

INTERIM POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS



Reformed Episcopal Church

This interim policy supplements the policies of REC dioceses where they may be lacking until such time as each diocese disseminates its own.



ANGLICAN CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA

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OVERVIEW

WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP

The Reformed Episcopal Church with her constituent dioceses 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 nowhere truer than when caring for our children, youth, and adults.

Current statistics regarding child abuse are alarming. One in every three to four girls and one in every six to eight boys are sexually abused before age eighteen. Physical and emotional abuses continue to be serious problems in our society. The effects of such abuse can damage children at the core of who they are, and often follow them into adulthood. Abused children are 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 very important 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).

In addition to protection of children and youth, the Reformed Episcopal Church is committed to honoring the image of God in adults as well. Laboring to treat others, regardless of age, with due respect and honor.

The purpose of this document is to give instruction to the clergy and Deaconesses, laity, and churches of the varied dioceses within the Reformed Episcopal Church that will inform our decisions and methods with regard to safeguarding the children, youth, and all adults, in particular all those with special needs, who are entrusted to us and instruct us, providing at least the minimum standards of care and vigilance.

May God be glorified in all we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray R. Sutton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Most Rev. Dr. Ray R. Sutton

Presiding Bishop & Bishop Ordinary
of the REC Diocese of Mid-America

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 the Reformed Episcopal Church as we craft our child and adult protection policies. It also serves as a reference manual to inform our decisions and methods regarding the safeguarding of those entrusted to us, providing standards of care and vigilance.

THE DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

The Bishop Ordinary, in collaboration with the Standing Committee of his diocese, establishes a Safeguarding Committee, which is responsible for the creation and promulgation of the Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children and Adults, under the authority and oversight of the Bishop and the Standing Committee in accordance with the canons of the Diocese.

From time to time, ideally at least annually, it is recommended that 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.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS POLICY

The Rector, rather than the diocese or the Anglican Church in North America, has overall responsibility for administering this policy within the parish, mission, or church plant he leads, and for providing all reports requested by the diocese. In the absence of a Rector, the Senior Warden will be responsible. Unless forbidden under governing state law, duties may be delegated, except in those areas specifically delineating action by the Rector.

POLICY SUMMARY

Each diocese in the Reformed Episcopal Church requires that each church (see definition) is expected to have in place these procedures (or their equivalent) for preventing misconduct and/or abuse of both adults and children. Below are the key points to remember from this sample policy:

AWARENESS

- All clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers (see definition below) must be screened, background checked, and trained on this policy prior to serving
- All clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers must complete the sexual abuse prevention training prior to serving
- Documentation for laity is maintained by the church; the Diocese maintains documentation for clergy

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

- Two-adult rule should be used at all times (rule of three)
- Pastoral counseling limited to 3 or fewer per person
- Verbal interaction should be kind, clean, legal, and age-specific
- All interactions should remain hands off, especially with restroom policies, affection, and discipline; remain in public view; kids are never alone; be open to parents being present; follow Supervisory Plans and other policies outlined below (medical, restroom, transportation, overnight, off-campus, responding and reporting); provide a safe environment; follow the recommended ratio of Certified Adults to children or youth

REPORTING

- Any report of misconduct or abuse should be reported to the proper authorities immediately, as described below
- Allegations against clergy are to be reported directly to a Diocesan Reports Receiver through the REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH website; allegations against a Bishop should be reported to the Archbishop
- Allegations against all lay persons are to be reported directly to senior church leadership (Rector, priest-in-charge, or Senior Warden)

COMPLIANCE

- Churches are responsible for all documentation regarding screening, training, and implementation for non-clergy employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers, in compliance with this policy and with their insurance carrier's requirements
- The Diocese is responsible for all documentation regarding screening, training, and implementation for clergy, in compliance with this policy and with the diocesan insurance carrier's requirements
- Documentation is to be completed, submitted, and filed no later than December 31 each year

DEFINITIONS

The Bishop Ordinary and the Diocese strictly prohibit all types of abuse (as defined in this document), by any member of the clergy, anyone pursuing ordained ministry, any employee, staff person, vestry member, or by any Child and Youth Worker (as defined) working in any capacity for the Diocese or any diocesan related institution/church in this Diocese.

For the purpose of this policy, please note the interpretation of the following terms:

- **Certified Adult:** an adult who has gone through the full screening and training process outlined in this policy. All clergy (including those seeking ordination or transfer), employees, and vestry members are

required to be certified. All Child and Youth Workers are required to be certified prior to serving with children or youth.

- **Child and Youth Worker:** adult volunteers and paid childcare workers who serve in children and youth activities in diocesan institutions, programs, and churches. This includes teachers in Sunday school classrooms or discipleship groups; it should also include anyone who has access to children in a supervisory capacity even if they are not the primary teacher. All Child and Youth Workers must be certified. All supervision of minors must include two Certified Adults (unrelated strongly preferred) in every room.
- **Abuse*:** interactions in which one person behaves in a cruel, violent, demeaning, or invasive manner toward another person which causes or is likely to cause harm or injury. The term encompasses physical, sexual, and psychological (emotional) mistreatment.
 - **Child Abuse:** any willful act or threatened act resulting in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes, or is likely to cause, the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts and/or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not necessarily constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child. 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. This information is easily obtained through the Department of Children and Families, or like entities, within each state.
 - **Pastoral Abuse:** Pastoral abuse may be found when a person with spiritual authority demonstrates a pattern of control, intimidation, manipulation, coercion, isolation, elitism, censorship of decision making, exploitation, or the use of the name of God to get someone to do something inconsistent with Scripture or our foundational documents. This pattern may include the use of spiritual truths or Scripture to harm others. Pastoral abuse is unacceptable in our churches (see Matthew 7, Matthew 11, Matthew 23).

*Adapted from the American Psychological Association: <https://dictionary.apa.org/abuse>

As a helpful resource, recognizing such laws can change over time, please visit the following website to view links to the child abuse reporting laws in each jurisdiction: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>

- **Advocates:** person(s) selected by the complainant with consent of the Bishop, or appointed by the Bishop if the complainant desires, to assist the complainant(s) in understanding and participating in the disciplinary processes of the church, including obtaining assistance to formulate and submit a complaint that conforms to the canons. Advocates are not to serve as legal advisors or pastors.
- **Bishop:** the Bishop of the Diocese, but also includes the ecclesiastical entity authorized to act in the absence of the Bishop, such as the Standing Committee.
- **Camp Director:** when applicable, each diocese must have its own policies regarding diocesan camps and Camp Directors.
- **Chaplain:** spiritual advisor to the complainant, or to the respondent, selected by the complainant or respondent, or appointed by the Bishop if the complainant or respondent desires.
- **Child or Youth:** any unmarried person under the age of majority under state law—who has not been emancipated by order of the court. In most cases, child refers to infants through elementary school, and youth refers to middle/junior high through high school-aged minors.
- **Children's Ministry Director:** the person overseeing children's ministry in a congregation, whether employee or volunteer.

- **Church:** all fellowships, congregations, parishes, church plants, and any other worshiping entity affiliated or in association with the Diocese.
- **Clergy:** for the purposes of this document clergy includes those ordained in the Anglican Church in North America, as well as those pursuing ordained ministry (including aspirants, postulants, candidates, ordinands, and transfers), whether employed or non-stipendiary.
- **Complainant:** the person making an allegation.
- **Consent:** Generally, consent is when someone agrees, gives permission, or says yes to sexual, romantic or emotional activity with another person. Consent is always freely given and all people in a sexual, romantic, or emotional situation must feel that they are able to say yes or to stop the sexual, romantic, or emotional activity at any point. There is a power dynamic that occurs when people have authority, which may undermine the validity of consent. For example, there is a power differential between a supervisor and a subordinate employee that could undermine the validity of consent. The fact that sexual activity is initiated by someone other than the church worker does not relieve that worker of responsibility, nor does it make sexual activity under those circumstances acceptable. Under no circumstances can a child or minor give consent.
- **Consultants:** person(s) appointed by the Bishop to consult with and advise the respondent accused of misconduct/abuse and his or her legal advisors at reasonable times prior to the issuance of a Presentment. The consultant should be knowledgeable in the canons of the REC and ACNA and shall explain the rights of the member of the clergy and the alternatives. The selection of the consultant may consider the complainant's needs/requests.
- **Dating Relationships:** consensual relationships of clergy or employees with a parishioner in which two parties are exploring a consensual relationship that may lead to a Christian marriage. In such situations, the relationship is to be conducted with the knowledge of the Rector (or Bishop in the case of clergy). Non-clergy consensual dating between individuals not involved in supervisory relationships are excluded from the definition of sexual exploitation. Clergy have the duty to report any dating relationship to their Bishop.
- **Diocesan Reports Receiver:** a Diocesan Reports Receiver is an unbiased receiver who is trained to respond to allegations of misconduct/abuse made through a designated diocesan hotline, website, or email address. They are trained to deploy predetermined notification policies, depending upon the written allegation submitted. Per the ACNA Title 1, Canon 5, Section 9, each diocese shall appoint at least two Diocesan Reports Receivers to receive reports of misconduct. In no event shall any Chancellor of the Diocese serve as a Diocesan Reports Receiver.
- **Director of Safeguarding:** the Director of Safeguarding oversees the Safeguarding Team for the Diocese, which includes all policies, training, prevention, and response.
- **Misconduct:** any violation or misuse of procedures, policies, practices, or processes by an individual or group to improperly control or manipulate others within an organization.
- **Rector:** the person in charge of a parish, including instances where such person has a title other than Rector (such as vicar, priest-in-charge, deacon, or church planter).
- **Respondent:** anyone who is accused of misconduct or abuse.
- **Safeguarding Team:** team drawn from psychologists, counselors, attorneys, and members of the clergy or other persons appointed by the Bishop to oversee the policies and procedures regarding misconduct or abuse in the Diocese. The Safeguarding Team will oversee training, provide prevention methods and resources, respond to inquiries, help handle responses to crises, and recommend policy changes.
- **Sexual misconduct:** includes a range of unwelcome and unwanted sexual conduct, including grooming; verbal, emotional, and/or physical sexual harassment; sexual assault; molestation; and all forms of sexual

violence. Sexual misconduct is not restricted to intercourse but includes a wide range of inappropriate behaviors, including inappropriate emotional intimacy, as well as the following:

- **Sexual misconduct against minors/vulnerable adults:** sexual misconduct against any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or is a vulnerable adult.
- **Grooming:** a technique used to break down barriers of protection. Abusers will use grooming techniques to gain trust, continually testing boundaries in such a way that inappropriate behavior seeps into the relationship without consent or even acknowledgement. Grooming usually includes gaining access through trust, targeting a particular type of person as a victim, slowly eroding boundaries, and employing methods to keep the victim quiet.
- **Sexual harassment:** sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, quid pro quo behavior, sexually motivated physical contact or other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature; including but not limited to, sexually oriented humor or language, questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference, undesired physical contact, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements. This applies with children and with adults where there is an employment, mentoring, or collegial relationship between the persons involved.

This might include:

- Inappropriate touching;
 - Sexually oriented comments about an individual's body;
 - Sending sexually explicit or offensive communications (e.g., text messages, emails, social media messages or posts);
 - Voyeurism, including viewing or displaying objects or pictures that are sexual in nature;
 - Submission to such sexual conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution;
 - Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual;
 - Conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or
 - Subjecting an individual to sexual jokes or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.
- **Sexual coercion:** the use of physical or emotional power to gain sexual gratification.
 - **Sexual exploitation of adults:** including but not limited to, the development of or the attempt to develop, a sexual relationship between a member of the clergy, employee, or volunteer affiliated with the dioceses of the Reformed Episcopal Church and a person with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship, whether there is apparent consent from the individual. Sexual exploitation includes activity during a pastoral relationship such as sexual involvement or sexually demeaning comments. The apparent consent of a possible victim to a sexual or romantic relationship seldom determines whether there has been

- **Sexual exploitation of children:** including, but not limited to, obscene or pornographic photographing, filming or depiction of children for commercial purposes or exploitation, the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in or assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct, or any simulation of any sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of any sexually explicit conduct, or the rape, molestation, incest, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children.

- For the purposes of this policy:

- # AWARENESS

While education about misconduct and abuse is only one part of what is required to build an environment that protects adults and children from abuse, awareness and clarity about various aspects of misconduct are essential to create a healthy church that seeks to protect its people.

SCREENING

One of the foundational steps to protecting our people from abuse is the careful screening of clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers. Screening is designed to expose any potential concerns regarding high-risk offenders before they ever set foot in one of our ministries. This should include background checks, reference checks, interviews, and minimum attendance periods. These efforts are completed to do all we can to create a safe environment for our people.

To help understand who must be screened, by when, and where to keep documentation:

SCREENING				
Role	Background Check		Application/ References/ Interview	Who Keeps Record?
	Required	When	Required	
Clergy (includes Transfers & Postulants)	Yes	Prior to ordination, transfer, and/or hire; [2 year] renewal	Yes	Diocese
Employees	Yes	Prior to hire; [2 year] renewal	Yes	Church
Vestry	Yes	Prior to term; [2 year] renewal	No	Church
Child and Youth Worker	Yes	Prior to serving; [2 year] renewal	Yes	Church
Camp Directors	Yes	Prior to serving; [2 year] renewal	Yes	Church

Screening includes the following procedures:

- **Background checks** – this includes all clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers in diocesan institutions, programs, and congregations. Background checks should be completed prior to serving, hire, ordination or transfer (as applicable), in compliance with the insurance carrier’s requirements.
 - Non-clergy employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers can complete their background checks [through [Protect My Ministry using the ACNA negotiated rate](#), or through an equivalent program]. This should include criminal history, sex offender registry check and, as appropriate, DMV driving license check (see “Transportation” below). A Credit Bureau Record Check is also recommended for clergy, treasurers,

bookkeepers, check signers, and those having access to any church financial accounts and/or credit cards.

- The screening of clergy is the responsibility of the Diocesan office, not the Anglican Church in North America. Clergy seeking canonical residence or license must be background checked through Oxford Document Management (ODM) or other diocesan-approved screening providers prior to the acceptance of Letters Dimissory or issuance of a License. [Delineate what level of background checks and who is responsible for ordering and paying for them.] It is the responsibility of the church to notify the diocesan office to begin a background check as soon as the vestry has decided who they would like to call. A call should not be considered final until the results of the background check are received.
- Clergy background checks will include:
 - Inquiries of all Bishops having past or present canonical authority over the individual, all schools attended by the individual during the past five years, and all employers of the individual during the past five years. If the individual has had more than one employer for over five years, then inquiries will be made of the two most recent employers. In the case of clergy who have served as Rector, “employer” shall be the Senior Wardens of congregations served during the past five years.
 - Motor Vehicle record check and Credit Bureau check.
 - Sexual Misconduct and Criminal Record Check.
 - Local criminal history records check through local law enforcement agencies.
 - Statewide criminal history records check through the appropriate state law enforcement agencies.
 - References will be secured from immediate supervisors at the three most recent places of employment and results documented.
 - When available, a thorough social media search will be conducted.
 - Each member of the clergy domiciled or licensed in the Diocese will be required to update and pay for their ODM background check on a five-year rotating schedule to be administered by the Diocese. Their church may choose to pay this fee.

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.

- **Membership** – Vestry and Child and Youth Workers should complete a six-month minimum attendance prior to appointment, which includes active participation in the life of the church, including Sunday morning worship.
- **Application** – For employment and for all volunteers who work with children, the host church should:
 - have the applicant fill out a complete application which includes (see “Resources” for a sample screening statement):
 - whether or not they, or any immediate family member or person living in their household, have been convicted of, pled nolo contendere to, had adjudication withheld for, or have an active arrest for any crime involving abuse or neglect;
 - whether or not they have been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition;
 - conduct-criminal history and the National Sexual Offender Registry checks;

- secure references from immediate supervisors at the three most recent places of employment and results documented;
- check the applicant's references;
- conduct a face-to-face interview;
- when available, a thorough social media search should be conducted.
- It is recommended that churches familiarize themselves with effective screening practices and recognizing high-risk applicants. *Protect My Ministry*, *Brotherhood Mutual*, and *Ministry Safe* each offer training on skilled screening for employees.
- **Prior Sexual Offenders:** Sub-jurisdictional policy for prior sexual offenders can be found here: [Registered-Sex-Offender-Protocol.docx](#)

TRAINING

Clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers must be properly trained to care for those they serve in ministry. This training encompasses job functions and also covers recommended practices outlined in this policy, ensuring a safe environment for our people. Sexual abuse awareness training by MinistrySafe or an equivalent service may be completed online. This training must be renewed every two years.

- **Sexual Abuse Awareness Training:** The first portion of the safeguarding training is currently completed through MinistrySafe and will be completed online or in person. This training must be renewed every two years and must be completed prior to ordination, transfer, and/or hire for clergy, prior to hire for employees, prior to term for vestry, and prior to serving for Child and Youth Workers.
- **Policy for the Protection of Children and Adults Training:** The second portion of safeguarding training will be offered in person by your church's Safeguarding Coordinator. This training covers the content in this policy, and must be renewed every two years. In addition to completing this training, all clergy, employees, vestry and Child and Youth Workers must certify that they have read the diocesan policy.
- Evidence of completion and compliance must be supplied to the diocesan office.
- Directors of Diocesan Camps must complete MinistrySafe prior to serving as Director. Each Diocesan sponsored camp is responsible for ensuring all clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers serving at camp have taken MinistrySafe training. Clergy, employees, vestry, Child and Youth Workers, and any other camp leaders or workers may submit copies of their certificate to satisfy this requirement. If Child and Youth Workers arrive at camp without certification, the camp should immediately have the Child and Youth Worker complete it prior to serving or the Child and Youth Worker should not attend.

Please see additional screening and training resources under "Resources" below.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

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INTERACTION

Christian ministry relies not only on right belief but also on right behavior, including interacting with those in the church and in the community. All allegations of misconduct or abuse will likely result from personal interactions and therefore it is important to establish communities of health that reinforce appropriate boundaries, build trust, demonstrate care and respect, and seek justice for those who abuse these. This section outlines guidelines for communication, counseling, spiritual formation and discipleship, interaction with minors, and supervisory procedures for minors.

It is not harassment or a hostile environment when a leader communicates verbally or nonverbally, or takes action, including appropriate discipline, to uphold the biblical, orthodox, and historic Christian faith as expressed in the Holy Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, the REC & ACNA Constitution and Canons, and the Anglican formularies, unless such verbal or nonverbal communication, or action is unreasonable and inconsistent with the standards of conduct set forth in the same authorities.

Verbal interactions among Clergy, employees, vestry, Child and Youth Workers should be edifying, respectful, and should refrain from inappropriate topics. Specifically, the following are inappropriate:

- **Intimidation:** behavior directed toward an individual with the intention of causing fear, including forcing someone to do something they do not want to do out of fear.
- **Nonverbal Harassment:** includes distribution, display or use of any written or graphic material that ridicules, denigrates, insults, belittles or shows hostility toward an individual or group because of nationality, national origin, race, color, religion, age, biological sex, pregnancy, appearance, mental or physical disability, marital or any other status protected by applicable federal or state law. This also includes graphic gestures and making sexual gestures through hand or body movements.
- **Verbal Harassment:** includes unreasonable statements or comments that are offensive regarding a person's nationality, national origin, race, color, religion, age, biological sex, pregnancy, appearance, mental or physical disability, marital status, or any other status protected by applicable federal or state law.
- **Inappropriate Use of Technology:** sending sexually explicit or offensive communications (e.g., text messages, emails, social media messages or posts) is included in the definition of harassment and will not be tolerated [include reference to Diocesan social media policy here]. Use personal interactions on social media avenues to model appropriate behavior and language, both on and off social media. Church leaders should be aware that their behavior reflects Christ and the Church.
- **Sexual and other unlawful harassment:**
 - The Reformed Episcopal Church and her dioceses prohibit sexual harassment and other unlawful harassment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, disability, or any other basis protected by applicable federal or state law (all as defined and protected by applicable law). Such harassment is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
 - Sexual and other unlawful harassment in any manner or form is expressly prohibited. All incidents of sexual or other unlawful harassment will be promptly and thoroughly investigated, and appropriate corrective action will be taken by management. Any employee who engages in any conduct constituting sexual or other unlawful harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

Relating well in addressing Sexuality and Identity: Every effort should be made to treat all people as individuals made in the image of God. It is essential that we strive to build an environment that does not harass, discriminate, intimidate, or devalue God's creation. We recognize that same-sex sexual relationships are sinful, but so also is pornography, fornication and adultery, as well as non-sexual sins such as greed, disregard for the poor, and self-righteousness.

The call to pastoral ministry includes the charge to lead with gentleness, scriptural clarity, and a desire to seek the lost. To hold to, proclaim, and act in accordance with the biblical, orthodox, and historic Christian faith is not in and of itself abuse or harassment.

In order to provide pastoral ministry to those facing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria, therefore, the following are recommended whenever necessary:

- For overnight events, it is recommended that the church's leadership team, and the parent/guardian of the student, outline an agreed upon Supervisory Plan designed to safeguard all participants.
- Churches, Child and Youth Workers, and Child and Youth Leaders should endeavor to make sure all students do not feel isolated, but rather included, welcomed, valued, and respected. This is essential, especially at meals, morning and evening scheduled events, and spontaneous moments. Ongoing and open communication with parents who have child-specific concerns is encouraged.
- For those churches that are able, consider offering a family (non-gendered) bathroom as an act of hospitality.
- **REC Policy on Sexual Ethics**
We, the 46th General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church, reaffirm the biblical standard given for the well-being of society: That sexual intercourse should take place only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. That fornication, adultery, and homosexual acts are sinful in all circumstances. That Christian leaders are called to be exemplary in all spheres of morality, including sexual morality, as a condition of being appointed or remaining in office. That the Church is called upon to show Christ-like compassion to those who have fallen into sexual sin, encouraging them to repent and receive forgiveness, and offering the ministry of healing to all who suffer physically or emotionally as a result of such sin. *Adopted by the 46th General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church Meeting at St. Mark's Reformed Episcopal Church, Jenkintown, PA, Wednesday, May 23, 1990*
- **Pornography creation, viewing, or distribution:** printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings. All clergy are required to avoid creating, viewing, or distributing pornography at all times, not just while working or in church facilities. When this includes a person under the age of legal majority, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.

Additional considerations for communication with children: Verbal interactions between leaders and children should be encouraging, constructive, and mindful of the mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children. To this end, clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers 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. In addition, clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers are expected to refrain from using vulgar

language in the presence of children. Concerns about children should be directed to parents, legal guardians, the appropriate ministry leader, or the clergy.

Clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers should avoid engaging in any sexually-oriented communications with children, and should refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the program. Clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers should report any sexually-oriented communications involving a child to the appropriate ministry leader or the clergy.

- Sexually-Oriented Materials: Staff members and volunteers may employ (subject to limitations imposed by the Rector) age-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality or sexual abuse prevention. Any prospective material should be made available for review for the parents of participants. Prior to introducing these materials, notice should be provided to parents in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.
- Technology and Youth: Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Their world is often constructed around social media, for better or worse. 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).
 - Virtual spaces are to be treated the same as in-person spaces. This means two Certified Adults must be online with one youth (known as the two-adult rule, preferably unrelated), participants must be appropriately clothed, and conversation must be within "public" view. For online conference calls, this means calls are not completed in the bedroom, and the parents are aware that the student is in conversation with the leaders. Use group apps rather than private messages. If a situation arises where only one Certified Adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present. In text and email exchanges with youth, Youth Workers should copy another Youth Worker in messages they send.
 - For those students under 13, get parent permission for any communication and welcome the parents into that environment.
- Photography: Photos of children will not be used contrary to parental wishes and must not contain any personally identifying information about children either online or in print publications without prior parental permission. This is easily handled by including a consent statement on programming registrations that are signed by the parent/guardian.

PASTORAL ABUSE

Pastoral abuse occurs when a spiritual leader in a position of authority relative to the receiving party utilizes their position (or perceived position) of authority to justify misconduct or other forms of abuse. This includes, but is not limited to, patterns of abuse such as manipulation and exploitation, intimidation, censorship, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirements of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a "divine" position in

order to maintain power or control, isolation as a means of punishment, superiority and elitism, and patterns of behavior such as blaming, shaming, or shunning. It is unacceptable for any Diocesan clergy to abuse their parishioners as it is considered conduct unbecoming to the sacred calling of one in holy orders.

Regarding discipline, clergy are subject to disciplinary action upon committing offenses listed in the Reformed Episcopal Church's Constitution and Canons, and the Diocesan Constitution and Canons.

People sometimes may find they disagree with clergy, or find themselves subject to accountability or church discipline (which, in and of itself, can be a healthy part of discipleship). This does not equate to pastoral abuse. It is expected that clergy will teach and uphold the doctrine of the church. Please consult the following for more information regarding the expectations of clergy:

- The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.
- *The Book of Common Prayer* (2019): The ordination vows (found under Episcopal Services) outline the expectation for faithful diligence in upholding the doctrine and discipline of Christ.
- *To Be a Christian* (2020): The ACNA Catechism outlines confession, absolution, and forgiveness, as well as describes the Church's authority.
- *The 39 Articles of Religion*: The ACNA upholds the 39 Articles of 1571 and their amendments which explain our views on the Sacraments as well as the expectation of clergy. In particular, the recognition that clergy are imperfect and should be examined carefully and removed if necessary.
- *The Jerusalem Declaration*: This 2008 declaration outlines our beliefs and expectations regarding Christian living, Sacraments, the authoritative standard of clerical orders, stewardship, unity, and our fidelity to orthodoxy.
- The REC/ACNA's Constitution and Canons, and the Constitution and Canons of individual REC dioceses.

COUNSELING

One of the expectations of all clergy and other pastoral caregivers serving in the Diocese is that they offer pastoral counseling to members of the congregation if/when necessary and appropriate. Pastoral counseling occurs when church personnel offer spiritual direction or advice concerning moral or spiritual matters. This counseling is recommended to be offered for a small number of sessions per person [insert number of sessions here]. Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, crisis counseling, premarital counseling and marriage counseling. If those crises continue beyond a few sessions, or if there is a need for ongoing counseling, members should be referred to a certified or licensed professional. Fees or donations to an individual for pastoral counseling are prohibited.

Any clergy or staff member charging fees for counseling must possess appropriate professional credentials and proof of separate professional liability insurance, including coverage for sexual misconduct, at all times. Such persons offering paid spiritual direction or professional counseling shall submit that ministry for approval by the Rector (or, in the case of the Rector, the Bishop).

During any pastoral counseling sessions, clergy and pastoral caregivers are expected to maintain an environment that minimizes any existence, or appearance, of potentially inappropriate behavior or exploitation. It is also advised that clergy consult Diocesan policy on boundaries in pastoral counseling,

including as they pertain to matters such as mandatory reporting and the seal of the confessional. Exploitation occurs when church personnel take advantage of the pastoral counseling relationship for the benefit of the pastoral counselor. Sexual exploitation includes sexual contact between church personnel and the recipient of the pastoral counseling services, regardless of who initiates the contact. Under certain circumstances, it is advisable to bring another pastor or staff member into a conversation or session - for example, if a counseling session raises the possibility of possible illegal activity or abuse, or if someone is making allegations or disclosing abuse or illegal activity. All clergy, employees, and vestry, and Child and Youth Workers should maintain healthy boundaries and strive for emotionally healthy relationships.

Each congregation's leaders are asked consistently to raise awareness about these issues by normalizing the following principles:

- **Transparency:** it can be difficult clearly to state what you think, feel, or see happening, but it is a sign of emotional health to speak up when something is wrong. No one can improve or eradicate inappropriate behavior without exposing the issue. Avoid triangulation and protection of individuals who are acting inappropriately. Whether it is porn addiction, gossip, an affair, bullying, sexual jokes or comments, flirting, etc., bringing the issue into the light is always the path toward healing, accountability, sanctification, and emotional health.
- **See Something, Say Something:** if something is a concern to you, bring it to the appropriate leaders detailed within this document; including more than one leader in the discussion encourages accountability, transparency, and appropriate resolution.

Pastoral counseling should always be respectful and consistent with the intent to provide a safe and comfortable environment. Pastoral counseling should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times and should not be held at places or times that would cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.

Additionally, all clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers should maintain a physical environment that minimizes any appearance of potentially inappropriate behavior at all times, including when traveling or participating in events held at the church after business hours. It is wise to remain in public view when possible. It is strongly recommended that the doors to rooms used for pastoral care contain windows. It is generally not recommended that employees share a hotel room when traveling. No one-on-one pastoral counseling should be conducted in private living quarters.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION, SPIRITUAL DIRECTION, & DISCIPLESHIP

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek discipleship opportunities. This frequently manifests in 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. If a partnership of spiritual formation, spiritual direction or discipleship is entered into long-term, 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;

- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction or discipleship in your church, consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the church, as well as accountability;
- If one clergy person is offering long-term spiritual direction or discipleship to another clergy person, bring the arrangement into the light by informing the office of the bishop of the relationship;
- Meet in a public place, not alone in one another's private living quarters;
- It is recommended that it be conducted by same biological sex participants in groups of at least 3 people total whenever possible;
- 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;
- Consider utilizing a signed agreement that outlines expectations regarding confession, confidentiality, and mandatory reporting;
- Communicate to whom the participant should report if he or she has any concerns (including the names and numbers of senior leadership, the bishop, or the Diocesan Reports Receivers);
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together.

In order to protect the emotional and spiritual health of all clergy, it is recommended that clergy also seek regular spiritual direction to ensure accountability and a strong support system. Spiritual Formation, Spiritual Direction & Discipleship with Youth: If spiritual formation, discipleship or spiritual direction with a youth is entered into long-term, consider these safeguards in addition to those above:

- Gain the parent/guardian's consent;
- Meet in a predictable location at a predictable time (same time/place each occurrence);
- Guidelines outlined in this policy for interaction with youth (regarding awareness, screening, interaction, and reporting) must be followed.

In order to protect the emotional and spiritual health of everyone involved, it is recommended that Youth Directors and Children's Ministry Directors also seek regular spiritual direction to ensure accountability and a strong support system.

PHYSICAL INTERACTION WITH MINORS

Clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers often have a powerful relationship of trust with the people to whom they minister. Betrayal of that trust through violation of sexual boundaries causes great emotional and spiritual harm. Such behavior 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 or abuse occur.

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of clergy, employees, vestry, or Child and Youth Workers. It is the Diocesan policy that all Child and Youth Workers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. 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. 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, the Children’s Ministry Director, Youth Director, and/or clergy.

Appropriate physical affection between Child and Youth Workers and children is important for children’s development and is generally suitable in the church setting.

Table of appropriate and inappropriate physical affection:

Appropriate physical affection may include:	Inappropriate physical affection may include:
• High-fives • Handshakes • Fist bumps • Thumbs up • Side hugs • Smiling • Pats on the back	• Wrestling • Tickling • Sitting in laps (except nursery-aged children) • Kissing in any form • Initiating frontal hugs • Commenting on children's bodies • Forcing unwanted affection

Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate behavior by anyone must be reported immediately to (1) the Rector and/or clergy in charge, **and** (2) the Senior Warden. If the allegation is against the Rector, notify the Bishop, the Senior Warden and the supervisor or other clergy. Any suspected abuse should be reported to law enforcement as well as the Rector and Senior Warden.

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 Child and Youth Workers 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.

SUPERVISORY PLANS FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH EVENTS

The purpose of the supervisory plan for any given activity is to give direction to clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers, to ensure appropriate measures are in place to meet the diocesan standard for supervision. All Child and Youth Workers for the activity need to be informed of the contents of the supervisory plan. It is recommended that a copy of the plan be provided for leaders (and parents, depending on the activity), and that the plan be posted in a visible location. See “Resources” below for sample versions of Supervisory Plans.

Onsite Supervisory Plans should include the following:

- A description of the nature of the activity
- The details of the registration process and registration form
- The personnel responsible for running the activity
- The following is the recommended ratio of Certified Adults to children [recommendation based on Ministry Safe standards; each congregation should consult their individual state's recommended ratios]:
 - 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
- The physical environment
- Bathroom procedures, including showering procedures if applicable
- First aid and medication procedures
- The reporting of discipline concerns
- The release of children

Offsite Supervisory Plans should include all of the items listed above in the onsite Supervisory Plan, plus the following, which are described in more detail on the pages following:

- Offsite transportation plan
- Dining arrangements
- Sleeping arrangements
- Showering procedures

Monitoring Procedures

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 offsite activities increase the risk of abuse. Clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers 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:

- All children and youth activities shall be designed to be supervised by two or more Certified Adult leaders, preferably not related to each other (known as the two-adult rule).
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property before, during, or following a church activity;
- Clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers 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;
- Watching for 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, and keeping unused rooms locked whenever possible;
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the church building;
- An onsite or offsite written Supervisory Plan shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children.

Restroom Use

Because preschool, nursery, and special needs children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers 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 biological sex. (Churches are encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that nationally one out of every four women has survived 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 Certified Adult female staff/volunteers or the child's parent/guardian.)
- 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.

Toilet Training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only Certified Adult 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 may be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children, if necessary.
- 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.) Triads of the same-aged/biological sex-buddy system may also be used.
- Child and Youth Workers should take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom. If a Child and Youth Worker 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 Child and Youth 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 Child and Youth Worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

First Aid and Medication

If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parent or guardian. Medication may be given to a child by a Child and Youth Worker 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 Child and Youth Worker consistent with the Supervisory Plan. Parents should be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.

The Release of Children

Any time that a child has been entrusted to a Child and Youth Worker, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child, including the release of the child back to the parent/guardian. Child and Youth Workers 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 Child and Youth Workers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact their supervisor before releasing the child.

Transportation

Child and Youth Workers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be observed during the transportation of children whenever practicable:

- Clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers responsible for driving minors to a sponsored activity must provide to the church copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- It is understood that the Child and Youth Worker driving the child must have undergone an insurance approved background check including a DMV record check (this is a small add-on charge), as indicated under the "Screening" section above. Use of child safety seats that meet federal standards is required. 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 or youth as part of an event.
- Traveling with minors in a vehicle should follow the two-adult rule (two Certified Adults, preferably unrelated) or rule-of-three at minimum (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). 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, should include details regarding when/where, and should be signed by the parent/guardian or documented by the Child and Youth Worker if only verbal consent is obtainable. The child or youth should be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.
- In extraordinary circumstances these may be altered for emergencies. In these cases, the Youth Director or Children's Ministry Director (or supervisor) should be notified immediately.
- Cell-phone use while driving - refer to your state's legal requirements in regards to cell phone use while driving
- Children and youth should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops at a non-public place should be avoided. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks should be done as a group.

Those organizing the event should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.

- Adults 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.
- 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.

Home Group Procedures

The Diocese and its churches do not exercise control or responsibility over home groups (defined as a small group meeting in a home for discipleship such as Bible study, worship, fellowship, etc.). The care and protection of children in such settings is always the responsibility of the parents/guardians of each child. Leaders of home groups organized by churches should be encouraged to read this policy, take the child abuse training provided, and consider supervisory plans for their events, including:

- Supervision by two screened and trained (preferably unrelated) Certified Adults;
- The safety of the environment;
- Restroom procedures specific to the environment and needs of children.

Overnight Events (including lock-ins, mission trips, retreats and camps)

- The leader from any church offering overnight events, trips, and camps, as well as Diocesan sponsored Camp Directors, should complete additional relevant training (such as Ministry Safe's "Camp Leadership Training") every two years.
- The two-adult rule (two Certified Adults, preferably unrelated) should be followed; a single student should not be alone with one adult. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present (known as the rule of three).
- All leaders and volunteers must be Certified Adults (must have previously completed the church's screening and training process).
- Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Youth Director prior to the activity.
- As long as any students are awake for a prolonged amount of time, two trip leaders should be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
- Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. R-rated movies require Rector and parental approval.
- Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
- 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.
- Leaders will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, leaders should never physically touch a student.
- Whenever possible, leaders will sleep in the same room, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.

- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each leader and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

Off-campus, non-sponsored youth activities and events

Due to the nature of contact work within youth groups, situations may arise where a Child and Youth Workers 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 two-adult rule (two Certified Adults, preferably unrelated). It is consistent with best practices and research, protects the church, the leader, and the children involved.

On-campus, non-sponsored activities and events

Due to the nature of facilities and shared ministry, a situation might arise where church facilities are used by non-sponsored groups for activities and events (such as Young Life, the Boy Scouts, 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 leaders for every instance of an outside group using the church's facilities.

Nudity

Child and Youth Workers should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e., changing clothes during a pool party, a weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Director will detail rotation procedures for showering or changing clothes in the Supervisory Plan for the scheduled event. Children should also avoid nudity and utilize rotation procedures so as to be sensitive to body image issues and same-sex attraction.

Addictive substances

While in church facilities, while traveling with or in the presence of children or their parents, during church-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children, Child and Youth Workers should not use tobacco products, possess or use any illegal or mind-altering drugs, be under the influence of alcohol, share or view pornographic material.

Compliance

The requirements outlined in this Diocesan policy must be followed by each congregation. If an individual church's optional addendum to this policy includes additional, reasonable safety measures, all clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers should be held accountable to that addendum as well as this policy.

REPORTING

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

Go immediately to <https://www.childwelfare.gov/state-child-abuse-and-neglect-reporting-numbers/?rt=795>. Select the appropriate state and call the relevant number.

Following a report to local authorities, when necessary, the Diocese also provides confidential reporting mechanisms to document incidents and follow their protocols. Reporting is time sensitive and may not be covered by insurance if not completed within 24 hours. Diocesan reporting is done through <https://www.childwelfare.gov/state-child-abuse-and-neglect-reporting-numbers/?rt=795> by calling or emailing the appropriate contacts listed by state.

At times, when a church leader receiving reports of misconduct/abuse puts together the separate pieces of information provided by different parties, the leader may discern a pattern or recognize information that triggers further investigation and/or a report to state authorities.

Throughout any inquiry or investigation, it is the responsibility of the Bishop to ensure that the following steps are being taken (though these steps should not be undertaken by the Bishop directly, in the case of a conflict of interest): (1) reach out to, and care for, any complainants (an Advocate, Chaplain, and/or a response team may be utilized in pastoral care); (2) alleged offenders should be treated with dignity and support; (3) maintain confidentiality utilizing maximum discretion.

The moment someone discloses abuse to someone, the primary responsibility of the listener is to enable a safe environment for the person disclosing the information. If reasonably possible, ask a Certified Adult, or other responsible adult, to join in listening to the account. If someone begins a conversation by implying he or she is about to disclose, and asks you if you can keep a secret, it is recommended that you remind him or her that your primary job is to keep them safe and sometimes that means getting help, and for that reason you cannot promise you will keep it secret.

Whenever someone discloses abuse, the following is recommended:

1. Listen! Do not probe or ask for details. Allow the person to tell you only what he/she is comfortable to share. Ask open ended questions like "Is there anything else you would like to share with me?" If possible, reflect back to the person what you have heard for the sake of clarity.
2. Avoid expressing doubt or disbelief, judgment of the person, or shock or outrage. Be calm and compassionate.
3. Find out if the person is safe and/or has a safe place to go. Help him/her get to safety, if needed.
4. Some helpful things to say may include:
 - a. "I hear you, and I take this seriously."
 - b. "I'm very concerned about what you've shared and want to make sure you are safe."
 - c. "Thank you for being brave enough to share this with me."
5. Reassure the person that you will hold their story in confidence insofar as you are able, letting them know that you may, legally or otherwise, be required to report what has been disclosed.

6. Determine if you need to report the allegation. Ask for help from appropriate authorities (e.g. the Chancellor), if needed. If the complainant is a child and you are still unsure, the best practice would be to report the allegation.
7. After the conversation, immediately take down notes of the conversation. Keep these notes in a safe and secure location to preserve confidentiality.

Someone just disclosed abuse to me. **HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?**

SAY »» DO: - Be compassionate! Listen. Stay calm. "I hear you, and I take this seriously." "I'm very concerned about what you have shared and want to make sure you are safe." "Thank you for being brave enough to share with me." DON'T: - Express judgment, doubt, or disbelief. 1	ASK »» DO: - Ask open ended questions that give the person the opportunity to share without influencing his/her account. - Find out if he/she is safe. - Determine who, what, where, and when, if possible. DON'T: - Probe or ask for details. - Push the person to tell you more than he/she is comfortable with. 2	ACT »» DO: - If necessary, help the person find safety. - Determine if you are a mandatory reporter to the state authorities under the circumstances. If so, report. - If not a mandatory reporter, determine if it is prudent to report to the secular authorities anyway. If so, report. - Report to appropriate church authorities. - Make notes of the conversation and action taken. DON'T: - Tell anyone who does not need to know. 3
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For responding to and reporting child abuse specifically, see the sample procedures on responding to and reporting child abuse under "Resources" below.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST LAY LEADERS

If someone discloses abuse, it is not the responsibility of the recipient of that information to investigate or verify; he or she should report to the proper authorities who will investigate.

In all cases, the complainant will be assured that the church is concerned and that the complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The initial verbal response should not convey doubt.

Any clergy involved in the process should not, at any time following the first receipt of the complaint, hear the sacramental confession of any person(s) involved. The clergy will comply with the reporting and notification requirements as contained in the diocesan, parish, or other liability policies for insurance claims.

1. When the complainant is a minor/vulnerable adult:
 - a. All reports of abuse of children or vulnerable adults must be reported to state authorities immediately.
 - b. If a person accused of abuse is not the child's parent or guardian or otherwise a member of the household, the Rector or designee should contact the child's parents/guardians and offer support from the church.
 - c. The Rector and Senior Warden shall be informed.
 - d. Because there are legal implications, the person reporting should then contact a Diocesan Reports Receiver, who will deploy notification procedures including the Bishop, Chancellor, Chair of the Standing Committee, and the Director of Safeguarding. The Director of Safeguarding can assist with documentation and expansion of inquiry, if necessary. The church's legal counsel should also be notified.
2. When the complainant is an adult:
 - a. Allegations of adult misconduct/abuse against a non-clergy leader will be reported to the Rector and the Senior Warden.
 - b. The Rector and Vestry are responsible for the church's investigative and disciplinary procedures regarding adult misconduct/abuse allegations against lay leaders. It is recommended that all aspects of any inquiry or investigation be fully documented and filed.
 - c. The Rector or Senior Warden will contact the Director of Safeguarding for transparency and accountability. The Diocese is available for guidance and templates for documentation.
 - d. Allegations of adult misconduct/abuse against a non-clergy lay leader of the Diocese or Child and Youth Worker serving in a diocesan program must be reported immediately to a Diocesan Reports Receiver.
3. If the Diocese receives a complaint against a lay person, "the Diocesan Reports Receivers shall inform the bishop. The Diocesan Reports Receivers shall also, in consultation with the bishop, inform a Warden and/or the member of the clergy in charge of the congregation such layperson attends or in which the alleged misconduct occurred for the matter to be addressed at the level of the congregation with support, as needed, from the diocese."
4. Suspension of employment or volunteer activities:
 - a. The alleged offender's church-related employment or volunteer activity may be suspended by the Rector of the church or other person in charge of a church, after consultation with the bishop, until such time as the allegations of misconduct or abuse are resolved.
 - b. This leave of absence is without prejudice (i.e., it does not imply guilt or innocence of the person under investigation). Payment of salary and benefits to the employee may be discontinued at the discretion of the church-related employer only after consultation with the Bishop.

ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING CLERGY

If someone discloses abuse, it is not the responsibility of the recipient of that information to investigate or verify; they should report to the proper authorities who will investigate. In all cases, the complainant will be assured that the church is concerned and that the complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The initial, verbal response should not convey doubt.

The Bishop, clergy, or anyone who may subsequently be involved in the process, will not, at any time following the first receipt of the complaint, hear the sacramental confession of any person(s) involved. The Bishop and clergy will comply with the reporting and notification requirements as contained in the diocesan, parish or other liability policies for insurance claims. Any member of the clergy who believes himself or herself to be accused of misconduct/abuse may request the Bishop to begin formal inquiry.

1. When the complainant is a minor/vulnerable adult:

- a. Any report received regarding the abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult shall be reported to the appropriate civil authorities consistent with applicable laws and subject to constitutional and statutory exemptions and protections.
- b. Any complaint of misconduct/abuse by any member of the clergy under the authority of the Bishop shall also be reported immediately to the Diocesan Reports Receivers.
 - a) The Diocesan Reports Receiver will assure the complainant that the Diocese is concerned and that the complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.
 - b) If the complaint is against a member of the clergy, the Diocesan Reports Receivers “shall evaluate the report in a timely manner and...recommend to the Bishop whether the report discloses reasonable grounds to believe an offense has been committed. With the advice of the Standing Committee (or its designated subcommittee), the Bishop shall determine whether a report of misconduct... should be dismissed or if such report should proceed to investigation.”
 - (1) If determined necessary, the Diocesan Reports Investigation Committee should begin a canonical investigation of the complaint and, upon completion, “make a recommendation to the Ecclesiastical authority as to whether further juridical process should be pursued.”
 - (2) “If a report is dismissed, the reporting party must be promptly notified of such dismissal.”
 - (3) Each Diocese shall facilitate provision of pastoral care for those making reports that are not dismissed, as well as for the clergy who are subject of such reports.
 - (4) If further juridical process is recommended, the Diocese shall follow additional process and standards set forth in the REC and Diocesan Canons.

2. When the complainant is an adult:

- a. All of section 1.b. in the preceding paragraph applies.

- b. All reports of pastoral abuse should be reported to a Diocesan Reports Receiver through the Diocesan website link.
- 3. Suspension of employment or leadership:
 - a. The alleged clergy offender may be inhibited by the Bishop under REC Canons until such time as the allegations of misconduct/abuse are resolved.
 - b. This inhibition is without prejudice (i.e. does not imply guilt or innocence of the person under investigation). Payment of salary and benefits to the clergy may be discontinued at the discretion of the church-related employer after consultation with the Bishop.

ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING THE BISHOP

Any person believing that the Bishop has engaged in any misconduct/abuse should immediately submit an allegation in writing to the Province via email at misconduct@anglicanchurch.net.

CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Incidents of child abuse, and the secrecy that often surrounds them, can cause devastating harm to the complainants as well as to the church. Therefore, where current or past child abuse has been perpetrated by clergy, employees, vestry, or Child and Youth Workers 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. Under “Resources,” “Caring for the Community” provides a suggested model for congregational trauma debriefing.

COMPLIANCE

COMPLIANCE

The Bishop, the Director of Safeguarding, and the Standing Committee are responsible for the creation and promulgation of the diocesan “Policy for the Protection of Children and Adults,” in accordance with the canons of the respective Diocese.

The Standing Committee will annually update and revise the Policy in light of practical experiences, medical and other scholarly research, legal developments, and other relevant considerations.

The Rector has overall responsibility for the compliance and administration of this policy within the church he/she leads and for providing all reports requested by the Diocese.

The Reformed Episcopal Church requires that, at a minimum, each church (see definition) is expected to have in place these four procedures with regard to adults and children:

Procedure 1: Awareness

Procedure 2: Behavioral Expectations

Procedure 3: Reporting

Procedure 4: Compliance

POLICY OVERSIGHT

The Diocesan Office is responsible for:

- upholding the Constitution and Canons of the REC and maintaining/upholding the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese;
- setting additional, clear diocesan policies and procedures;
- following through on those policies and procedures to provide a consistent and transparent process;
- reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law when necessary.

Clergy are responsible for:

- knowing and abiding by the Diocesan policies and procedures;
- ensuring that timely training, and resulting written acknowledgements, occur for all parties identified within these policies who are under their supervision;
- reporting to a Diocesan Reports Receiver any allegation of clergy misconduct/abuse;
- reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law when necessary;
- providing proof of compliance of all such policies and procedures to the Diocesan office upon request.

Rectors and Wardens are responsible for:

- maintaining record keeping of all procedures outlined in this document;
- upholding the policies set forth in this document, which represent an appropriate standard of care, by adopting them as their own;
- reconciling this policy with the conditions of your particular congregation's insurance coverage and the need for a contextualized policy, ensuring the conditions to your insurance coverage are met;
- reviewing your insurance policy and calling the diocesan Director of Safeguarding if you have any questions; the Diocese assumes no responsibility for a congregation's non-compliance with its insurance carrier's policy;
- providing proof of compliance of all such policies and procedures to the Director of Safeguarding upon request.

Employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers are responsible for:

- abiding by the Diocesan policies;
- reporting to the Rector and Senior Warden any allegation of employee/lay person misconduct or abuse (allegations of clergy are to be reported directly to a Diocesan Reports Receiver);
- reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law when necessary.

In some cases, insurance companies require a response within a specific timeframe or the institution forfeits coverage. A congregation's adoption of written standards of conduct may also be required by insurers as a condition of coverage. Strong warranty language in some policies requires careful compliance on the part of insured entities. Failure to comply with policy standards could result in denial of insurance coverage in the event of a claim.

COMPLIANCE DOCUMENTATION

Churches are responsible for tracking the screening and training requirements for all non-clergy Certified Adults in their church. The Diocesan office is responsible for tracking screening and training clergy, diocesan employees, and diocesan Child and Youth Workers. The Diocese assumes no responsibility for a church's non-compliance with their insurance carrier's policy on acknowledgment of receipt of the church's policies and procedures or insurance carrier screening or training requirements.

All churches will update their rosters of clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers in November of each year. Signed documents are due to the Director of Safeguarding by 12/31 of each year.

Anyone considered a leader in the Diocese or in any of the Diocesan churches (including fellowships, church plants, congregations, or missions), is expected to sign an individual policy acknowledgement annually. This includes all Diocesan staff and clergy, vestry, and any Child and Youth Workers in Diocesan programs.

Every church associated with the Diocese is expected to fill out a [insert Diocesan compliance process here] annually.

This document is provided to the churches and congregations in the [your Diocese] as minimum expectations.

Revised versions of this policy will be distributed to each congregation in August of the calendar year with the understanding that the congregation has the rest of the calendar year to come into compliance with any changes. It will be the responsibility of the Rector of each church to ensure all clergy, employees, vestry, and Child and Youth Workers are made aware of the church's policies and that those who are required to complete approved training do so.

See “Resources” for additional resources on risk management and compliance for children’s and youth ministries.

RESOURCES

RESOURCES

The following resources are offered to assist churches and Clergy, employees, vestry, Child and Youth Workers in their protection of individual members of each congregation.

[Sample Child Abuse Responding and Reporting Procedures](#)

[Screening and Training Resources](#)

[Sample Supervisory Plan](#)

[Additional Sample Supervisory Plans \(Gulf Atlantic Diocese\)](#)

[Sample Individual Receipt of Policies Acknowledgement Form](#)

[Risk Management and Compliance Resources for Children's and Youth Ministries](#)

[Caring for the Community Resources](#)

[Safeguarding Resources \(Gulf Atlantic Diocese\)](#)

[Sample Policy Regarding Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment \(Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic\)](#)

[Sample Policy on Registered Sex Offenders \(Diocese of Pittsburgh\)](#)

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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