reporting discipline concerns; and
- Release of children.

Note: Emergency plans and procedures, including schematics with fire escape routes, shelter-in-place designations and plans for reuniting children with parents would also be helpful.



## E.2 Sponsored: Off-site Supervisory Plans

Sponsored Off-site Supervisory Plans should include the following:

- Description of the nature of the activity;
- Details of the registration process and a sample registration form;
- Personnel responsible for running the activity;
- Recommended ratio of adults to children, **[insert your guidelines based on your state(s) requirements, such as:**
  - **Infants: 2 adults for up to 8**
  - **Young toddlers: 2 adults for up to 12**
  - **2 and 3 years: 2 adults for up to 16**
  - **4 years: 2 adults for up to 20**
  - **School age: 2 adults for up to 40**
  - **Mixed age group: ratio for the youngest child in the group]**
- Standards for interacting with and disciplining children or youth;
- Description of the physical environment;
- Bathroom procedures;
- First aid and medication procedures;
- Procedures for reporting discipline concerns;
- Dining arrangements;
- Sleeping arrangements: see Overnight Events;
- Showering procedures: see Overnight Events
- Offsite transportation plan(s): see Transportation;
- Release of youth.



### **E.3 Non-Sponsored: On-site Events**

Due to the nature of the facilities and shared ministry, the situation might arise where the church facilities are used by non-sponsored groups for activities and events (such as Young Life, or the Boy Scouts, or parties, etc.). These events may choose to offer childcare on their own, utilizing the facilities available. All churches should consult their insurance policy regarding these types of activities and to be compliant with the restrictions and recommendations in that insurance policy. It is also recommended that all churches use a Facilities Agreement that clearly articulates the outside organization's responsibility and liability for their program and volunteers/employees for every instance of an outside group using the church's facilities.

### **E.4 Non-Sponsored: Off-site Events**

Due to the nature of contact work within youth groups, situations may arise where a youth volunteer/employee organizes a social event off campus. These events usually are not sponsored by the church and may only be open to certain youth due to the nature of contact work. It is recommended that these events remain in compliance with the diocesan policy and with the individual church's policy, specifically with regard to the 'minimum of two adults' rule. It is consistent with common practices and research, protects the church, the volunteer/employee, and the children involved.



## F: RESPONDING & REPORTING PROCEDURES

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### F.1 Response and Reporting Overview

Anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, a child has been abused, abandoned, neglected, or exploited in violation of the law should immediately contact the appropriate state abuse hotline [**provide number here**]. All reports are confidential and access to these reports is limited by specific criteria described in the appropriate state's statute(s).

State laws generally require that certain categories of persons responsible for the care or treatment of children report to state authorities when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected, or is in danger of abuse or neglect. The specific laws, and thus their specific requirements, vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For example, some states require any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health and welfare has been or will be adversely affected by abuse or neglect to report immediately to authorities. Other states require only those who have special occupations, such as nurses, counselors, teachers, physicians, law enforcement officers, or the like, to report suspected cases of abuse.

Every church in the diocese should be familiar with, and every person responsible for the care of children in the church should be made aware of, the applicable child abuse reporting requirements and procedures in that jurisdiction.

Each church in the diocese should review the applicable laws in its jurisdiction and should create a written response plan that is consistent with those laws.

As a helpful resource, [this government website](#) links to the child abuse reporting laws in each jurisdiction by state. Laws can change over time, however, and it is the responsibility of the individual church, not the diocese nor the Anglican Church in North America, to make certain that it has identified and understands the child abuse reporting laws that currently apply to it at any specific time.

In addition to complying with any applicable legal requirements, churches should also have in place appropriate procedures for internal reporting to appropriate church leaders of any suspected mistreatment of or injury to a child and any suspicious or unusual information about a child.

## **F.2 Responding to the Child Victim**

One of several ways in which the clergy, staff member, or volunteer may come to suspect child abuse or neglect is from information that a child himself or herself shares. If a child discloses abuse or neglect, the clergy, staff member, or volunteer receiving such a communication should attempt to:

- Respect the child's privacy by finding an appropriate non-threatening place to talk;
- If reasonably possible, ask a staff member, trained volunteer, or other responsible adult to join in listening to the child's/youth's account;
- Keep calm, listen, and avoid expressing shock or outrage;
- Let the child know that he/she is believed;
- Assure the child that any abuse was not his/her fault;
- If helpful, tell the child that he/she was brave to disclose the abuse;
- Child victims are often vague in their initial disclosure— avoid questions that could make the child feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint the child's recollection and account. A safe question is always, "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?"

Write down as accurately as possible what the child disclosed. This information can be used in filing the Report of Suspected Abuse Form (see Section G.5) and helps capture all the information needed to make a Child Protective Services report.

Be careful afterwards not to discuss the information with, or in front of, other people who do not need to know what happened. Discussion about the information should be limited to appropriate church and legal authorities, as discussed further below.

## **F.3 Reporting to Church Authorities**

Churches should also have in place appropriate internal procedures and mechanisms for reporting to appropriate church leaders any suspected child abuse or neglect, any other suspected mistreatment of or injury to a child, and any suspicious information involving a child. Such internal reporting allows church leaders to determine whether a legal reporting obligation has been triggered, whether further information is needed, and/or whether pastoral or other care for children and others should be offered.

At times, when the church leader receiving such reports puts together the separate pieces of information provided by different workers, the leader may discern a pattern or recognize information that triggers further investigation and/or a report to state authorities. (Such internal church reporting procedures are not intended to supersede any applicable legal reporting requirements.)



It is critical to be prepared in advance by adopting an appropriate plan and following that plan if an incident or allegation of child abuse occurs. **[Sample plans should be provided to churches.]** When there is reason to believe child abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring, act immediately. Do not ignore or fail to take seriously any reported incident.

**Implement Your Response Plan.** The church is expected to have in place an appropriate plan (even if only a very brief one) to use when responding to any allegation of child abuse. That plan may include a response team of individuals instructed with proper response mechanisms, along with additional procedures to implement throughout the church in responding to the allegation.

**Report to the Rector.** The individual(s) suspecting abuse or neglect should immediately notify the rector and senior warden (or another person designated by the rector or senior warden or otherwise identified in the church's child abuse reporting procedures as authorized to receive such reports) of the suspected child abuse. The church should also identify in its response plan and other children's ministry policies other persons who may receive such a report if the rector or senior warden is the person who is the subject of the allegations or is otherwise suspected of having committed abuse or neglect.

**Suspend Person Accused of Abuse from Duties.** If the person accused of abuse is employed by or volunteering with the church, the rector (or the designee) should immediately remove the person accused of abuse from the situation in which the accusation arose and from any duties where he/she will have any further contact with children. This can be done quietly and should be done quickly and without exception. An interim transfer to a position that has no contact with children is one possibility; a leave of absence (with pay if the person is an employee) may be another solution. The church leadership will determine whether the person accused of abuse will continue in ministry.

**Notify Parents Where Appropriate.** If the person accused of abuse is not the child's parent or guardian or otherwise a member of the household, the rector or the designee should contact the child's parents or appropriate guardians and offer support from the church.

**Notify the Bishop.** The rector shall notify the Bishop. The Bishop shall notify the diocesan chancellor. The Bishop may request periodic updates of the investigation being conducted and subsequent actions taken at the local church level and/or may initiate a third-party investigation into the allegations of child abuse.

**Notify the Church Legal Counsel.** In most circumstances, the rector should notify the church's legal counsel. Obtaining competent legal advice at the very outset of the matter will help protect the church from failing to comply with legal duties and/or being exposed to additional legal liability. In addition, if the investigation is conducted by legal counsel, the information gathered and conveyed to the attorney may be privileged from disclosure as a confidential attorney/client communication under certain state laws.

## F.4 Reporting to Legal Authorities

The rector or other appropriate church leaders should consult with the church's legal counsel for assistance in identifying and complying with the appropriate abuse reporting requirements within the required time frame under applicable state laws.

No allegations, complaints or reports of suspected abuse should be ignored. As discussed above, churches should be aware of and should comply with any applicable legal obligations to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

Further, even where reports are not legally required, voluntary reports of suspected abuse or neglect are legally permitted in all jurisdictions in the diocese and should always be considered with the assistance of legal counsel.

If the church determines that a report is legally required or decides that it should make a permissive report even though one is not legally required, contact the appropriate legal authorities [**provide contact information**]. Contact information should be updated by the church regularly.

**Cooperate with the investigating legal authorities.** Subject to advice of the church's legal counsel, the church should cooperate in the investigation conducted by the governmental agency to which the report has been made, as well as any other law enforcement agencies involved with the investigation.

**Notify insurance providers.** Unless the church's legal counsel advises otherwise, the church should promptly notify its liability insurance company. This is important for at least four reasons: (1) the insurance policy may require immediate notification for coverage to be effective; (2) the policy may pay for counseling or legal advice; (3) the policy may not provide coverage for lawsuits involving acts of sexual abuse; and (4) the insurance carrier, having dealt with similar cases, may be a source of helpful advice. Unfortunately, most insurance policies do not generally cover sexual misconduct or negligent hiring/supervision in sexual abuse situations. Separate "riders" can be purchased, although some require strict preconditions to coverage like screening, awareness, and prevention training.

**Appropriately document actions.** Designated clergy should document any actions taken regarding the complaint, and retain that documentation in confidential files. (The church's legal counsel may have specific instructions for how such documentation should be prepared and maintained.) It should be noted that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the legal responsibility of the police or child protective authorities. It is not the responsibility of church leaders to prove that such an incident did or did not take place.

## F.5 Release of Information

**Carefully consider any release of information.** Identify a single person to respond to all inquiries (media or otherwise), such as a specially trained management person, and instruct all other workers politely to direct all inquiries to that person. Use an approved, prepared statement to answer media inquiries and to convey news to members of the church. Such a statement should be reviewed by the church's legal counsel. Don't release any information until the church has solidly confirmed its factual content. Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved by not releasing names or other identifying information, especially that concerning minors.

**Maintain appropriate confidentiality** of any allegations and of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the investigation to each person who is interviewed and instruct them not to disclose any information regarding the allegations or your investigation to anyone other than law enforcement or child protective authorities. Maintaining appropriate confidentiality will: (1) protect the privacy and reputations of those actually or allegedly involved in the incident; (2) reduce the risk that defamation may occur; and (3) help preserve the attorney-client privilege, where otherwise applicable.

**Reach out to, and care for, any victims.** One of your church's primary missions is sharing the love of God with children. Offer whatever pastoral care and other help is appropriate and available to the victim and his/her family.

**Treat the accused with dignity and support.** Since the accused has not been formally charged or convicted, he/she should be treated as innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Be supportive and objective.

**Bring closure to the investigation.** If the accused is eventually convicted, then discipline or dismissal is generally appropriate. Counseling may also be appropriate. If charges are unsubstantiated, the decision about whether to restore the accused to full employment or volunteer service may depend on a number of circumstantial factors. Consult the Bishop and legal counsel for guidance. Of course, all personnel actions should be well documented in writing and kept in confidential files. Attorney-client privileged material should never be disclosed without first consulting your attorney.

It is essential that each church respond to a report or instance of abuse in a manner that promotes healing for the victim, the person accused of abuse, and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the local church and community (see Section I).

## **F.6 Internal Church Communication and Reporting**

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall report promptly to the appropriate ministry leader, supervisor, or rector whenever the clergy, staff member, or volunteer:

- Is involved in or becomes aware of any sexually-oriented communications involving a child connected with the church; or
- Is involved in or becomes aware of any inappropriate behavior involving a child by a clergy person, a staff member, or a volunteer; or
- Is arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, is charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; commits an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) is diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism; or
- Becomes aware that a member of his/her household has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism; or
- Becomes aware that a person who is attending the church has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; has been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; has committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) has been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism.

*Such information is important to enable church leaders to see that appropriate child protection mechanisms are in place in accordance with this policy while handling this information in a responsible and confidential manner.*

## G: MINIMUM STANDARDS RESOURCES

### G.1 [Sample Screening Statement, adjust as necessary]

Have you ever:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No
- Been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No
- Committed an act of child sexual abuse?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No

Has any other member of your household:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No
- Been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No
- Committed an act of child sexual abuse?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## G.2 Implementing a Train-the-Trainers Model

**[This section covers the two main trainings (awareness and policy) and how to conduct it in a Train-the-Trainers model. Your diocese will need to decide if you will offer the awareness training online through external programs, or in person alongside your policy training. Additionally, you may choose to write your own awareness training. Once you have decided which format and curriculum to use for the awareness training, update this section with that information, being sure to retain the explanation of the process and why it is necessary.]**

There are two main components of training: awareness training and policy training.

The most effective model for child abuse awareness and prevention policies is to hold interactive workshops in-person. Since so many in our culture (one in five) have had an experience of child sexual abuse, in-person workshops are often also a very helpful place for ministry and for healing. The topic itself is a difficult one for many to examine and those in attendance may need help in processing what they have learned or what the training has triggered.

Workshop leaders should be equipped to provide information, support, and referrals and be trained through the Train-the-Trainers model established in our diocese. This model is structured so that each church sends their trainer(s) to be trained by the diocese, and the trainers then return to their home church to train clergy, staff, and volunteers. These trainers should demonstrate expertise in teaching while also exercising discernment and pastoral care for those who may be triggered by difficult content.

Once trained, the church representative trainer will provide instruction for staff, vestry, and volunteers in their home church that mirrors the instruction offered by the diocese, including:

### **1. Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Awareness Training**

**[This awareness training is offered either through a diocesan created and approved curriculum or by using a purchased training curriculum that has been approved by the diocese, listed below. Once your diocese selects its model, update this section with the program of choice and how to access it.]**

**If the diocese does not create their own Awareness training curriculum, churches can easily utilize one of the online certification programs, see below.**

***Ministry Safe and Protect My Ministry* offer online learning management programs that keep track of certification. Each congregation should appoint an administrator who will manage online users. Both of these offer discounts for ACNA churches, see below. Another option for small groups is *Creating a Safe Environment*, an in-person group curriculum (an updated version of *Safeguarding God's Children*).]**

## 2. Diocesan and Church Policy Training (Five Steps to Keep Kids Safe in Your Diocese/Church)

The Diocesan and Church Policy Training (Five Steps to Keep Kids Safe in Your Diocese/Church; found in this policy document) should also be covered with clergy, staff and volunteers, either in-person or virtually. A committee should also be formed to review the policy and procedure manual and adapt it for your congregation. Check with an attorney to make sure that guidelines and reporting procedures conform to your state.

### **[Options for Awareness Training:**

#### ***MinistrySafe***

*MinistrySafe* is a safety system designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in your congregation. *MinistrySafe* provides on-line child sexual abuse awareness training, has sample policies and procedures that can be tailored to your particular situation, and provides training in skillful screening and guidelines for monitoring and oversight of the program. This program has been endorsed by the Anglican Church in North America and is its minimum standard.

A church's *Ministry Safe* account will cost \$100/year for ACNA churches and \$5 for each person who successfully passes the test. To set up a *MinistrySafe* account, go to <https://ms.ministrysafe.com/acna/>. Be sure to register as an ACNA church and to sign up for the discount with ACNA2021 code (updated each year).

#### ***Protect My Ministry***

*Protect My Ministry* offers child safety training as well as background checks and free screening training videos, helping you fill in the gaps in risk management. *Protect My Ministry* covers protecting children from abuse through its online training and certification, but it also offers extensive resources for screening before the volunteer or employee even begins working with children. One of the unique benefits to *Protect My Ministry* is its social screening, designed to screen a potential worker's social media accounts through a legal process reviewed by the Federal Trade Commission, intended to increase information received beyond background checks. Enrollment fees are waived and the per person cost is reduced if the organization mentions they are an ACNA church. For more information or to purchase: <https://info.protectmyministry.com/acna>.

### ***Creating a Safe Environment***

*Creating a Safe Environment* is a research-based, facilitator-led, video-based training program that is intended to be completed in small group training within your church. From the publishers of *Safeguarding God's Children*, Praesidium, this *Creating a Safe Environment* curriculum offers case study videos that are watched together and discussed, covering additional topics that go beyond the basics of child protection, such as protecting against peer-to-peer abuse, red-flag behaviors, electronic communications, supervising high-risk areas, and how to handle the conversation when a child discloses abuse. The facilitator guide is a helpful resource for the trainer in each church to know how to navigate difficult conversation among adults, especially when they may be triggered talking about past abuse. For more information or to purchase: <https://praesidium.lpages.co/case/>.

### ***The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention***

*The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention* is an organization that offers accreditation to churches and schools dedicated to the protection of children. This organization offers resources such as awareness training, but it also offers coaching for churches in the accreditation process seeking to improve their protection of children. For more information visit: <https://www.ecap.net>.

For more information on any of these programs or this policy, please visit: [ACNA Child Protection](#).

**Once your online program is selected, update this section with that information including registration codes and costs, and removing the rest.]**



### **G.3 Sample Supervisory Plan**

#### **Sunday Morning SAMPLE Supervisory Plan for Toddler Nursery (ages 2- 4)**

**Registration:** All children must be registered by their parent or guardian prior to being welcomed into the nursery. Emergency contact information should be listed on the completed registration form.

**Personnel/Ratio:** Only screened staff and volunteers may work in the nurseries. No one under the age of [X] may be hired to work in the nurseries and no one under the age of [X] may volunteer in the nurseries. A minimum of two screened and trained staff/volunteers must provide supervision at all times with a minimum ratio of one staff/volunteer per five children at any time. Nursery staff and volunteers are not permitted to allow unscreened friends or family members to assist in the nursery.

**Supervision:** Children in our care require constant loving supervision. Staff and volunteers are expected to engage children in conversation, direct them to age appropriate activities, and calmly redirect problematic behavior.

**Cell Phone Use:** Cell phone use is not permitted while working or volunteering in the toddler nursery other than in the case of an emergency.

**Discipline Procedure:** Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management in the nursery. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management.

Our disciplinary response includes these four steps:

- a. Friendly reminder
- b. Verbal warning/correction
- c. Time out
- d. Summoning the parent to return to the nursery

**Physical Environment:** Windows on nursery doors will not be obstructed. Toys, books, and furniture and apparatus will be cleaned on a **[indicate and adjust how frequently, where to find supplies, etc.]** basis. Rugs and other moveable items that could pose danger will be secured.

**Bathroom Procedure:** Children will be escorted to the bathroom by female staff and volunteers with one person assisting and another in close proximity. Diapering will be conducted by female staff/volunteers in the observable diapering areas only.

**Injury/Incident Reporting:** Staff or volunteers will fill out an incident report and advise [X] when a child is injured or hurt in any way. Incidents of conflict with parents should also be reported in the same manner.

**Reporting Concerns:** Concerns about the nurseries should be reported to [X].

**Release of Children:** Staff or volunteers will release children only to those adults who have corresponding wristband identification with the child.

I certify that I have read the Supervisory Plan for the following event: \_\_\_\_\_.

I will abide by this plan and report any breach of it to \_\_\_\_\_.

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

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

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

**[Note: This is an example of what a supervisory plan may look like. Please consult Section E of this policy sample policy for detailed information about what supervisory plans should include. Plans are required for all children's and youth programming.]**



## **H.4 How to Report Abuse to Child Protective Services**

Although the name of the person reporting the suspected abuse may be requested for follow-up purposes, the person reporting abuse to Child Protective Services is generally NOT required to give his/her name. If the person reporting does provide his/her name and requests anonymity, there are legal mechanisms in place in each state to protect the reporter from having his/her name given to the alleged abuser, unless otherwise ordered by a court.

It is helpful for the person reporting suspected abuse to provide the following:

- The name and address of the child and the parent or person responsible for his/her care;
- The names of other persons, especially children, living in the suspected victim's home;
- Address of the child's home;
- The child's age, sex, and race;
- The name of the school the child attends;
- The name and address of the alleged abuser, if known;
- A description of the alleged abuse and or neglect, including how long it may have been happening;
- The relationship between the person reporting the abuse and the child.

Please refer to Section G.5 for a sample form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse to be used when reporting allegations of child abuse to Child Protective Services and other authorities.

Once completed, that form should be kept in a confidential file with the church.

### **Child Protective Services Procedure after Initial Report**

If the Child Protective Services worker determines that the report of abuse is a valid complaint, then the complaint must be investigated. To constitute a valid complaint, all of the following criteria must be met:

- The child must be under the age of 18 at the time the complaint occurred;
- The alleged abuser must be the child's parent or caretaker at the time of the abuse;
- The report must be made in the city or county where (a) the child lives, (b) the abuse occurred, or (c) if neither of these is known, where the abuse is discovered; and
- The circumstances must meet the state definition of abuse or neglect.

## G.5 Sample Form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse

**Confidential:** *Keep completed form in locked file. [Provide direction here as to where these forms will be stored.]*

<b>Your Information</b>	Name:	
	Date of initial report:	
	Title/Position:	
	Supervisor:	
	Address:	
	Phone:	
	Email:	
<b>Information Regarding Suspected Victim(s):</b>	Name:	
	Age:	
	Biological sex:	
	Address:	
	Telephone:	
	Relationship to the church:	
	Name of any other suspected victim (attach additional forms):	
	How did you become suspicious of possible abuse?	

<b>Information about the Person Suspected of Child Abuse:</b>	Name:	
	Address:	
	Telephone:	
	Relationship to the church, if any:	
<b>Confidential Details (Keep locked up)</b>	Describe any physical evidence of suspected abuse:	
	Describe incidence details such as type, date(s), time(s), and location(s) of suspected abuse:	
<b>Witnesses (if any)</b>	1. Name/phone/age:	
	1. Relationship to church, if any:	
	2. Name/phone/age:	
	2. Relationship to church, if any:	
<b>Reporting Details</b>	To whom was the initial report made (name/title/phone):	
	What is their relationship to the church?	
	On what date was the suspected abuse reported to Child Protective Services?	
	Name of CPS worker who received the report:	
	If reported to police, what was the name of officer receiving report and the date?	
	Were the parents notified? Date and parent phone number:	
	Was suspected abuse reported to the Diocese, what date, and to whom was it reported?	
	Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation?	
<b>Submission</b>	Date:	Signature:

## H: RISK MANAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE RESOURCES

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### H.1 Risk Management Guide

**[Each diocese can purchase insurance as a whole if it chooses. The following language is included if the diocese does not purchase insurance that covers individual churches, leaving each church to select their own. It is highly recommended that all dioceses have a Risk Management Committee who oversees this decision and can guide churches in their decisions.]**

A comprehensive user-friendly Risk Management Guide is available on the ACNA website at [anglicanchurch.net/risk\\_management](http://anglicanchurch.net/risk_management). We recommend that you make use of this valuable resource and purchase the very best insurance your church can afford.

No matter how expertly your diocesan policies and procedures are written, no matter how compliant your churches and diocesan organizations are, no matter how outstanding your screening, training, interactions, monitoring, reporting and responses are it is not uncommon for completely unintended things to happen to churches intentionally following protocols.

It is, therefore, important to select the right insurance including the correct limits, terms, conditions, and deductibles that are customized to your specific needs.

Each church should create their own Risk Management Committee to help individual churches navigate insurance selection, claims, sexual misconduct policy decisions, investigations, response teams, etc.

## **H.2 Sample Diocesan Documentation – Tracking Compliance Checklist**

Churches, not the diocese or the Anglican Church in North America, are responsible for obtaining and keeping documentation of the following items in a secured location, in perpetuity, which includes evidence of the following. It is acceptable to save electronic copies of scanned documents in a secure location.

### **Screening Standards:**

- ☐ Volunteer applications for those working in youth and children’s ministries and all employees;
- ☐ National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks renewed at least every two years;
- ☐ Personal and professional reference checks;
- ☐ Social media searches;
- ☐ Interviews and screening statements;
- ☐ For drivers: copy of valid driver’s license, vehicle registration, DMV record, and proof of auto insurance;

### **Training Standards:**

- ☐ Certification that all clergy, vestry, and staff working in youth and children’s ministries have read, understood, and accepted the Diocesan Policy on the Protection of Children;
- ☐ Certification that all clergy, vestry, staff and volunteers working with youth and children’s ministries have attended a diocesan-approved awareness training and have recertified every two years;
- ☐ Certification that all clergy, vestry, staff and volunteers working with youth and children’s ministries have attended a diocesan/church policy training (Five Steps to Keep Kids Safe in Our Diocese/Church) and have recertified every two years;

### **Monitoring Standards**

- ☐ Written supervisory plans for all youth and children’s programming;

### **Responding & Reporting**

- ☐ Reports of suspected child abuse.



### **H.3 Sample Individual Acknowledgement of Receipt of Policies**

#### **Child Protection Policy Acknowledgement of Receipt for all clergy, vestry, employees, lay ministers, and volunteers**

I have received [**your diocese's**] Child Protection Policy and that I have read and understand its contents. I understand how this is implemented in my local church and my role in that. I understand that the policy may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by my church. Once notified of any amendments or revisions, I am responsible for reading and complying with them. It is not the responsibility of the diocese or the Anglican Church in North America to ensure I comply.

I am (check appropriate group):

- ☐ Clergy
- ☐ Vestry
- ☐ Employee, non-clergy
- ☐ Lay minister
- ☐ Volunteer

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

\*This form must be signed and returned by all clergy; vestry; lay ministers; employees; and volunteers who work with children.

## H.4 Sample Congregational Certificate of Compliance

**[Each diocese will determine how best to encourage and maintain church compliance with their Child Protection Policy. This sample certificate could be used for internal record keeping or provide documentation to the diocese. Your final form should be approved by your diocesan chancellor.]**

Congregation Name: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this congregation:

- ☐ Has obtained and will maintain sexual misconduct insurance coverage.
- ☐ Has adopted policies and procedures that comply with terms and conditions set forth by the insurance carrier in respect to sexual misconduct.
- ☐ Has adopted the **[your diocese's]** Policy Manual for the Protection of Children.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rector

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Warden

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **I: CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

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### **I.1 Caring for the Congregation**

Incidents of child abuse, and the secrecy that often surrounds them, can cause devastating harm to the church as well as to the victims. Therefore, where current or past child abuse has been perpetrated by clergy, staff, or volunteers of the church, the church shall provide consultation to encourage the discussion of such incidents and to provide a means to facilitate healing within the church. Section I.3 includes one suggested model of how this may be done: a congregational trauma debriefing model.

It is essential that each church respond to a report or instance of abuse or misconduct in a manner that promotes healing for the victim, the offender and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing within the congregation generally.

Traumatic events have well-documented effects, both immediate and delayed. When a congregation experiences a trauma, the impact is likely to be expressed through symptoms such as:

- Loss of energy or feeling of paralysis;
- Distrust of leadership (often projected onto future leadership);
- Divisions within the congregation;
- Some group members feeling isolated and withdrawing from the group;
- Anger being displaced onto unrelated issues, or blown out of proportion;
- A conspiracy of silence about the traumatic event;
- Despair about the congregation's future;
- Distorting responsibility for the event;
- Seeking a "quick fix" without thoughtful reflection;
- Difficulty making normal and necessary decisions.

All of these symptoms could be carried into subsequent years unless the trauma is processed, integrated into the life of the congregation and healed. A useful model for addressing and integrating a trauma is the "debriefing" model drawn from disciplines that do crisis counseling, such as emergency medicine, law enforcement, military science, crisis chaplaincy, and disaster agencies.

A trauma debriefing allows participants to integrate the reality of the event with their own responses to that event. The Church Information, Trauma, and Healing Debriefing Model set forth in Section I.3 is an effective means to communicate, process, and accept facts, allow feelings to surface, and then, through God's healing grace, head into the future unhindered by the past.

## I.2 Guiding Principles for Healing in the Church

The following guidelines outline steps that can be taken to promote healing in the congregation:

1. **Contact with the Family.** Before the process for healing begins, the Bishop or his representative should maintain regular contact with the complainant(s) and describe to complainant(s) the procedures to be used for promoting congregational healing.
2. **Privacy Concerns.** The privacy of the complainant(s) must be balanced against the need for openness with the local church. Insofar as possible, the identity of the complainant(s) and any details which may identify him/her should be kept confidential.
3. **Providing Facts.** The procedures shall consider that church members usually know when "something is going on," and, in the absence of facts, rumor and speculation will grow.
4. **Notifying Lay Leadership.** The lay leadership should be advised promptly of the issues, since that group's participation is vital in planning and implementing the processes for church healing.
5. **Trauma Debriefing.** The healing and unity of a congregation are fostered when there is an open meeting, called a "Church Information, Trauma, and Healing Debriefing," at which the Bishop or his representative presents as much factual information as possible.

Since the local church will likely include people who have experienced abuse or misconduct themselves, appropriate personnel trained in crisis ministry should be present and available on a small group or one-to-one basis immediately after the formal presentation. Also, local mental health resources (including sliding scale fee agencies) should be publicized so that members of the congregation know how to find these services. (Note that many communities have publicly-funded survivor services.)

The debriefing should follow this process set forth in I.3. The message should be "The Church is a place for truth. We follow Jesus, who described himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life."

6. **Church Spokesperson.** The vestry, in consultation with the clergy, is encouraged to appoint a church spokesperson. The congregation, including church members and staff members, is urged to refer all media inquiries to the church spokesperson.
7. **Interim Priest.** If the circumstances require that an interim priest be engaged, that priest should have special training in trauma debriefing. The interim priest should have regular opportunities to report and consult with the Bishop, his or her designated staff person, and counselors.
8. **Consulting Legal Authorities.** Neither the clergy nor any other church worker should attempt to impede persons who wish to consult with legal authorities.
9. **Continuing Pastoral Care.** The clergy and/or vestry should consult with the Bishop about additional resources for the healing and care of the congregation.

### **I.3 A Model for Information and Trauma Debriefing Meeting**

The following procedures are recommended for the information and trauma debriefing meeting, but the church and the Bishop should consult in advance with their respective legal counsel (and, if counsel recommends, insurance provider(s)) before conducting such a meeting or undertaking any such actions.

#### **Steps Prior to Meeting**

1. **Select Leaders.** Carefully choose a Congregational Trauma Debriefing team and a leader or co-leaders who have had experience with a debriefing or trauma-related process. It is important that the rector or the rector's representative be a visible participant in the debriefing, but not in the role of leadership.
2. **Schedule and Notify.** Schedule the debriefing as soon as possible after the complaint becomes public knowledge. Ensure that all members of the congregation and church staff are notified of the debriefing by telephone, email, overnight mail, or other fast and reliable method of notification. It is important to get a wide participation, so that all who experience the trauma also share the debriefing experience.
3. **Choose Meeting Place.** Hold the debriefing in an appropriate place, preferably on the church's property. Although an opening prayer is appropriate, this should not be a liturgical event.
4. **Address the News Media.** While the debriefing should not be confidential, it is important that no one be placed in jeopardy because of any disclosures made during that meeting. Therefore, it is preferable that the news media not be present for the debriefing, but meet after the debriefing with the church spokesperson and Bishop.

#### **Agenda for the Meeting**

1. **Open the Meeting.** The Bishop or his representative should welcome the attendees, as should one of the lay leaders. The lay leader then should introduce himself/herself, explain the debriefing process, and outline the guidelines for the debriefing. It is important to keep the debriefing to the specified procedures. Leaders should be prepared for a lengthy meeting.
2. **Present the Facts.** Subject to the advice of counsel, the general facts and approximate chronology of the trauma should be presented verbally, supplemented by written notations such as a summary handout, or by writing notes on newsprint during the factual presentation. The goal is to ensure that all those present have a common record of the traumatic event. Note that this is not a time for feelings to be expressed, and the group may need some direction to withhold those feelings until the next phase of the debriefing.

3. **Solicit Reactions.** Once an appropriate record has been presented, the lay leader should invite church members to express their reactions to the facts. (Some church members may need to be directed to express their own feelings and not those of others.) No feelings, however trivial, intense, or unusual, should be discounted, and no effort should be made to fix, soothe, or smooth them over. The responses simply are to be collected and heard.
4. **Examine Repercussions.** Once reactions have been expressed fully, the leader should ask those present to turn their attention to the repercussions of the event, and consider the congregation's future. This step bridges the trauma with the ongoing life of those involved in the trauma. It may be a time to explore some of the issues the congregation will face in the near future. As with the presentation of facts, the issues raised may be noted both verbally and in writing.
5. **Seek Context and Perspective.** Members of the congregation also should be invited to place the event within a context or perspective. There may be expressions of confusion, helplessness, or curiosity about how other groups have resolved an issue of this type. In this phase, people may have an awareness of paradox and pose some hard questions such as the following:
  - Why do bad things happen?
  - How can it be that such a talented priest/leader could be involved in misconduct?
  - Why do things like this happen in a church?
  - Where does the responsibility lie?
  - What about the resources of our faith?

Leaders have discretion whether to respond, or to simply allow others speak.

### **Actions After the Meeting**

1. **Plan for the Future.** The final step is planning. This could include
  - Scheduling a follow-up session one or two months into the future;
  - Discussing the ways in which the pastoral and sacramental needs of the congregation will be met; or
  - Describing the resources available to people who may need counseling or other specialized attention.
2. **Provide Trained Counselors.** For the immediate needs of those present, it is important that trained crisis professionals be available in the church building so that individuals or groups may process their feelings further. These professionals are present simply to listen and support people in integrating the trauma.



3. **Debrief the Debriefing.** After the debriefing, members of the Congregational Trauma Debriefing Team should meet to discuss their own experiences with the debriefing meeting, in order to do the following:
- Plan the follow-up monitoring of the congregation in the future;
  - Determine whether there are issues that will need further clarification;
  - Determine whether there are complicating factors, or factors that require special continuing attention;
  - Decide what the lay leadership of the congregation requires to address the issue further; and evaluate the debriefing meeting itself (or agree to do so at a later date).

### **Additional Responses & Follow-Up**

If new information comes to light after the first debriefing, further meetings may be held. Additionally, regular follow-up sessions with the congregation should be held during the first year after disclosure of the incident(s).

Additional appropriate church responses may include:

- Regular prayer for the complainant(s), the respondent(s), and the congregation should continue;
- Preaching on the subject of violation of trust and liturgical acts of corporate penance;
- Securing a safe place for the complainant(s) and the complainant's family in community life;
- In the event that incarceration or other punitive action follows legal proceedings, developing a means for the congregation to deal appropriately with the person who may be imprisoned.

### **Congregational Follow-up: The First Year**

Even with the best of care, a congregation that has experienced sexual misconduct will likely need an ongoing program of support and assistance, especially in the first year. This year will be devoted to a healing process, in which the congregation slowly will integrate the reality of its experience into its future. If such integration does not take place, the congregation may suffer from prolonged loss of energy, despair about the future, loss and/or isolation of some members, distrust of lay and/or ordained leadership or of the Bishop, and difficulty making decisions or taking risks.

Suggested congregational follow-up activities may include:

- **Meeting with the Bishop.** A meeting with the Bishop or the Bishop's representative and the vestry in order to assess the healing process of the congregation.

- **Staff Input.** Obtaining input from church staff (including an interim priest where present) about their observations regarding the incident and the debriefing process.
- **Study Groups.** Establishing study groups to consider the issue of healing from sexual abuse, perhaps by reading a selected book for discussion.
- **Self-evaluation.** Conducting a congregational self-evaluation, through the use of a questionnaire or survey instrument.
- **Focus Groups.** Creating congregational focus groups to address the issue of where the congregation stands in its process of moving ahead.
- **Committee on Congregational Life.** Forming a Committee on Congregational Life charged with assessing the needs and planning programs for continued healing.
- **Professional Consultant.** Appointing a professional consultant experienced with issues of child abuse to work with the vestry and affected congregation on the components of the healing process.

### **Using the Trauma to Help Others**

Some churches, having worked through a history of child abuse, take up a special vocation in a related area. Such steps signify that the congregation has moved into the redemptive activity of letting its own pain be a gift for others. Among possible actions:

- **Helping Other Churches.** Offering help to other churches confronted with the same issues.
- **Sponsoring Programs.** Sponsoring seminars or programs on ethics and sexuality.
- **Church Building Use.** Offering the church building for use by community groups to address issues of child abuse.
- **Developing programs for young people** about protecting themselves from abuse.

## I.4 Pastoral Response to Known Sexual Offenders

The church must make every reasonable effort to protect children. Special care must be taken when a church interacts with a person who is registered as a sexual offender, or self-discloses a history of sexual misconduct towards children, or self-discloses a struggle with sexual attraction toward children.

When such a person is known to be a participant in the church or its activities, the clergy shall inhibit that person from any contact with children and shall require (except as otherwise directed by the church's legal counsel) the offender to sign a contract/covenant that details expectations, defines boundaries and off-limits locations (e.g. children's areas, acolyte vesting areas), and establishes appropriate supervision (such as, for example, a bathroom escort) for the offender while on church premises and/or at church activities. The church shall have in place a plan to deal with any violation of the contract/covenant.

If the perpetrator is observed acting in an inappropriate manner with children or their families, the rector or wardens shall inform the family/families of a potential danger to their child/children (unless otherwise directed by the church's legal counsel). Where appropriate, the rector or senior warden shall consult the offender's probation or parole officer to assure that supervision and reporting requirements have been met.

*O merciful Creator, your loving hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence, and give us grace to honor you with all that you have entrusted to us; that we, remembering the account we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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