



The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Handbook for Those Who Work with Children and Youth

2009 Update

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Why We Have These Policies

Through baptism we share a common life of faith, a life of service and servanthood, a life rooted in love and faithfulness. We promise at every baptism to strive for justice and peace among all people and to respect the dignity of every human being.

These promises call us to assure that our churches are safe places for all God's children. They commit us to our highest and best efforts in our common life, including the care and safety of our children and youth. This policy is a response to OUR baptismal promises.

As part of your application you will be asked to agree to these policies and procedures.

General Definitions

Church Personnel

For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, canonically resident in this Diocese, licensed in this Diocese, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel, whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the Diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
3. Those who contract their services to the Diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
4. Volunteers in activities for children and youth, including any person who enters into or offers himself or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so.

For the purpose of these policies, "Head of congregation" is defined as the rector, vicar, lay vicar, senior warden (if no clergyperson is on staff). Heads of school or executive directors of diocesan programs are also administrators of this program.

Types of Abuse

1. **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
2. **Sexual abuse** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.

3. **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.

4. **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.

Code of Conduct

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant—in any way—to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This “**Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth**” has been adopted by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the “**Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth**” stated in accord with *The Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church. Persons who cannot agree to adhere to the *Code of Conduct* are not allowed to serve in ministry to children and youth.

The Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth

- Church Personnel agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Church Personnel agree not to physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with the Diocesan Safe Church policies as defined in *The Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with *The Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth*.
- Church Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.

- In the event that Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, Church Personnel agree to immediately report their observations as outlined in this policy.
- Church Personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

General Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Youth

The following guidelines are intended to assist Church Personnel in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children and youth. These guidelines will help identify and stop those behaviors and interactions which may be used by child molesters to “groom” children, youth and their parents, or which may create conditions where abuse can more easily occur. These guidelines are also used to make decisions about interactions with children and youth in church sponsored and affiliated programs. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families.

1. All Church Personnel who work with children and youth must agree to comply with the Diocese of Texas *Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth*.
2. No person will be allowed to volunteer to regularly work with children or youth until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months.
3. Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
4. Church Personnel are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs or prescription medications while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children and youth.
5. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Church Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose.
6. Church Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, culture or socioeconomic status. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.

7. One-to-one counseling with children and youth will be done in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
8. Church Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
9. Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.
10. Church Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, computer files, e-mails, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of an educational program that is preauthorized by the rector or canonical equivalent.
11. Church Personnel are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children and youth.
12. Church Personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
13. Church personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags or tents with other children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of one of the children or youth in the bed, sleeping bag or tent. An adult may sleep in the same hotel room with no fewer than three (3) other children, providing adult and all children are of the same sex. The adult must sleep alone in a bed or on a cot or rollaway bed. The adult must never be alone with a child. The adult will use the bathroom facilities alone, dressing/undressing in the bathroom with the door closed and with no children present.

Exception to the above is given if any of the children are related to the adult, in which case, the adult may sleep in the same bed with a child who is an immediate family member. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep in one open space such as a parish hall or camp lodge with children or youth. A best practice rule is no situation in which one adult is alone with one child unless they are immediate family members.
14. Church Personnel are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.
15. Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.

16. Church Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, profanity, degrading punishment, or any mechanical restraint for behavior management.

17. Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities or behaviors which could be construed as hazing.

Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth

The Diocese of Texas is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Personnel from misunderstandings. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and which are inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children and youth. The guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to “groom” children, youth, and their parents for future abuse.

The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children and youth.

1. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- “High-fives” and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate. (For example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities).

2. The following forms of affection are considered **inappropriate** with children and youth in ministry settings because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to “groom” children or youth for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.

- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development.
- Snapping bras or giving “wedgies” or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

Supervisory personnel and others should monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth and other children with children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped. The behaviors and interactions of persons with children and youth that need to be monitored and supervised are covered below and in the previous section, *Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth*.

1. Every program for children and youth must meet established ratios for adults and children. Compliance with the established ratio is required at all times, including activities that occur off church premises.
2. Church Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.
3. Church Personnel aged 21 or older must directly supervise Church Personnel younger than 21 and be physically present during all activities.
4. No person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member unless another non-related adult is present. An immediate family member is defined as the spouse, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, partner or co-habitant. This also applies to in-law and step family relationships. Related personnel may minister together as long as an unrelated adult is present.
5. An up-to-date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth will be maintained in the church office or other place where church records are kept.

6. Church Personnel are not permitted to develop new activities for children and youth without approval from the rector or canonical equivalent. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing to the rector or head of school or institution who will consider whether the plan for a new activity includes adequate adult supervision.
7. Each program will follow age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths.
8. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, Church Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
9. At least two unrelated Church Personnel must supervise activities. When both boys and girls are participating in overnight activities or activities away from the church or school, male and female chaperones must be present.
10. When transporting children in vehicles, two unrelated adults must be in each vehicle unless the group is organized into a caravan, during which all vehicles are in sight of another vehicle in the caravan. It is suggested that cell phones be available in each car and a list of names and contact numbers be provided to each driver
11. Classrooms or other areas used by children or youth should have windows or a window in the door. If there are no windows or a window in the door, the door must remain open. Doors of occupied classrooms must be unlocked at all times during activities. Unused rooms should be locked.

Procedures for Restroom Use, Showers or Baths for Children or Youth Programs and Activities

1. No adult may shower, bathe or use the restroom facilities in the presence of children or youth. Hand washing is required of all persons after any use of restroom facilities.
2. Diapering should be done in diapering stations in close proximity to other care providers. It is not appropriate for diapering to occur behind closed doors or in isolated places.
3. An adult caregiver must accompany all children age 2 through kindergarten to the restroom. If facilities are removed from the classroom, the caregiver must check the bathroom to see if other adults are present before allowing the child to go in. If there is no stall in the restroom, the caregiver stands outside the door while the child uses the bathroom. If there are stalls, the child goes in alone. The

caregiver will assist the child only if necessary, in which case the stall door and the outer door shall remain ajar. The caregiver should not go into the restroom with the child and close the door, or into the stall and close the door.

4. If the restroom is in the classroom with only one toilet, the child should go alone into the restroom. If the restrooms are removed from the classroom, the caregiver must accompany children age 2 through kindergarten, following the procedures outlined above.

5. In a classroom with attached restrooms with only one toilet, the first through fifth grade child will go alone. If the restrooms are located away from the room, another child of the same sex will accompany the child to the restroom. Children in this age group may not go to the restroom alone. In no instance should a door be completely closed if adult assistance is needed.

6. Youth in sixth through twelfth grades are encouraged to use the buddy system if restrooms are located some distance away from the activity.

7. When there are special needs or extenuating circumstances, a specific policy may be formulated, approved by the rector and the parent(s) of the child, and implemented with appropriate monitoring and supervision. If assistance is needed in formulating such a policy, please contact the Safe Church office.

Responding to Problems

Reporting of Inappropriate Behavior or Policy Violations with Children or Youth

When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the *Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth*, or which may violate any provision of ***The Diocesan Policies for Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse***, they must immediately report their observations as instructed below.

Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would include:

- seeking private time with children or youth
- taking children or youth on overnight trips without other adults
- swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth
- or selecting staff or volunteers without the required screening and ***Safeguarding God's Children*** training.

Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported immediately in one of the following ways:

1. A telephone call or meeting with the head of congregation, head of school or executive director of the diocesan institution. Notification may also be made to the Canon to the Ordinary in the Bishop's office.

2. A telephone call or meeting with the Canon to the Ordinary in the Bishop's office if the complaint is against the head of congregation, head of school or executive director of the diocesan institution.

3. A *Notice of Concern* signed or unsigned, sent to the Bishop. (See end page for *Notice of Concern* form).

- Any person receiving a report of inappropriate behavior or possible violation of these policies shall immediately inform the Bishop's office.
- All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously.

Reports may be sent to either of the following:

The Rev. Cecilia B. Smith
Safe Church Office
P. O. Box 2247
Austin, Texas 78768
csmith@epicenter.org
Secure fax: 866-241-7050
Phone: 512-478-0580
800-947-0580

The Rev. Canon Ann Normand
1225 Texas Ave.
Houston, Texas 77002
anormand@epicenter.org
713-520-6444
800-318-4452
Confidential fax: 713-521-2218

Reporting of Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth

All Church Personnel are required by this policy and by the laws of the State of Texas to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the police or to Child Protective Services. A copy of this statute is found in the **Safe Church Ministry Policies: Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.**

Reports to Child Protective Services (CPS) may be made in either of the following ways:

1. Call the toll-free 24 hour, 7 days a week, nationwide abuse Hotline:
1-800-252-5400
 2. Report through CPS secure web site (you will receive a response within 24 hours: www.txabusehotline)
 3. E-mail reports are not accepted.
- Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth is a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
 - Abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

- In addition to reporting to the state authorities, Church Personnel are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the head of congregation or school, who will immediately report it to the Bishop, so that immediate and proper steps may be taken.
- Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve Church Personnel must also be reported to the Diocese of Texas in one of the following ways:
 1. A telephone call or meeting with the head of congregation, head of school or executive director of the diocesan institution. Notification may also be made to the Canon to the Ordinary in the Bishop's office or to the Safe Church Minister in the Safe Church Ministry Office.
 2. A telephone call or meeting with the Canon to the Ordinary in the Bishop's office or with the Safe church Minister if the complaint is against the head of congregation, head of school or executive director of the diocesan institution.
 3. A *Notice of Concern*, signed or unsigned, to the Bishop or Canon to the Ordinary; 1225 Texas Avenue; Houston, TX 77002; 713-520-6444 or 800-318-4452; confidential fax 713-521-2218. OR Safe Church Minister; P. O. Box 2247; Austin, TX 78768; 512-478-0580; 800-947-0580; secure fax: 866-241-7050.

The Diocese of Texas will cooperate fully with any investigation by law enforcement authorities.

Confidential Notice of Concern

Who is the complaint about? _____

Position _____

Date of Notice _____

Congregation/school/ institution: _____
City _____

Nature of Concern: _____

Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth (please describe the behavior)

Policy violation with a child or youth: Yes No

Reason to believe abuse occurred/is occurring: Yes No

Other _____

Describe the situation:

What happened?

Where did it happen?

Who else was present? _____

Has it ever happened before? _____

Was it reported to the authorities? ___ Yes ___ No

If reported, to whom: _____

What action was taken? _____

Follow-up:

Does anyone else need to be notified? _____

Would you like someone to call you to discuss the situation? ___ Yes ___ No
(If yes, be sure to give contact information below.)

Optional Information:

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Once completed, please fax or mail to one of the Bishop's Office contacts below:

Canon to the Ordinary
1225 Texas Avenue.
Houston, TX 77002
1-713-520-6444 or 1-800-318-4452
Confidential fax 1-713-521-2218 (Bp's office)

Safe Church Minister
P. O. Box 2247
Austin, Texas 78768
1-800-947-0580 or 1-512-478-0580
Secure fax: 1-866-241-7050