

SAMPLE

SAFEGUARDING CYCLE TRAINING GUIDE

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ANGLICAN CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA

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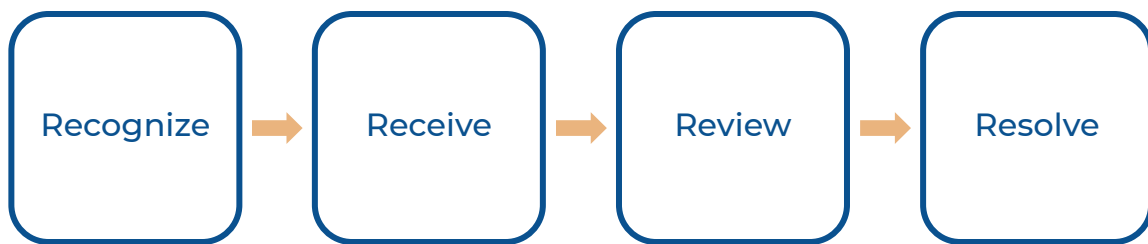
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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This Safeguarding Cycle Training familiarizes the Province and its dioceses of canonical requirements and general best practices concerning safeguarding in the Church. Safeguarding is not just about administering discipline when misconduct or harm occurs. It is a continual cycle that cultivates a church culture of awareness and prevention grounded in the biblical mandate to to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). Safeguarding begins and ends by shaping a culture that actively Recognizes risks, Receives disclosures with grace, Reviews concerns thoroughly, and Resolves them faithfully.



This process equips the Church—from the Province to the parish—to walk humbly with God while protecting His people from harm.

Drawing from the *Provincial Constitution and Canons* (particularly *Title IV* on ecclesiastical discipline) and the *Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Ecclesiastical Trial Courts and the Court for the Trial of a Bishop*, this model aligns canonical integrity with safeguarding best practices. The goal is a healthy church that collectively reflects Christ’s mercy and righteousness.

This guidance is intended to help dioceses understand how questions about safeguarding are answered. As safeguarding and misconduct are local and contextual, this guidance clearly specifies when procedures are canonically required (according to the Provincial Constitution and Canons) versus suggested best practices. Each diocese is encouraged to adapt this guide for education and implementation alongside the *Provincial Sample Policy for the Protection of Children and Adults*.

SCOPE

Safeguarding begins locally but impacts the common good of the whole Province. The scope of this training is to help the Church recognize and prevent misconduct, as well as to train the Church on how to receive and respond to misconduct if it occurs. For the purposes of this training, misconduct is defined by *Title IV, Canon 2*. This canon describes the nature of misconduct that may be presented against an Archbishop, a Bishop, a Presbyter, or a Deacon in this Church. However, this Safeguarding Cycle training widens the scope to help churches

recognize, receive, review, and resolve harm from wherever it may arise.

It is the moral duty of the whole Church to pursue godly discipline when the safety of the people of God is jeopardized. Rectors have a heightened obligation to safeguard the local flock, but it is the duty of each diocesan Bishop to ensure that healthy processes are implemented across the diocese and to oversee the disciplinary process of clergy, deacons, and lay leaders. The Province provides safeguarding resources to the dioceses and the Archbishop oversees the disciplinary process against a Bishop. The Dean of the College of Bishops oversees the disciplinary process against the Archbishop. At all levels, it is our shared responsibility to act decisively when harm is suspected, and to care well for those affected. *Title I, Canon 5.9* of the Provincial Constitution and Canons affirms this duty:

It is the moral duty of the whole Church—the Province, the dioceses, and local congregations and ministries—to ensure that those entrusted with leadership are subject to godly discipline as needed. As the primary level at which discipline is exercised, each diocese shall establish processes and procedures to respond to reports of misconduct by clergy and laypersons, and to facilitate care for those affected. It is the duty of each diocesan bishop—not the Province—to ensure that these processes are implemented within congregations, ministries, and diocesan structures, and to monitor and ensure compliance.

The term “ecclesiastical authority” throughout indicates the person who is canonically responsible for safeguarding under their jurisdiction. For example, if a report concerns clergy, a lay leader, or a volunteer, the bishop is the appropriate ecclesiastical authority. If a bishop is the subject of a report of misconduct, the Archbishop is the appropriate ecclesiastical authority.

APPROACH

This guidance elevates a systems-based model—each report is not only about an individual event but a chance to examine our culture, structures, and oversight. Prevention is built into the process, and spiritual formation—grounded in Scripture and prayer—is essential.

TRAINING

It is a best practice that all bishops, clergy, lay leaders, safeguarding teams, and volunteers should be trained in this cycle and refreshed regularly—at least annually. A healthy safeguarding culture is one where people are alert, equipped, and courageous to act in love.

RECOGNIZE

Safeguarding begins with vision and vigilance. To recognize harm—or the potential for it—is to pay attention. The Church must be moved by both what is wrong and build a healthy structure for the health and safety of the people of God.

CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF PREVENTION

Recognizing that misconduct and harm likes to thrive in the shadows, it is important to foster a culture of prevention. Prevention is the fruit of intentional formation and discipleship that cultivates good soil and plants healthy seeds. To support safeguarding from the Province to the parish, it is important to elevate safeguarding into general church staff training and leadership development. There are some canonically required safeguarding initiatives as well as general best practices to cultivating a culture of prevention:

Canonically Required:

- Each diocese will have a Protection Policy for Children and Adults that is publicly available by June 30, 2025 (*Title I, Canon 5.8*).
- Each diocese will have two Reports Receivers by December 31, 2025 (*Title I, Canon 5.9*).

Best practices include:

- Ongoing audits and policy reviews
- Annual safeguarding training
- Safe recruitment, vetting, and background checks
- Clear, enforced codes of conduct for church staff

KEY PRACTICES FOR RECOGNITION

Many of these practices are already reflected in the ACNA *Sample Protection Policy for Children and Adults*. Sharing them here is not intended to add an additional burden where practices are already in place, but to put them in context within the safeguarding cycle.

- **Training and Education:** Every person in ministry—clergy, staff, and volunteers—should be trained to recognize signs of harm, both obvious and subtle, such as “grooming.”
- **Designated Safeguarding Roles:** Each parish must appoint a Safeguarding Officer and at least two Reports Receivers (*Title I, Canon 5.9*), ensuring accessibility and accountability.
- **Routine Audits:** Dioceses should review safeguarding compliance every two years—checking training records, volunteer screening, and policy adherence.
- **Embedding Safeguarding in Teaching:** Use teaching and prayer to elevate themes of lament, acting justly, and repentance.
- **Empowering the Congregation:** Foster a climate where people feel safe raising concerns. Encourage attentiveness to secrecy, manipulation, fear, or misuse of power. Treat the voices of children and the vulnerable not as disruptions, but as sacred insights.

By developing eyes to see and ears to hear, we make space for the Spirit to shine light before shadows take hold.

RECEIVE

After we recognize a concern, we must be ready to receive it. This means creating a culture where people are heard with compassion, their reports are taken seriously, and action begins. To receive well is both a legal duty and a spiritual one—it reflects the heart of the Good Shepherd who hears the cry of the wounded.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

By December 31, 2025, every diocese is canonically required to have two Reports Receivers. Most dioceses have someone already serving in this role. However, there is always the chance that a report comes to whomever a reporter trusts or believes to be a Reports Receiver. Therefore, all church leadership and staff should be trained on how to receive and direct a report of misconduct or harm.

If a report concerns sexual or physical abuse by a bishop, clergy person, deacon, lay leader, or volunteer, immediately call 911 and make a report directly to local law enforcement or child protective services if the abuse involves a minor. It is the scope of civil authorities to inquire into reports of sexual or physical abuse, not the church.

Nevertheless, after reporting the abuse to local authorities or child protective services, a reports receiver should work with their immediate ecclesiastical authority so that they are aware of how to care for persons involved and take appropriate action to respond within the church.

If the report involves other forms of misconduct as defined by the ACNA's Constitution and Canons (Title IV, Canon 2), the Reports Receiver will differentiate if a report needs an administrative review or an initial inquiry with the advice of their ecclesiastical authority.

Key principles when receiving a report of misconduct:

- **Ensure safety:** If the individual is in immediate danger, call emergency services without hesitation.
- **Listen well:** Find a private, safe space. Let the person speak in their own words. Offer calm reassurance: "Thank you for telling me. This was not your fault."
- **Support presence:** If possible, include a second trusted adult as a silent support—not as an interrogator.

- **Avoid leading questions:** Do not press for details or suggest answers. Use open-ended prompts: “Tell me more,” or “What happened next?”
- **Document carefully:** Immediately record what was said, including the date, time, setting, and exact words as remembered. Use a standard report form when available.
- **Maintain confidentiality:** Share only with those directly responsible for safeguarding. Do not gossip or speculate. Honor the trust that has been given.
- **Report promptly:** Inform civil authorities and church leadership as required. If the report involves clergy or serious misconduct, notify the bishop or designated provincial contact without delay.

Disclosures are sacred moments. How we receive them matters deeply. Our response can either begin the road to healing—or deepen the wound.

INITIAL TRIAGE – DISCERNMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

A Reports Receiver should engage every report with pastoral presence and practical discernment:

- **Frivolous or unfounded concerns:** An initial review should assess if a report is clearly incoherent, malicious, or unrelated to misconduct, in which case after careful review and with documentation of the report and determination, it may be dismissed.
- **Credible concerns:** If the issue appears to involve misconduct as described by *Title IV, Canon 2*, proceed to the Review phase. As appropriate, notify the person named in the report, including the nature of the concern and, when safe, the identity of the reporter.
- **Pastoral intervention:** For non-abusive interpersonal issues, a pastoral conversation may lead to reconciliation. But if serious misconduct is involved, or the issue remains unresolved, formal investigation is warranted.

MANDATORY CIVIL REPORTING

Church leaders and volunteers who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults are mandatory reporters in most states. Any known or suspected harm must be reported to civil authorities within a specific timeframe—regardless of internal assessments or preferences. Check timelines and requirements in your specific state. Church investigations do not replace law enforcement but might proceed alongside them to ensure the safety of all throughout a civil and ecclesiastical process.

ECCLESIASTICAL RESPONSE

- **Immediate steps:** The bishop or ecclesiastical authority must determine whether to impose a temporary restriction (inhibition) on a clergy person during the investigation. This protects all involved while maintaining the presumption of innocence.
- **Lay involvement:** Similar prudence applies for lay staff and volunteers—such as being relieved of duties temporarily while facts are gathered.

RECEIVING A REPORT – PRACTICAL CHANNELS

Reports may come in any form—conversation, email, phone call, or anonymous submission. It is recommended to inform reporters that if they report anonymously, it may be difficult to confirm a report. One value of anonymous reporting is that multiple anonymous emails may build a case against someone accused of misconduct and can lead to further inquiry. Regardless, every report should be documented clearly and submitted through the proper diocesan form or reporting system. If a report concerns a bishop, it must be sent directly to the Province (e.g., misconduct@acna.org).

WRITTEN AND SIGNED NOTICES

Wherever possible, reporters should submit written, signed notices. This protects both parties and ensures clarity. If the report is verbal, the receiver should document the key facts on their behalf.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

- Acknowledge receipt within two business days.
- Log each report securely and track all related actions.
- Avoid duplicate reporting—add to the existing case file as more information emerges.

Every report initiates a sacred trust. It deserves careful attention, prayerful action, and detailed records.

INITIAL SAFETY MEASURES

If the report describes someone in immediate danger, respond urgently: notify law enforcement, remove alleged offenders from ministry access, and offer protection to the reporter. Alert church insurers as required. Assign a support advocate where needed.

PASTORAL CARE AT INTAKE

This is a moment of soul care. Offer prayer, connect individuals to chaplains or counselors, and affirm the Church's commitment to stand with them. Intake is not just administrative—it is spiritual triage.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the task of the Church to safeguard sensitive information, the disclosure of which could jeopardize the reporter or the respondent while reports are being assessed or investigated.

General Principle: Guard confidentiality rigorously. Only those who need to know should have access to details. Use confidentiality agreements where appropriate. This protects everyone—reporters, respondents, witnesses, and the process itself.

During an Investigation: Investigation Teams can use an investigation planning sheet to help track relevant information concerning the investigation.

- Depending on the sensitive nature of an report, all records and reports related to an investigation to be shared for investigation purposes outside of an investigation team may be anonymous via the removal of names and the substitution of “Reporter A,” “Subject A,” “Subject B,” “Witness A,” “Witness B,” etc. *All investigations involving information of minors should be confidential.*
- An Investigation Planning Sheet that contains the full identity of the complainant, the accused, and witnesses may only be shared among the investigation team.
- Therefore, there may be two Investigation Planning Sheets – one with anonymous personal information that may be shared in the event that information needs to be disclosed, and another containing full information for those that need to know only.

Post-Investigation: Once an inquiry or investigation is completed, refer to the section “Community Follow-Up and System Reform” under “Resolve” for external communications guidance.

Clear, compassionate receiving is the bridge between awareness and action. The Church’s credibility and care are revealed in how we listen, record, and respond.

REVIEW

To review a report is to seek the truth with integrity and care. This phase includes investigation, discernment, and wise application of Church law and pastoral oversight. Here, the Church listens deeply, examines responsibly, and prepares to act justly.

LAUNCHING AN INVESTIGATION

The scope and complexity of an investigation should match the severity and complexity of the allegations. While this section offers guidance on a full, formal investigation, the ecclesiastical authority initiating the inquiry may determine the appropriate scope of the review at the outset, based on the particular situation.

When a report warrants further assessment, the bishop (or parish clergy in consultation with the bishop) initiates a formal inquiry. A Canonical Investigation Team may be appointed to examine the facts and recommend next steps.

This internal process runs parallel to any civil investigation but does not replace it. It is an ecclesiastical inquiry focused on truth, care, and accountability within the Church.

NOTIFICATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Once an investigation begins:

- Notify the complainant and respondent with a summary of the concern, the process, and expectations.
- All involved parties—including the investigation team—must agree to maintain confidentiality throughout the process.
- Offer each party the opportunity to have a support person or advocate.

ADVOCATES AND PASTORAL SUPPORT

Both complainant and respondent should be offered pastoral care and practical support—such as access to counseling, spiritual direction, or legal guidance. This support does not influence the investigation but ensures that all are treated with dignity.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Ecclesiastical Authority:** Depending on the subject of the report, the ecclesiastical authority is the one who exercises such authority over the accused. This person makes the final disciplinary decisions, and may recuse if impartiality is in question.
 - A report against clergy, deacon, lay leader, or volunteer - the diocesan bishop.
 - A report against a bishop - the Archbishop.

- **Reports Receivers:** Receive and document reports. They may assist with the initial review or hand off the case to an investigation committee.
- **Investigation Team:** An investigation team can be an internal team or an external team. The investigation team is a trained group (often including legal, pastoral, and safeguarding expertise) that gathers facts, interviews key people, and offers a recommendation.
- **Chancellor:** a provincial or diocesan representative who provides legal counsel but does not direct or receive reports.
- **Church Attorney:** May be appointed if formal charges or a trial become necessary.
- **Standing Committee / Parish Council:** May be consulted depending on diocesan policies.
- **Civil Authorities:** Conduct independent investigations when harm or criminal activity is reported.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Anyone involved who may have a personal stake in the case must disclose it and, if necessary, step aside. Recusal safeguards the process and reinforces trust.

INVESTIGATION PLANNING AND TIMELINE

The investigation team should:

- Establish a clear plan—who will be interviewed, what evidence is needed, and by when.
- Aim for timeliness. The investigation team should not make promises on a specific timeline, but they should endeavour to set specific goals for key deliverables in the investigation of a report.

GATHERING EVIDENCE

- **Interview complainants and respondents** with compassion, clarity, and respect.
- **Interview witnesses** and anyone with relevant context or insight.
- **Collect documentation:** emails, texts, photos, church records, or anything directly related to the concern.
- **Record everything:** Maintain a secure, dated log of interviews, findings, and actions.

ASSESSING CHURCH SYSTEMS

Investigators should also note any systemic issues that contributed to the situation—gaps in training, unclear policies, or lax oversight—all indicative of areas to improve or cultivate safeguarding more proactively in the church’s culture. These observations will guide future reform.

INTERIM ACTIONS AND COMMUNICATION

During the review, leadership may take precautionary steps—such as temporary suspension from ministry—if continued involvement poses risk. Communication with both complainant and respondent should be consistent and transparent throughout, especially if delays occur.

EVALUATING FINDINGS

The role of the investigation team is an evaluation of facts. Then, there is a separate assessment of the meaning of those facts - e.g., if the facts amount to misconduct that aligns with an ecclesiastical offense, etc. Considering the evidence, investigation team will recommend to the ecclesiastical authority if the allegation is:

- **Substantiated:** There is sufficient evidence that misconduct occurred.
- **Unsubstantiated:** The evidence does not support the allegation.
- **Partially substantiated:** Some concerns are supported, others are not.

This discernment must be rooted in facts, not assumptions or pressure. The guiding standard for ecclesiastical trials is “clear and convincing evidence.” Regardless of the outcome, parties must be informed in a direct, pastoral, and respectful manner. See further guidance on these findings below in “Resolve.”

CANONICAL INTEGRATION

If the misconduct aligns with an ecclesiastical offense under Title IV (e.g., immorality or scandalous behavior), the bishop may initiate formal disciplinary processes such as Presentment or Inhibition. Canonical protocols must be followed and documented accordingly. While ecclesiastical trials are uncommon, they remain an essential safeguard for the Church, providing a path of truth-seeking, accountability, and godly discipline in the most serious cases of clerical misconduct. When reconciliation is not possible, and the Church must act in a formal capacity, trials proceed under **Title IV of the Canons** and the **Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Ecclesiastical Trial Courts**.

A Note on Purpose

The goal of ecclesiastical trials is never retribution, but repentance, healing, and the protection of Christ’s Church. When conducted rightly, trials uphold the integrity of ordained ministry and the holiness to which we are all called. As stewards of God’s household, we engage this process in humility, seeking to act justly with mercy, truth, and grace.

Articles of Presentment

When the Bishop (or other ecclesiastical authority) concludes that a formal trial is necessary, charges—called Articles of Presentment—are drawn up. These must clearly state the offenses alleged, including supporting facts (who, what, when, where) and cite the specific canons violated (Canon IV.3.4; Rule 5(a)). The articles are then served to the Respondent (the accused clergy), initiating the formal trial process (Rule 2).

Summons and Response

A summons accompanies the Presentment and gives the Respondent 30 days to file an Answer (Rule 3(c)). This response must admit or deny each charge and may include any defense (Rule 3(c)(1)). Both the Church and the Respondent may be represented by canonical or legal counsel during the proceedings (Title IV, Canon 3.3.3).

Discovery and Disclosure

In keeping with Christian fairness and integrity, both sides exchange relevant information in advance—witnesses, documents, and testimony—so the trial is transparent and not adversarial in tone. This phase is governed by the Rules of Procedure (Rule 8), and aims to prevent surprises, ensuring both parties are prepared and that the truth can be discerned in love.

Conduct of the Trial

Trials are formal but spiritual in nature. They are held before either a diocesan court (for presbyters or deacons) or the Provincial Court (for bishops), with members drawn from both clergy and laity (Canon IV.5.1–2). The court hears opening statements, witness testimony, and closing arguments. All testimony is taken under solemn oath, affirming a commitment to truth before God (Rule 9).

The Church's burden is to show each charge is supported by **clear and convincing evidence**—a high standard that reflects both the seriousness of ecclesiastical discipline and the presumption of innocence (Rule 1; Rule 11(d)).

Judgement and Sentencing

After the hearing, the court privately deliberates and issues a written judgment. A majority vote of the judges is required to determine whether each charge is proved (Rule 12(a)). The final decision must be delivered in writing within 60 days (Canon IV.5.1.3; Rule 12(b)). If guilt is found, the court may impose appropriate discipline as outlined in Canon IV.8, ranging from admonition to deposition from holy orders.

Right to Appeal

The Respondent may appeal the judgment if there is reason to believe there was error in law or process (Canon IV.5.5–6). The appellate process ensures accountability not only for the accused but also for the Church's handling of the case.

INDEPENDENT OR EXTERNAL REVIEW

In high-profile or sensitive cases, external reviewers may be appointed to ensure neutrality. Dioceses can also partner to share trained investigators and avoid conflicts of interest.

FINAL PASTORAL CONVERSATION (OPTIONAL)

Before a decision is finalized, a bishop might offer a final, prayerful meeting with the accused—an opportunity to hear the findings, respond, and, if possible, begin a path to repentance. This is not a trial but a pastoral encounter. A facilitator may guide the conversation with sensitivity and grace.

FINAL REPORT

The investigation team prepares a Final Report outlining:

- Allegations and process followed
- Key findings and supporting evidence
- Recommended outcome (e.g., trial, dismissal, or remedial discipline)

The ecclesiastical authority reviews this report and makes a final determination. This outcome is then communicated respectfully to all parties.

DOCUMENTATION AND CONTINUITY

All case records—including interviews, emails, and outcomes—must be stored securely and retained in accordance with canonical and diocesan policy. These records ensure continuity, accountability, and the protection of others in the future.

COOPERATION BETWEEN DIOCESES

Where helpful, dioceses may collaborate to share resources, training, or investigators. Title I, Canon 5.9.8 permits such partnerships to strengthen safeguarding across the province.

RESOLVE

The “Resolve” phase implements outcomes—disciplinary, pastoral, and systemic—so that the Church may respond wisely to what was revealed and begin the work of discipleship, healing and, where needed, godly discipline. Resolution is never merely procedural; it is a sacred duty rooted in the pursuit of truth and mercy.

TIMELINES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Once findings are determined, actions must follow without undue delay. In less complex cases, resolution may be swift. In more serious matters, the Church should still aim to communicate the outcome within a reasonable timeframe—weeks or months, not years. Unresolved cases erode trust and delay healing.

IF THE ALLEGATION IS SUBSTANTIATED

Inform the parties

Clearly and kindly notify both the complainant and the respondent of the findings. Offer pastoral care in both directions—encouragement and validation to the harmed, and a call to repentance for the one who caused harm.

Disciplinary response

The bishop implements discipline in line with the canons. This may include:

- Formal admonition
- Required counseling or supervision
- Suspension or removal from ministry (deposition)
- Other disciplinary measures with the intention to encourage repentance and safeguard the soul (1 Cor 5:5).

Severity depends on the nature of the offense, the level of repentance, and the potential risk to others.

Redemptive care

ACNA SAMPLE SAFEGUARDING CYCLE TRAINING GUIDE

- **For reporters:** Even after the initial reception of the report as detailed earlier, the church can connect them with counseling, prayer, and a path of healing.
- **For responders** (when appropriate): Provide pastoral support and boundaries, not for restoration to position, but to relationship with Christ and His Church.

Civil and external follow-through

If the conduct involves a criminal offense or civil liability, ensure proper coordination with

legal authorities and insurers. Serious outcomes should be reported to the Provincial office for recordkeeping.

Congregational communication

Inform the church community only as needed, in language that is honest yet discreet. For example: “Following a report and investigation, appropriate action has been taken, and the individual is no longer serving in their previous role.” Avoid unnecessary details or public speculation.

IF THE ALLEGATION IS *UNSUBSTANTIATED*

Communicate respectfully

The respondent should be cleared and, if removed temporarily, restored. The reporter should be thanked for raising concerns—even if unproven—reminded that it was right to speak up. Some possible responses include, “The report was found to be untruthful,” or “There wasn’t enough evidence to sufficiently conclude the report was valid.”

Address harm

Both parties may carry wounds from the process. Offer space for reconciliation where possible, but never force a meeting. Provide pastoral care to help both sides process what has occurred.

Respond to false reports

If a claim is determined to be intentionally false or malicious, and the reporter is a church leader or member, appropriate discipline may follow.

Reintegrate the accused

If cleared, the accused should be publicly restored (if their suspension was public) and welcomed back into ministry or community life with dignity.

LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Whether or not misconduct occurred, each case reveals something. Leaders should meet to review:

- What policies or systems failed or worked well?
- What new training, oversight, or reforms are needed?
- How can we prevent similar issues going forward?

This leads to lasting change—not just resolution of a single case.

COMMUNITY FOLLOW-UP AND SYSTEM REFORM

Leadership should:

- Implement policy or process changes based on findings.
- Communicate reforms to appropriate stakeholders (e.g., new volunteer requirements or reporting procedures).
- Offer spiritual care to the wider community, if impacted. A service of lament or a pastoral letter may bring closure.

POST-INVESTIGATION REVIEW

Once a case concludes, conduct a formal internal review:

- Did we follow the process with integrity?
- Were actions timely and clear?
- What needs to be improved in this Safeguarding Cycle itself?

Close the loop by following up with those who initiated a report, respondents, and the church community. Safeguarding is not just a response—it's a culture we continue to build.

CONCLUSION

*The Safeguarding Cycle—**Recognize, Receive, Review, Resolve**—is not a checklist, but a spiritual rhythm. It shapes how we care for the vulnerable, respond to harm, and act justly in the life of the Church.*

By following this pattern faithfully:

- We protect the dignity of every person made in God's image.
- We hold leaders accountable with truth and mercy.
- We cultivate trust through transparency and wise action.
- We learn, grow, and reform so that what is broken may be made whole.

Safeguarding is not a task for specialists alone. It belongs to the whole Church—from vestry to bishop, from parishioner to pastor. As we walk this path together, we become not only a safer Church, but a more Christlike one.

“He has told you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

—Micah 6:8

Let this scripture be our standard, our prayer, and our commitment.

SAFEGUARDING CASE STUDY

Case Study: *“The Youth Retreat Concern”*

OBJECTIVE

To show how a church responds when a safeguarding concern arises, highlighting the distinct yet collaborative roles of pastoral care, canonical discipline, and legal compliance.

SCENARIO SUMMARY

A 17-year-old student shares with her small group leader at a diocesan youth retreat that one of the adult volunteers, Mr. D, made her feel uncomfortable. She says he kept finding excuses to be alone with her, texted her at night, and once brushed her back while she was walking away, making her feel “uncomfortable.” She says, “I don’t think it’s serious, but I don’t want to come to youth group if he’s there.”

DEBRIEF DISCUSSION

- What would you do as a youth leader hearing this?
- What would your role be as a vestry member, parent, or bishop?
- How do we ensure the student is not forgotten in the process?
- How do we care for Mr. D while also maintaining safety and integrity?

WORKSHOP WALKTHROUGH

a. What would you do as a youth leader hearing this?

- The student’s disclosure is the report. It must be received seriously.
- First responders: Listen non-judgmentally, thank her, and clarify that her well-being is the priority.
- Immediate pastoral care: offer support from a female leader or counselor.
- Recommend removing Mr. D from active ministry pending review (precautionary, not punitive).
- Record the report in writing with date, time, people present, and exact language if possible.
- Initiate safeguarding flow: Recognize → Receive → Review → Resolve.

“We honor the student’s courage and create a safe space. Even if this isn’t ‘provable’ abuse, it is a boundary violation. Her safety is our call to action.”

b. Canonical Response – (Title IV)

- Determine status: Is Mr. D ordained or a lay volunteer?

- Determine status: Is Mr. D ordained or a lay volunteer?
- If lay, diocesan safeguarding policy applies; if clergy, Title IV applies.
- Diocesan Bishop (or appointed Reports Receivers - Dec 31, 2025) receives the formal report.
- Bishop may impose an inhibition or suspension pending investigation.
- A BOI or Investigation Committee evaluates if a formal presentment is warranted.
- Emphasize principles of due process *and* presumption of innocence.

"Our canons ensure that the process is fair and protective—both for the person raising concern and for the accused."

c. Chancellor Response – Civil Reporting Lens

- The student is 17, so still a minor in most jurisdictions. This triggers mandatory reporting.
- Most state laws require reporting of reasonable suspicion.
- A report must be made to Child Protective Services or Law Enforcement.
- Legal risk exists if the church fails to report.
- Clergy privilege usually does not cover third-party disclosures.
- Check for prior allegations that may indicate a pattern - this is one reason why even confidential reports should be received.

"Even if it seems borderline, it's better to over-report than under-report. The law protects those who report in good faith."

FAQs

What is the ultimate goal of the Safeguarding Cycle?

The goal is both truth-seeking (determining whether harm or misconduct occurred) and mercy-centered (ensuring safety, healing, accountability, and long-term trust in the Church's integrity).

How does the investigation team ensure objectivity?

By including trained, diverse members with expertise in safeguarding, pastoral care, and legal matters. External reviewers may be engaged if necessary to avoid conflicts of interest.

Can a person report if they are not 100% sure abuse or harm occurred?

Yes. It is better to report suspicions than to risk silence. Investigators will evaluate credibility and evidence. Reporting in good faith is generally protected.

What does "clear and convincing evidence" mean?

It is a high standard of proof requiring that the evidence presented is highly and substantially more likely to be true than untrue. This standard helps balance justice for both the accuser and accused.

How does the Church guard against false accusations?

All reports are carefully reviewed with documented evidence, impartial investigations, and confidentiality. The process includes safeguards such as conflict of interest disclosures and the right of the accused to respond.

How is confidentiality maintained?

Confidentiality is maintained through restricted information sharing, secure documentation, and confidentiality agreements. Anonymous identifiers (e.g. "Reporter A") may be used during some stages of review.

What happens if a report is substantiated?

The ecclesiastical authority will implement appropriate discipline, which may include removal from ministry, counseling requirements, or canonical trial depending on severity.

What happens if a report is unsubstantiated?

Both the reporter and respondent are informed with respect and pastoral care. If the accused was removed temporarily, they may be reinstated publicly to restore their reputation.

What support is offered to victims?

Pastoral care, counseling, spiritual direction, and ongoing support are offered to help victims heal spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

What if the reporter is harmed by retaliation?

Retaliation is a distinct form of misconduct. Any form of retaliation should be reported immediately and will be addressed as a serious safeguarding concern itself.

How does the Church ensure that patterns of misconduct do not go unnoticed?

Even anonymous or seemingly minor reports are logged and monitored over time. Patterns may emerge that warrant investigation.

What training should be provided to prevent harm?

Annual safeguarding training, leadership development, background checks, and embedding safeguarding principles into the church culture are all part of ongoing prevention efforts.

How does this process contribute to the health of the Church?

By fostering transparency, accountability, and pastoral care, the Safeguarding Cycle builds trust, strengthens leadership integrity, and promotes healing in the body of Christ.

Why does the Church take reports seriously even when there is limited evidence?

Because silence or inaction can enable harm to continue. Every report deserves careful, respectful, and confidential review to discern the truth and protect the vulnerable.

What if new evidence arises after a case is resolved?

The ecclesiastical authority may reopen the case if significant new, credible evidence emerges that could alter the original findings.