THE DIOCESE OF
CHURCHES FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS

C4SO SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Revised September 2026

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IF YOU ARE CONSULTING THIS POLICY MANUAL IN A CRISIS SITUATION, CHOOSE FROM THESE TWO ACTION STEPS:

1. If you are certain that abuse has taken place, visit C4SO's Reporting Portal at C4SO.org/Report.

2. If you have questions about whether or not the misconduct you experienced or witnessed should be reported, contact the Ombudsman.

MY CONGREGATION COORDINATOR IS:
(FILL IN NAME AND PHONE NUMBER)

_____

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Dear Church Leader,

Thank you for your willingness to serve in ministry at your church. To ensure you are equipped to serve children and vulnerable adults in your care, please carefully review this policy, which describes best practices and requirements for protecting children and vulnerable adults in the churches and ministries of The Diocese of Churches for the Sake of Others ("C4SO" or "the Diocese"). These guidelines are intended to foster a healthy and nurturing environment in which people can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sadly, the reasons for protection policies are numerous (APPENDIX I). The harmful effects of sexual abuse are consistent with what one would expect from such a destructive act and often persist into adulthood. Abused children often become adults who suffer from low self-esteem, are unable to form and keep healthy relationships, and struggle to maintain healthy boundaries. Similarly, adults who are at increased risk of abuse due to age, illness, disability or life circumstances suffer detrimental effects from abuse.

The protection of children and vulnerable adults is not a packaged program that takes place during defined hours. Caring for the vulnerable is woven into the DNA of C4SO. Advocacy for the welfare of others is who we are and how we live. We encourage you to join us in adopting this mindset in all that you do, for the sake of others.

As you participate in this process, you join with the many who are committed to protecting and serving those most vulnerable. We're grateful for the ways you offer your time and gifts to the service of God's people. It is through the efforts and collaboration of those like you—volunteers, clergy, employees and lay leaders—that the Church is able to serve those who are entrusted to us and lead them in the ways of faith.

If you have any questions, please email us.

With gratitude,
The C4SO Diocesan Team

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Note for clarity: In the Anglican Church, a rector is a member of the clergy who has charge of a church or parish. The term rector, used throughout this policy, may be considered interchangeably with pastor.

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Guiding Values for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Love, understood as willing the good of the other, is our overall highest value. Cherishing and treasuring our youth and vulnerable adults automatically rules out unkindness and abuse of all kinds. In serving, we seek to be the kinds of people who could and would follow the teaching of Jesus to love our neighbor as ourselves. We don't ever want things *from* people to satisfy something in us, we want things *for* them: growth in Christ, in the Spirit, in the kingdom of God, in love and service to others.

Respect, admiration and reverence are close seconds to love. Adults who may have special needs or be more vulnerable to harm due to age, mental illness or other factors, are not lesser persons. In the same way, children are not some sort of sub-species of adults. They are, by the will and creation of God, God's beloved image-bearers. Thinking of Psalm 8:

What is man, that you are mindful of him, the son of man, that you visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of your hands, and you have put all things in subjection under his feet.

As leaders in ministry, you, working with the Spirit, shepherd into being the glorious purposes of God for humanity—helping people live out the precious potential for doing good that God created within them. Such a view of your work will eliminate all manner of damaging God's creation and will spark in you a strong desire to protect people from any predator.

A No-Tolerance Diocesan Approach

Everyone who serves the Church through educational, pastoral, recreational or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct. That commitment extends to sexual and physical behavior. C4SO will not tolerate any form of abuse involving clergy, lay employees, volunteers or other persons. In addition, because the safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults is of the highest importance, those who have a criminal conviction or substantiated civil finding related to child abuse, sexual abuse, or abuse of vulnerable adults are unable to serve as volunteers in children's, youth or any programs with vulnerable adults that may involve direct individual engagement where there aren't other adults close by.

A Spiritual Mandate

Christians believe that human beings are created in the image of God, that we are stewards of creation and that God values sexuality as good, blessed and purposeful. Our God-given nature invites us to the responsible fulfillment of our sexuality. Those who work and minister in Christ's name must model God's trustworthiness.

Jesus teaches explicitly that children are of much value in Kingdom terms and that to cause one to sin has the gravest of consequences. Caring for children, youth and vulnerable adults is a sacred trust immersed in our guiding values as we live out the spiritual mandate embodied by these policies.

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)

Roles and Responsibilities

The Rector:

Has overall responsibility for the administration of this policy within the church he/she leads and for providing all reports requested by the Diocese. In the absence of a rector, the priest-in-charge, lay leader or senior warden is responsible. Duties may be delegated, except in those areas specifically delineating action by the rector.

The Ministry Supervisor:

Is responsible to partner with the Congregation Coordinator to enforce the C4SO Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults.

The Congregation Coordinator:

Oversees local implementation of child, youth and vulnerable adult protection disciplines as per this policy. The Coordinator may be the rector or someone he/she designates. Larger churches may have multiple people overseeing different departments within the congregation, while smaller churches may have one person responsible for all child, youth and vulnerable adult programs.

The Volunteer/Employee:

Is responsible for complying with and acting upon the policies for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults. In all matters concerning these parties, the volunteer and employee is responsible to the Congregation Coordinator or rector, if not the same person. If ever you are in doubt about who is in charge of overseeing child, youth and vulnerable adult protection in your environment, ask your supervisor.

Definitions

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

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

Vulnerable Adult - Any person aged 18 or older who has substantially diminished capacity to protect themselves from harm or exploitation due to physical or mental disability, illness, age-related frailty, social isolation or life circumstances.

Example: A 72-year-old woman who lives alone, is experiencing early-stage dementia, and relies on church volunteers for transportation and companionship. She may be particularly vulnerable to emotional manipulation, financial exploitation or spiritual coercion.

Types of Abuse - Abuse may be physical, emotional, financial, sexual, spiritual or involve neglect/self-neglect. Abuse can occur in relationships of trust or dependence, including church relationships. Church leaders, volunteers and members should be aware of these common types of abuse:

- Physical Abuse: Intentional infliction of pain, injury or physical coercion. Examples include hitting, pushing or inappropriate use of restraints.
- Emotional or Psychological Abuse: Use of threats, humiliation, isolation or verbal attacks to control or belittle a person. Often harder to detect but equally harmful.
- Sexual Abuse: Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind, sexual harassment or exploitation. This includes inappropriate comments, touching or coercion.
- Spiritual Abuse: Misuse of religious influence to manipulate, control or exploit another person. This can involve using Scripture or faith as a weapon or means of intimidation.
- Financial or Material Abuse: Illegal or unauthorized use of a person's money, property or resources. Includes fraud, theft or pressure to give money or assets.
- Neglect: Failure to provide necessary care, assistance or supervision, resulting in harm or risk of harm.
- Self-Neglect: When a vulnerable adult is unable to care for their own basic needs, health or safety and refuses assistance.

We encourage everyone in the church to remain vigilant and report any suspected or actual abuse immediately: C4SO.org/report.

Our Five-Step Approach to Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Diocese and your congregation are committed to creating a positive and healthy environment through a five-step approach:

1. **Screening**
2. **Training**
3. **Interacting**
4. **Monitoring**
5. **Responding and Reporting**

Please read carefully for practical guidelines and best practices. Your knowledge, commitment and participation are invaluable to this process—we couldn't do it without you!

Congregations like yours use screening tools like background checks and reference checks to have the greatest assurance that the employees and volunteers they are assembling and monitoring are properly suited and adequately trained for the outlined responsibilities. These screening procedures apply to everyone who serves at your church or volunteers with children or vulnerable adults, even for special events and day camps. Your church is expected to know and comply with applicable state laws and insurance terms/conditions. Thank you for your cooperation.

All staff and volunteers who have direct contact with or supervision of minors must undergo background screening, reference checks and child abuse prevention training before beginning service. Screening requirements increase based on the degree of contact, responsibility and trust inherent in each role.

STEP 1: SCREENING

One effective way to reduce the incidence of abuse is carefully screening all clergy, licensed ministers, employees and volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Diocesan Office Responsibilities

The Diocesan office oversees the screening of clergy and licensed ministers and is responsible for maintaining clergy and licensed minister files indefinitely. When congregations hire rectors, the Diocese is responsible for ordering and receiving full Oxford Document Management (ODM) background checks. Any results causing concern will be shared with the vestry and/or search committee in a confidential and timely manner. The Diocesan office complies with ODM and any applicable insurance carrier terms and conditions.

Your church is responsible for the cost of background checks for your respective clergy and ministers.

The Diocese uses the following tools:

- Appropriate Application (Ordination, License, or Transfer)
- 10-year Reference Check*
- Screening Questionnaire*
- ODM background check* includes: National Criminal and Sex Offender Check, Credit Check and Motor Vehicle Search
- Completion of Sexual Abuse Awareness Training*

- For transfers: C4SO requires clergy files from sending diocese, including psychological evaluation, or the applicant for transfer must provide new psychological evaluation

**Documents may be sent to the diocese if they are dated within the past two years.*

Five-Year Renewal: To ensure consistency of standards and attention, every five years the Diocese orders a five-year ODM background check and requires the completion of the C4SO five-year screening questionnaire from clergy and licensed ministers in active ministry within the Diocese.

Background checks for employees and volunteers in the Regular Contact Volunteers and Leadership Roles categories should be renewed every five years. Congregation Coordinators are responsible for confirming annually, as part of their records review, that every active volunteer's background check is on file and has not expired. This annual review does not require ordering a new check unless the existing one has lapsed. This differs from clergy and licensed ministers, who receive a full ODM background check renewal every five years through the Diocesan office (see above).

Church Responsibilities

Churches are responsible for appropriate screening and background checks for all employees and those volunteers who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults in their respective congregations. Churches must understand and comply with terms and conditions established by their insurance carriers in addition to any state requirements. These records are to be stored indefinitely in a secured and restricted location.

Churches may use the background check provider of their choice, **except California churches, which are required to use Livescan as of 2022.**

California Livescan Requirements:

- When a California church applies to the Department of Justice to run LiveScans, the church can sign up to receive subsequent arrest notifications by filling out the "Contract For Subsequent Arrest Notification Service" form. The church will then receive notice of any future arrests of their volunteers.
- Once a worker has been fingerprinted, he or she remains active until the church submits a "No Longer Interested (NLI) Request." According to the Department of Justice, it is not necessary to be re-printed yearly to meet California level of service. As of 2023, the Federal Rap Back Service is unavailable for FBI level of service.

The Categories Below Outline the Minimum Requirements for Each Level of Service

Irregular Volunteers

This category includes one-time helpers at special events, community festivals, holiday programs, or work days where minors are present but the volunteer is not assigned to a specific child or group.

- Must complete a volunteer application form and acknowledge receipt of the church's Safeguarding Policy.
- For minor volunteers, a reference must be provided. For adult volunteers, a criminal background check is required.
- Must not have unsupervised access to minors.
- Must be supervised at all times by approved staff or screened volunteers.

Regular Volunteers With Limited Contact

This category includes greeters, ushers, check-in personnel, hospitality volunteers or others whose roles involve brief or incidental interaction with minors but no direct supervision.

- Completion of volunteer application and two reference checks.
- Acknowledge receipt of the church's Safeguarding Policy.
- Successful completion of any state-mandated child abuse awareness training.
- Criminal background check compliant with state law if the role includes any potential unsupervised interaction with minors.
- Renewal of MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (or diocese-approved equivalent) every two years, consistent with the training requirement outlined in Step 2.

Regular Contact Volunteers

This category includes Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, youth group assistants, children's choir leaders, vulnerable adult care assistants, or other volunteers with regular and ongoing contact with minors or vulnerable adults.

- Completion of volunteer application, including personal interview with supervisor, and three reference checks (one pastoral, one professional, and one character reference. Minor volunteers who do not have a professional reference may submit a personal reference instead).

- Criminal background check including any state-mandated fingerprinting.
- Completion of state-compliant child abuse and neglect reporting training and certification prior to serving.
- Signed Statement of Understanding regarding mandatory reporting responsibilities.
- Renewal of MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training every two years, consistent with Step 2. Congregations should confirm annually that each volunteer's background check and training remain current and unexpired; a new background check is not required annually—see background check renewal schedule below.
- **Six-month minimum attendance rule:** Volunteers must have attended the church regularly for at least six months before serving in this capacity, except where the Bishop has granted a variance. *Note: The minimum attendance rule is helpful in getting to know the volunteer. However, for many potential volunteers with a sex crime past, a six-month wait is not a discouragement. Don't let your guard down because a volunteer meets this requirement.*

Sample Interview Questions:

Why do you want to serve in this specific ministry?

What does personal accountability mean to you in a team setting?

Tell me about a time you resolved a conflict or navigated a challenging interpersonal dynamic.

What do you understand a boundary to be in this context?

How would you respond if someone in our church shared a secret that made you feel uncomfortable or concerned for their safety?

Why do you think our church has strict rules about two-adult leadership (never being alone with a single participant in a private space)?

What would you do if you noticed another volunteer breaking a safety rule or crossing a boundary?

If a participant discloses abuse at home or elsewhere, what is your immediate next step?

Leadership Roles

This category includes ministry directors, program supervisors, youth pastors, overnight chaperones, camp or retreat leaders, and drivers transporting minors or vulnerable adults for offsite events.

- Completion of volunteer or employment application, formal interview, and three or more reference checks including one from a prior supervisor or ministry leader.
- Criminal background check including any state-mandated fingerprinting.
- Completion of state-compliant training and leadership-level safeguarding training addressing supervision, reporting, and boundary management.
- Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) check and proof of valid driver's license and insurance for anyone transporting minors or vulnerable adults.
- Signed leadership covenant affirming adherence to church policies, reporting requirements, and ethical standards.
- Ongoing supervision and annual performance review by pastoral leadership.
- Required to report any arrests, investigations or changes in eligibility within 48 hours.

Screening Employees, Interns, Fellows, Day Camp Staff and Volunteers

Screening candidates for employment includes:

- Reviewing signed job applications for those working with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks. Checks should be renewed every five years, consistent with the background check renewal schedule above.
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks. Seek a wide variety of references, including work references. Individuals with a background as sex offenders often know others with the same history who will give deceptively good references. Therefore, seek references that go beyond personal friends. Every reference must be checked and documented.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews.
- Requiring completion of a screening form. Among other questions, each applicant must state in writing whether the applicant or other members of his or her household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; have been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; have committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphilic psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. A sample form of the "Screening Statement for Employees/Volunteers" is included in Appendix IV.

Training is an important deterrent to abuse and focuses on recognizing inappropriate behaviors, risk factors and the warning signs of potential abuse.

STEP 2: TRAINING

Training is an important deterrent to abuse and focuses on recognizing inappropriate behaviors, risk factors and the warning signs of potential abuse.

In-person training at the parish is an important part of learning how to respond to the challenges of protecting children, youth and vulnerable adults. But reading and understanding this policy manual is also key in your training.

MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Your training includes MinistrySafe, the sexual abuse awareness training program endorsed by The Anglican Church in North America. Every two years (or upon initial service, whichever comes first), all clergy, lay ministers, employees and volunteers who have contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults must complete MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training or a diocese-approved equivalent.

As of 2026, each church owns and operates their own MinistrySafe account or comparable resource. Your church will provide materials and instructions in cooperation with MinistrySafe. This training must be successfully completed before any person begins to work in ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults. If you have any questions about whether you have completed your training or if it has expired, ask your Congregation Coordinator.

For those working with vulnerable adults, please complete the MinistrySafe Protecting Vulnerable Adult training, available as an add-on to your church's account.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please be aware that sexual abuse awareness training can be traumatic and/or open old wounds for those who have experienced abuse. Churches should have someone present who can give counsel, and refer those needing help for further counseling, if needed.

The MinistrySafe Process

1. You will deploy MinistrySafe training emails to your people, which include personalized training links.
2. People who need to receive training simply click on the link in the email, view the training and take the test. They can view the training videos as often as desired but can only take the test and pass once.

3. A passing score is 70%. Upon passing the MinistrySafe test, each person receives a certificate of completion (automatically deployed by MinistrySafe).
4. MinistrySafe automatically updates each person's training status and records the date of completion in the person's profile.
5. The Congregation Coordinator is responsible for managing the training status for their congregation's clergy, licensed lay ministers, employees and volunteers who work with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults. The Coordinator is most familiar with local training needs.
6. If a church is using a different program than MinistrySafe, the Congregation Coordinator is responsible for verifying completion, tracking status and providing documentation to the diocesan administrator.
7. The diocesan administrator provides guidance to Coordinators and is responsible for document management at the Diocesan office.

Note: C4SO uses MinistrySafe for training only. C4SO does not use the background checks service in MinistrySafe. Churches may use the background check provider of their choice as long as it includes checking the National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal records. In California, it must include using Livescan as part of the process (effective 2022).

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

In conversation with the Rector, ensure that all your church's employees, volunteers and interns (paid or unpaid) complete the Sexual Harassment Prevention Training in January of each year. Document who has taken the training.

Requirements:

- We recommend organizing an event for all your employees, volunteers and interns to watch the training together at your church.
- Use this training link for non-clergy staff and volunteers. Non-clergy staff and volunteers are not required to complete the quiz at the end of the training.
- Document who completed the training and keep it on file. Provide the documentation to the diocesan administrator.
- Make the C4SO Whistleblower Policy available to your church in a public place where it will remain throughout the year.

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STEP 3: INTERACTING

As you prepare to interact, it's important to know what factors may negatively impact a child or vulnerable adult, making them more susceptible to abuse. These include but are not limited to:

Individual risk factors

- Social isolation or limited support networks
- History of previous abuse or trauma
- Cognitive impairment or mental health conditions
- Physical disabilities requiring assistance
- Financial vulnerability or limited resources
- Cultural or language barriers
- Substance abuse history

Environmental risk factors

- Inadequate supervision or oversight
- High staff turnover or inadequate training
- Poor communication systems
- Lack of clear policies or procedures
- Insufficient resources or funding
- Isolation from broader community

The following best practices help children and vulnerable adults feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

Communication Guidelines for Children and Adults

- Strive to keep verbal interactions with children, parents and other staff encouraging and constructive. Always be mindful of your mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children. When volunteering with vulnerable adults, keep communication respectful and compassionate.
- Ensure that no reasonable observer could construe any of your conversations or language as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating. Always refrain from swearing in the presence of children or vulnerable adults.
- Don’t engage in any sexually-oriented communications with children (except as noted in the following section in educational or abuse-reporting contexts). Refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about your own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities.

- Report any sexually-oriented communications involving a child to the Diocesan Safety, Response and Care team lead ("Response Lead") or rector.
- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries.
- Never engage in behavior that is coercive, manipulative, shaming or exploitative.

Sexually-Oriented Materials

- You may use (subject to limitations imposed by the rector or rector's designee) age-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality/sexual abuse prevention/sexual purity.
- Make any prospective material available to the parents of participants for review, and give parents sufficient notice to opt out, should they have concerns or objections.

Social Media

If you have concerns about what constitutes social media misconduct, contact the Ombudsman.

Minors

Ask parents for permission before connecting with their children on social media. Don't connect with children on social media when they are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media channel (for example, Facebook's minimum age is currently 13).

Vulnerable Adults

Some adults may be considered vulnerable due to age, disability, illness or other circumstances that limit their ability to protect their own interests or give informed consent. Because each individual's needs and limitations are unique, the church will handle social media communication and online interaction with vulnerable adults on a case-by-case basis.

In evaluating appropriate communication, the church will consider the individual's specific situation, functional limitations and any expressed concerns or risks identified by caregivers or pastoral staff.

When warranted, the church may determine that all digital or social media communication should occur only through a designated caregiver or representative, rather than directly with the vulnerable adult. In such cases, church personnel and volunteers shall not initiate social media contact or private messaging with the individual, and all communication shall be redirected through approved channels to ensure privacy, dignity and protection from potential exploitation or misunderstanding.

If a vulnerable adult initiates social media contact with church staff or volunteers, a limited and appropriate response may be made to acknowledge the message, assess the nature of the communication, and determine whether redirection to a caregiver or alternate communication channel is warranted. Any ongoing or sensitive communication shall be conducted only with supervisory approval and, when applicable, in coordination with the caregiver.

This individualized approach seeks to balance inclusion and pastoral care with the Church's duty to safeguard vulnerable adults from harm or undue influence in digital environments.

Photography

- Do not use photos of any adult in the church without the written consent of that person.Remove location data (geotags) from all photos before posting online or sharing digitally.
- Do not use photos of children without written parental permission.
- To request permission to use photos of their children, ask parents to fill out a written consent form and keep it on file at the church. We recommend that churches obtain signed parental consent release forms annually, respecting the parents who are non-consenting.

Physical Interaction

- Ensure that any physical contact is for the benefit of the child or adult, and never based on your own emotional needs.
- According to diocesan policy, do not use physical discipline in any form for behavioral management of children. Prohibited behaviors include spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Discipline children using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management.
- In some circumstances, you may use physical restraint to prevent self-injury by the child or adult and/or harm to others or to property.
- Immediately report uncontrollable or unusual behavior to parents, the children's ministry director and/or the rector.
- Always ask permission and obtain clear verbal consent before touching, assisting with mobility or providing personal care to a vulnerable adult.
- Avoid making assumptions about a person's capabilities; offer support without condescension or pity.
- Appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's development and is generally suitable in the church setting.

Appropriate physical affection may include:

- High fives
- Handshakes
- Fist bumps
- Thumbs up
- Head pat
- Side hug
- Smiling

Inappropriate physical affection includes:

- Wrestling
- Tickling
- Sitting on laps (except nursery-aged children)
- Kissing on the lips
- Full frontal hugs
- Commenting on children's bodies
- Forcing unwanted affection

- Inappropriate touching and displays of affection are forbidden. Report any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer immediately by filling out the reporting form at C4SO.org/Report. Follow the guidance given, which may include mandatory state reporting and notifying the rector, who will then notify relevant local persons.
- Only give physical contact and appropriate affection in observable places. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Avoid even the appearance of wrongdoing in the area of physical contact. Your personal behavior must foster trust at all times. Make your personal conduct above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch or affection. A person's preference not to be touched must be respected at all times.
- You are responsible for protecting children under your supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

Virtual Environments

- We understand that engaging people may include not only in-person but also virtual gatherings. The following are guidelines for virtual events:
- All participants, adults, children and students should be fully clothed, including portions of the body that may be “off camera.”
- Participants should not be in their bedrooms, on their beds, or have a bed in the background of their camera.
- Adults must not have suggestive, political, racist or similar materials or images on their screens or in their backgrounds. Children and students should be requested to follow the same standards.
- An adult monitoring the virtual space for hackers or inappropriate use is required to host a virtual event.
- Virtual gatherings must require a registration, and links should not be included on any social media or in broad email lists.
- Should a “Zoom bomb” or other disturbance take place, parents must be contacted.
- If someone is sharing inappropriate, graphic or other harmful material, they must be removed from the virtual environment, and parents must be contacted in cases where it is a child sharing the inappropriate material.

Virtual environments are not suitable or safe for one-on-one gatherings and should follow the same standards as meeting in a physical room or transportation in a vehicle.

Drugs and Alcohol

Refrain from the use, possession or being under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol or any illegal drugs while in church facilities, traveling with or in the presence of children or their parents, during church-sponsored activities, or working with or supervising children or vulnerable adults.

Restroom Use

Nursery-Aged and Special Needs Children

Because nursery and special needs children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, the following policies must be observed:

Diapering

- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child’s parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.

- Change diapers in plain sight of other nursery workers; do not leave children unattended while they are being changed.
- As soon as you change the soiled diaper, re-diaper and re-clothe the child immediately.

Toilet Training and Personal Hygiene

- Do not force any child to toilet train.
- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- Leave the stall door partially open when you are assisting a child in the bathroom.
- Do not leave preschool-aged children unattended in bathrooms.
- Assist children with straightening their clothing before they return to the room with other children.
- Handle "accidents" by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

Elementary-Aged Children

- You may accompany elementary-age children to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. You may also use a same-aged-peer buddy system.
- Take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom. If you have to go into the restroom to check on an individual child, seek out another worker to accompany you. If another worker is not available, go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, 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.

Vulnerable Adults

- Only screened and trained staff or volunteers may provide aid in the restroom and only in cases where the individual does not have a personal aide with them.
- Two adults must be present.
- Always explain what needs to be done and ask for consent.

The Release of Children

- You are responsible for releasing children in your 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. If possible, get written instructions from the parents giving the name of any individual

authorized to pick up the child. If the parent has not done so, offer to write down the instructions and have the parent sign their approval.
- If you are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, contact your immediate supervisor before releasing the child.

Transportation

- You may be in a position to provide transportation for children, youth or vulnerable adults. If you are an adult volunteer driver, provide the church with copies of your valid driver's license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance.
- Use child safety seats that meet federal standards. You and your passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines.
- Never travel alone with a child in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). Ensure you always have two or more adult participants. You may then transport as many children as the seat belt limitations of the vehicle allow; wearing seatbelts is always required. Only in emergency situations (such as medical need or immediate safety risk) may you transport a single child alone. Obtain permission from a parent or legal guardian of the child. This permission should be written and signed by the parent/guardian; if only verbal consent is obtainable, make sure you document it. Transport the child in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.
- Do not use cell phones, including hands-free devices, while driving on church business or church-related activities—unless in an emergency in which phone contact is critical to the safety of a passenger.
- Transport people directly to their destination. Avoid unauthorized stops to a non-public place. Make group stops for meals, refueling and restroom breaks. Avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child or youth in transport.
- Avoid physical contact with children and vulnerable adults while in vehicles.

STEP 4: MONITORING

Be diligent in monitoring and supervising activities in all settings at all times. Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred.

Staff and Volunteers

Maintaining an ongoing safe environment includes always having two approved and trained adults present wherever there are children, youth and vulnerable adults, with a ratio of no less than one

staff/volunteer per five participants at any time. Insofar as it is possible, these staff/volunteers should not be related to one another.

C4SO's mandated ratio of adults to children:

- **Infants:** Two (2) adults for up to eight (8); one (1) additional adult for every additional one (1) to four (4) infants
- **Young toddlers:** Two (2) adults for up to ten (10); one (1) additional adult for every additional one (1) to five (5) toddlers
- **2 and 3 years:** Two (2) adults for up to sixteen (16); one (1) additional adult for every additional one (1) to eight (8) 2-to-3-year-olds
- **4 years:** Two (2) adults for up to twenty (20); one (1) additional adult for every additional one (1) to ten (10) 4-year-olds
- **School age:** Two (2) adults for up to thirty-six (36); one (1) additional adult for every additional one (1) to eighteen (18) school-age children
- **Mixed age group:** Ratio for the youngest child in the group

Clergy and staff supervisors must continually evaluate those who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults. It's often helpful to have casual conversations with volunteers on how they would handle difficult situations, checking to see if they are internalizing the church's commitment to safety. Where weaknesses are observed, address the problems promptly.

Facilities

Church clergy and staff must also monitor the facilities. The facility should be made safe before children, youth, vulnerable adults, staff or volunteers arrive. Do not place volunteers in situations that are impossible to manage. In order to monitor what is happening in each room, make sure the door is open, or that the activities taking place inside are visible from outside the room. While this is easy to arrange in a dedicated church facility, it can be a challenge in shared facilities.

General Best Practices

- Design all activities to be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals. Never leave an unattended child or vulnerable adult in the building or on the property during or following a church activity.
- Don't conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- If in a discipleship or mentoring relationship, conduct your interactions in a public place where other persons are present.
- Extend an open invitation for parents and family members to visit at any time unannounced.
- Carefully review new programs and/or significant changes to a program structure.

- Keep interactions with children, youth and vulnerable adults in full view of others at all times. Keep unused rooms locked where possible. Conduct all meetings and interactions in a room with an internal window that allows for constant observation of activities in the room at all times. If such a room isn't available, keep the door to the room open at all times so that all activities inside the room are visible from the hallway outside the room.
- Keep children and youth in supervised areas within the church building.

Written Supervisory Plans

For those working with children, youth and vulnerable adults, a written Supervisory Plan is a helpful tool to give clear direction to staff and volunteers and provide objective criteria to monitor an onsite or off-site event or activity. When all staff for an onsite or off-site event or activity are informed about the Supervisory Plan, it helps maintain Diocesan standards in the area of safeguarding and may prevent inadvertent missteps.

We recommend posting Supervisory Plans in a visible location at the event or activity. Congregation Coordinators must keep these Supervisory Plans on file.

Sample On-Site Supervisory Plan includes:

- 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 recommended ratio of adults to children/youth/vulnerable adults
- The physical environment
- Bathroom procedures
- First aid and medication procedures
- The reporting of discipline concerns
- The release of children, youth and vulnerable adults after the event/activity

Sample Off-Site Supervisory Plan includes:

- 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 recommended ratio of adults to children/youth/vulnerable adults
- The physical environment
- Bathroom procedures
- The release of children, youth and vulnerable adults

- First aid and medication procedures
- The reporting of discipline concerns
- Off-site transportation plan
- Dining arrangements
- Sleeping arrangements
- Showering arrangements

Note: Staff members and volunteers should never be nude in the presence of children, youth or vulnerable adults in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for changing clothes or an overnight change into pajamas, the rector or ministry supervisor will detail procedures for showering or changing clothes.

A sample Supervisory Plan template is included in Appendix V.

Meetings in Homes

Meetings in homes create a complex environment for assuring the safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults. There are three types of activities involving church members in homes:

1. Private Events

Private events take place when members of the congregation meet in the home of a member or regular attendee with no sponsorship by the congregation's leadership. In the community life of the church, individuals often develop friendships that lead to social or spiritual gatherings in homes, generally without the knowledge of the church. This is normal and expected. The congregation's leadership does not have a role in oversight of activities of this type.

Congregational leadership may become aware of these events and even be invited to them. However, gatherings initiated by congregation members themselves are not church events, and it would be intrusive for the church to attempt to institute controls. But if church leaders are aware of risks in these situations (such as a sex-offender participating in a social setting where children, youth or vulnerable adults are in another room), that matter should be immediately discussed with the rector who will provide guidance.

2. General Events in Homes (Church-Sponsored)

General events in homes take place when the congregation conducts its activities in the homes of its members. These are very typical of smaller churches and, obviously, house churches. In those instances where a congregational event takes place in a home, the same principles of protection apply as to any event that is held in a dedicated church space. That is, if a church event takes place in the home and children, youth and/or vulnerable adults are present, all the requirements of

screening, training, interacting, monitoring and responding must be applied. Every event is required to have the appropriate supervision as determined by church leadership.

Depending on the function and the size of the church and their ministry departments, it may be appropriate for the church to provide properly staffed care at the church during the event. We strongly recommend that all church-sponsored events in homes, even small groups, adhere to the two adults rule for managing groups of children, youth and vulnerable adults. Insofar as it is possible, these adults should not be related to one another.

Best practices for church-sponsored events in homes:

- Keep children, youth and vulnerable adults segregated by age/ability group with two adults overseeing each group whenever possible.
- Volunteer workers for small groups should be adults and must be screened and trained as any other volunteer. The risk of injury and abuse increases if adolescents are used as volunteer workers.
- Parents may want to take turns supervising the children.
- Homes must be inspected for any dangerous conditions such as toxins or other dangerous substances prior to children, youth and vulnerable adults arriving.
- Individual members of the group should check in on the children, youth and vulnerable adults throughout the event.
- Older children should be encouraged to report any inappropriate behavior they observe.
- Children should not be allowed to wander to the restrooms alone. Whenever possible, contact the parent of the child and have them escort the child to the restroom.

Specific Guidelines for Events With Vulnerable Adults

Church-sponsored events held in private homes present unique opportunities for fellowship but also introduce potential safety and accessibility challenges, particularly for vulnerable adults. Our goal is to ensure all participants are treated with dignity, respect, and appropriate care, while protecting both guests and hosts. The church will assess an individual's needs on a case-by-case basis. When it is reasonable, the church will ensure that offsite activities are accessible to those with known limitations.

Adults with Minor Limitations

Individuals with minor mobility, sensory, or cognitive limitations require no specialized supervision. Church hosts and volunteers should remain mindful and attentive, observing the environment for potential hazards and offering assistance when naturally needed.

Adults with Mobility Concerns

Individuals who may require occasional guidance or assistance (e.g., navigating steps, carrying items, monitoring for fall hazards) should have a designated volunteer or staff person assigned to monitor the environment for potential issues.

The assigned helper should maintain a supportive and unobtrusive presence, intervening only as needed to ensure safety.

Adults with Significant Limitations

Individuals with significant physical, cognitive, or medical needs that require continuous support during the event should have a volunteer or staff member assigned to remain with them for the duration of the gathering.

The assigned helper is responsible for attending to environmental safety, providing personal assistance as needed, and responding promptly to any requests for help, while respecting the individual's privacy and dignity.

Guests Who Require Bathroom Assistance

Individuals requiring direct personal care, including bathroom assistance, should be encouraged to attend the event with a caregiver or family member who can provide necessary support.

Church volunteers and staff may not be able to provide personal care in a private home setting, and the safety of the guest must take precedence.

Clear Communication About Event Type

Make sure that the person making the announcements at your church, whether written or verbal, clearly communicates which events are private and which are church-sponsored.

Examples:

Private Event Announcement:
"Mr. and Mrs. X are hosting an event at their home" gives the message that this is a private event.

Church-Sponsored Event Announcement:
"The church is holding an event at the home of Mr. and Mrs. X. Childcare is being provided by the church" gives the message that this is a church-sponsored event.

As a volunteer or employee, you are in a relationship of authority and trust with the people to whom you minister. Thus, you must respond at the earliest opportunity if misconduct occurs, or if you have reason to believe it is occurring, following the correct reporting protocols.
There are two immediate action steps to choose from:

1. **When certain abuse has taken place, visit C4SO's Reporting Portal at C4SO.org/Report.**
2. **If you have questions about whether or not the misconduct you experienced or witnessed should be reported, contact the Ombudsman.**

STEP 5: RESPONDING AND REPORTING

Responding to the Victim

If, by their own disclosure, you obtain knowledge that someone is experiencing or has experienced abuse or neglect, take the appropriate steps outlined below.

- Respect the person's privacy by finding an appropriate non-threatening place to talk that is still observable by others. If possible, ask a staff member, another trained volunteer or other responsible adult to join in listening to the person's account.
- Keep calm, listen and avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- Affirm clearly: "I believe you."
- State clearly: "This was not your fault. You did nothing wrong."
- If appropriate, tell the person that he/she was brave to disclose the abuse.
- Avoid questions that could make the person feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint the person's recollection and account.
- Write down as accurately as possible what the person disclosed.
- Do not discuss the information with, or in the presence of, other people who do not need to know what happened.

Internal Church Communication and Reporting

You must promptly report via C4SO's Reporting Portal (C4SO.org/report) whenever you:

- Are involved in or become aware of any sexually-oriented communications involving a child or vulnerable adult connected with the church; or

- Are involved in or become aware of any inappropriate behavior involving a child, youth or vulnerable adult by a clergy person, a staff member or a volunteer; or
- Are arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, are charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; commit an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) are diagnosed with any paraphilic psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism; or
- Become aware that a member of your household has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphilic psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism; or
- Become aware that a person who is attending the church has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; has been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; has committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) has been diagnosed with any paraphilic psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism.

Reporting to Church Authorities and/or the State

- When there is reason to believe any abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring, act immediately. Do not ignore or fail to take any reported incident seriously.
- Reporting requirements for suspected abuse and neglect include two separate authorities with different requirements: 1) reporting within the church, and 2) reporting to state authorities. Immediately report suspected abuse and neglect via C4SO's Reporting Portal (C4SO.org/report) and contact C4SO's Response Lead (629-257-7911) if you need assistance. State specific requirements are shown at www.c4so.org/safe-church-training/report-child-abuse.
- In some states, volunteers are classified as mandatory reporters. Immediately **contact the Ombudsman** for instructions on how to proceed.

C4SO's Response Protocol

When a report is made through the C4SO Reporting Portal, the following protocol will be followed:

Immediate Actions

1. **Suspend Person Accused of Abuse from Duties.** If the person accused of abuse is employed by or volunteering with the church, the rector (or designee) should immediately remove the person accused of abuse from the situation in which the accusation arose and from any duties where he/she will have any further contact with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults. This can be done quietly and discreetly, but should be done quickly and without exception. An interim transfer to a position that has no contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults is one possibility; a leave of absence (with pay if the person is an employee) may be another solution. The church leadership will determine whether the person accused of abuse will continue in ministry.
2. **Notify Parents Where Appropriate.** If the person accused of abuse is not the parent or guardian or otherwise a member of the household, the rector or his designee should contact the parents or appropriate guardians and offer support from the church.
3. **Notify the Bishop.** The rector must notify the Bishop and/or his staff. The Bishop will notify the diocesan chancellor. The Bishop may request periodic updates of the investigation being conducted and subsequent actions taken at the local church level and/or may initiate his own investigation into the allegations of abuse.
4. **Notify the Church Legal Counsel.** In most circumstances, the rector should notify the church's legal counsel. Obtaining competent legal advice at the very outset of the matter will help protect the church from failing to comply with legal duties and/or being exposed to additional legal liability. In addition, if the investigation is conducted by legal counsel, the information gathered and conveyed to the attorney may be privileged from disclosure as confidential attorney/client communication under certain state laws.
5. **Cooperate with Investigating Legal Authorities.** Subject to advice of your church's legal counsel, always cooperate in the investigation conducted by the governmental agency to which the report has been made, as well as any other law enforcement agencies involved with the investigation.
6. **Notify Insurance Providers.** Unless your church's legal counsel and/or insurance carrier policy directs otherwise, the church should promptly notify its liability insurance company. This is important for four reasons:
    - The insurance policy may require immediate notification for coverage to be effective
    - The policy may pay for counseling or legal advice
    - The policy may not provide coverage for lawsuits involving acts of sexual abuse
    - The insurance carrier, having dealt with similar cases, may be a source of helpful advice
7. **Appropriately Document Actions.** Designated clergy must document any actions taken regarding the complaint and retain that documentation in confidential files. (The church's legal counsel may have specific instructions for how such documentation should be prepared and maintained.) The investigation of suspected child abuse is the legal responsibility of the

police or child protective authorities. It is not the responsibility of church leaders to prove that such an incident did or did not take place.

Note: Unfortunately, most insurance policies do not generally cover sexual misconduct or negligent hiring/supervision in sexual abuse situations, which is why the Congregation Coordinator must verify that the church is covered for sexual misconduct.

Ongoing Response

1. **Reach Out to and Care for Any Victims.** One of your church's primary missions is sharing the love of God with all people. Offer whatever pastoral care and other help is appropriate and available to the alleged victim and his/her family.
2. **Maintain Appropriate Confidentiality** of any allegations and of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the investigation to each person who is interviewed and instruct them not to disclose any information regarding the allegations or your investigation to anyone other than law enforcement or child protective authorities. Maintaining appropriate confidentiality will:
    - Protect the privacy and reputations of those actually or allegedly involved in the incident
    - Reduce the risk that defamation may occur
    - Help preserve the attorney-client privilege, where applicable
3. **Treat the Accused with Dignity and Support.** Since the accused has not been formally charged or convicted, he/she should be treated as innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Be supportive but objective.
4. **Carefully Consider Any Release of Information.** Identify a single person as the church spokesperson to respond to all inquiries (media or otherwise) and instruct all other workers to direct all inquiries to that person. Use an approved, prepared statement to answer media inquiries and to convey news to members of the church. Such a statement should normally be reviewed by the church's legal counsel. Do not release any information until the church has solidly confirmed its factual content.
5. **Bring Closure to the Investigation.** If the accused is eventually convicted, then counseling, discipline and/or dismissal is appropriate. If charges are unsubstantiated, the decision about whether to restore the accused to full employment or volunteer service may depend on a number of circumstantial factors. Consult the Bishop and legal counsel for guidance. Of course, all personnel actions should be well documented in writing and kept in confidential files. Attorney-client privileged material should never be disclosed without first consulting your attorney.

Diocesan Response Process

When a report is made:

- The C4SO Response Lead will ensure it is documented and referred to diocesan authorities as needed.
- Reports are assessed by the C4SO Response Lead and may be assigned one of five categories, ranging from (1) local relational matters handled by church leadership to (5) serious allegations requiring law enforcement involvement and diocesan oversight.
- For higher-level concerns, diocesan support may include external investigators (e.g., Guideposts), trauma-informed interviewers and care chaplains.

If warranted, an Incident Response Team will be formed by the Diocese to coordinate response, care and communication, and your church will cooperate fully with these teams.

The Diocese affirms the importance of pastoral care for everyone involved:

- A Reporter Chaplain and Responder Chaplain may be assigned to provide care, prayer and support throughout the process.
- A clear communication plan will be developed to ensure transparency and respect for all parties.
- When needed, a care plan will be implemented for the wider church community, including staff, vestry and affected families.

Confidentiality and Documentation

- All safeguarding reports and documentation must be handled with strict confidentiality.
- Church records relating to reports or investigations will be stored securely and shared only on a need-to-know basis with appropriate personnel, diocesan leadership, or law enforcement.
- Final investigative reports will be retained by the Diocese, with redacted versions shared as appropriate.

Accountability and Learning

Following each case, the church will:

- Reflect on what happened and what can be improved.
- Participate in any diocesan-led debriefs or learning processes.
- Implement recommendations to strengthen our safeguarding practices.

Pastoral Response to Known Sexual Offenders

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

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

The contract/covenant must include:

- Clear expectations for behavior
- Defined boundaries and off-limits locations
- Supervision requirements while on church premises
- Supervision requirements during church activities
- Consequences for violation of the agreement

The church must have in place a plan to deal with any violation of the contract/covenant. See "Recommended Policies for Incorporating Sex Offenders in C4SO Congregations" on the Professional Development for Clergy web page: c4so.org/safe-church-training/professional-development-for-clergy.

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

You Make a Difference.

As Christ's ambassadors, you embody His love, respect and care for His people. These practices help us fulfill our calling to protect the vulnerable and create communities where all can flourish. Thank you for your faithful stewardship of this sacred trust.

Caring for the Congregation After an Incident of Abuse

Incidents of abuse and the secrecy that often surrounds them can cause devastating harm to the church as well as to the victims. Therefore, where current or past abuse has been perpetrated by clergy, staff or volunteers of the church, the church must encourage discussion of the incident and provide a means to facilitate healing within the church.

Understanding Congregational Trauma

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

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

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

Guiding Principles for Healing in the Church

The following steps may help to promote healing in the congregation:

1. Contact the family. Before the congregational process for healing begins, the Bishop or his representative should maintain regular contact with the victim and the victim's family, sharing the procedures to be used for promoting congregational healing.
2. Balance privacy and openness. Balance the privacy of both the victim and offender against the need for openness with the local church. As much as possible, keep the identities confidential.

3. Provide facts. Church members usually know when "something is going on," and, in the absence of facts, rumor and speculation will grow.
4. Notify lay leadership. The lay leadership should be advised promptly of the issues, since that group's participation is vital in planning and implementing the processes for church healing.
5. Conduct trauma debriefing. The possibility of healing and unity in a congregation grows when there is an open meeting, called a Church Information, Trauma and Healing Debriefing ("Debriefing"), at which the Bishop or his representative presents as much factual information as possible. After the meeting, ask a person trained in crisis ministry to be available on a small group or one-to-one basis. Make available local mental health resources (including sliding-scale fee agencies) so that people know how to find these services. (Note: Many communities have publicly-funded survivor services, which offer a variety of specialized resources.)
6. Your debriefing message should be "The Church is a place for truth. We follow Jesus, who described himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life."
7. Appoint a church spokesperson. The vestry, in consultation with the clergy, may appoint a church spokesperson. The congregation, including church members and staff members, then refers all media inquiries to the church spokesperson.
8. Find an interim priest, if needed. If the circumstances require that an interim priest be engaged, make sure the priest has special training in trauma debriefing. Arrange for the interim priest to have regular opportunities to report and consult with the Bishop, his designated staff person and counselors.
9. Encourage consulting of legal authorities. Neither the clergy nor any other church worker should attempt to impede anyone who wishes to consult with legal authorities.
10. Offer continuing pastoral care. The clergy and/or vestry should consult with the Bishop about additional resources for the healing and care of the congregation.

A Model for an Information and Trauma Debriefing Meeting

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

A. Steps Prior to Meeting

1. Select Leaders. Carefully choose a Congregational Trauma Debriefing Team and a leader or co-leaders who have had experience with a debriefing or trauma-related process. It is important that the Rector or his representative be a visible participant in the debriefing, but not in the role of leadership.
2. Schedule and Notify. Schedule the debriefing as soon as possible after the report becomes public knowledge. Ensure that all members of the congregation and church staff are notified of the

debriefing by telephone, e-mail, overnight mail, or other fast and reliable method of notification. It is important to get a wide participation, so that all who experience the trauma also share the debriefing experience.

3. Choose a Meeting Place. Hold the debriefing in an appropriate place, preferably on the church's property. Although an opening prayer is appropriate, this should not be a liturgical event.
4. Address the News Media. While the debriefing should not be confidential, it is important that no one be placed in jeopardy because of any disclosures made during that meeting. Therefore, it is preferable that the news media not be present for the debriefing but meet afterwards with the church spokesperson and the Bishop.

B. Agenda for the Meeting

1. Open the Meeting. The Bishop or his representative should welcome attendees, as should one of the lay leaders. The lay leader then should introduce himself/herself, explain the debriefing process and outline the guidelines for the debriefing. It is important to keep the debriefing to the specified procedures. Leaders should be prepared for a lengthy meeting.
2. Present the Facts. Subject to the advice of counsel, the general facts and approximate chronology of the trauma should be presented verbally, supplemented by written notations such as a summary handout. The goal is to ensure that all those present have a common record of the traumatic event. Note: This is not a time for feelings to be expressed and the group may need some direction to withhold those feelings until the next phase of the debriefing.
3. Solicit Reactions. Once an appropriate record has been presented, the lay leader should invite church members to express their reactions to the facts. (Some church members may need to be directed to express their own feelings and not those of others.) No feelings, however trivial, intense or unusual, should be discounted, and no effort should be made to fix, soothe or smooth them over. The responses simply are to be collected and heard.
4. Examine Repercussions. Once reactions have been expressed fully, the leader should ask those present to turn their attention to the repercussions of the event and consider the congregation's future. This step bridges the trauma with the ongoing life of those involved in the trauma. It may be a time to explore some of the issues the congregation will face in the near future. As with the presentation of facts, the issues raised may be noted both verbally and with writings.
5. Seek Context and Perspective. Members of the congregation also should be invited to place the event within a context or perspective. There may be expressions of confusion, helplessness, or curiosity about how other groups have resolved an issue of this type. In this phase, people may have an awareness of paradox and pose some hard questions such as the following:

    - Why do bad things happen?
    - How can it be that such a talented priest/leader could be involved in misconduct?
    - Why do things like this happen in a church?
    - Where does the responsibility lie?
    - What about the resources of our faith?

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

C. Actions After the Meeting

1. Plan for the Future. This could include a) scheduling a follow-up session one or two months into the future; b) discussing the ways in which the pastoral and sacramental needs of the congregation will be met; or c) describing the resources available to people who may need counseling or other specialized attention.
2. Provide Trained Counselors. For the immediate needs of those present, it is important that trained crisis professionals be available in the church building so that individuals or groups may process their feelings further. These professionals are present simply to listen and support people in integrating the trauma.
3. Debrief the Debriefing. After the debriefing, members of the Congregational Trauma Debriefing Team should meet to discuss their own experiences with the debriefing meeting, in order to do the following:
    - Plan the follow-up monitoring of the congregation in the future
    - Determine whether there are issues that will need further clarification
    - Determine whether there are complicating factors, or factors that require special, ongoing attention
    - Decide what the lay leadership of the congregation requires to address the issue further
    - Evaluate the debriefing meeting itself (or agree to do so at a later date)

D. Additional Information and Meetings

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

E. Additional Church Responses

Additional appropriate church responses may include:

- Regular prayer for healing of all parties
- Preaching on the subject of violation of trust and liturgical acts of corporate penance
- Securing a safe place for the victim and the victim's family in community life
- In the event that incarceration or other punitive action follows legal proceedings, developing a means for the congregation to communicate with the person who may be imprisoned

F. Congregational Follow-up: The First Year

Even with the best of care, a congregation that has experienced abuse will need an ongoing program of support and assistance, especially in the first year. This year will be devoted to a healing process, in which the congregation slowly will integrate the reality of its experience into its future. If such integration

does not take place, the congregation may suffer from prolonged loss of energy, despair about the future, loss and/or isolation of some members, distrust of lay and/or ordained leadership or of the Bishop, and difficulty making decisions or taking risks.

G. Suggested Follow-up Activities

1. Meet with Bishop or his appointed representative and the vestry in order to assess the healing process of the congregation
2. Obtain input from church staff (including an interim priest where present) about their observations regarding the incident and the debriefing process
3. Establish study groups to consider the issue of healing from abuse, perhaps by reading a selected book for discussion
4. Conduct a congregational self-evaluation through the use of a questionnaire or survey instrument
5. Create congregational focus groups to address the issue of where the congregation stands in its process of moving ahead
6. Form a Committee on Congregational Life charged with assessing the needs and planning programs for continued healing
7. **Appoint a professional consultant experienced with issues of abuse to work with the vestry and affected congregation on the components of the healing process**

H. Using the Trauma to Help Others

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

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

Appendix I

RAINN Statistics on the Sexual Abuse of Children and Teens

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE, online.rainn.org and rainn.org/es) in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Of all sexual abuse victims under 18, two out of three are ages 12-17.

Child victims know their perpetrator: Out of the yearly 63,000 sexual abuse cases substantiated, or found strong evidence, by Child Protective Services (CPS),[6] the perpetrator was most often the parent.[1]

- 80% of perpetrators were a parent
- 6% were other relatives
- 5% were "other" (from siblings to strangers)
- 4% were unmarried partners of a parent

Child Sexual Abuse Is a Widespread Problem.

- One in nine girls and one in 53 boys under the age of 18 experience sexual abuse or assault at the hands of an adult.[3]
- 82% of all victims under 18 are female.[4]
- Females ages 16-19 are four times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.[2]

The effects of child sexual abuse can be long-lasting and affect the victim's mental health. Victims are more likely than non-victims to experience the following mental health challenges:

- About four times more likely to develop symptoms of drug abuse
- About four times more likely to experience PTSD as adults
- About three times more likely to experience a major depressive episode as adults

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SOURCES:

1. *United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Child Maltreatment Survey, 2012 (2013).*
2. *Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sex Offenses and Offenders (1997).*
3. *David Finkelhor, Anne Shattuck, Heather A. Turner, & Sherry L. Hamby, The Lifetime Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault Assessed in Late Adolescence, 55 Journal of Adolescent Health 329, 329-333 (2014)*
4. *Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement (2000).*
5. *H.M Zinzow, H.S. Resnick, J.L. McCauley, A.B. Amstadter, K.J. Ruggiero, & D.G. Kilpatrick, Prevalence and risk of psychiatric disorders as a function of variant rape histories: results from a national survey of women. Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology, 47(6), 893-902 (2012).*
6. *United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Child Maltreatment Survey, 2013 (2014).*

Appendix II

Statistics on the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults

The following comes from the National Elder Abuse Incidence Study conducted by The National Center on Elder Abuse at The American Public Human Services Association in Collaboration with Westat, Inc.

- For every reported incident of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect, approximately five go unreported.
- The best national estimate is that a total of 449,924 elderly persons, aged 60 and over, experienced abuse and/or neglect in domestic settings in 1996. The authors note that this number increased exponentially from ten years prior, which suggests the current number might be even higher.
- Of substantiated reports of elder abuse attributable to perpetrators, as opposed to self-neglect, the most common types (in descending order from highest rates to lowest rates) were neglect, emotional/psychological abuse, financial/material exploitation, and physical abuse.
- Elders over 80 years of age are far more likely to be the victims of all categories of abuse, with the exception of abandonment.
- Approximately half of all substantiated reports of elder abuse involve those who are unable to care for themselves.
- Overall, men were the perpetrators of abuse and neglect 52.5 percent of the time. Of the substantiated cases of abuse and neglect, males were the most frequent perpetrators for abandonment (83.4 percent), physical abuse (62.6 percent), emotional abuse (60.1 percent) and financial/material exploitation (59.0 percent). Only in cases of neglect were women slightly more frequent (52.4 percent) perpetrators than men.
- Data show that family members were the perpetrators in nine out of ten (89.7 percent) substantiated incidents of domestic elder abuse and neglect with adult children representing 47.3% of perpetrators. Spouses followed at 19%.

The CDC reports:

- In the United States, people with disabilities are 4 to 10 times more likely to be victimized than people without disabilities.
- Researchers found that 11.5% of adults with a disability were victims of sexual assault vs. 3.9% of adults without disabilities. In addition, 13.0% of people with

disabilities were victims of attempted sexual assault compared to 5.7% without disabilities.

RAINN also publishes some statistical information on sexual violence against people with disabilities based on a 2017-2019 Bureau of Justice survey. Note that these statistics include minors, so this may not be exactly what you're looking for:

- Persons with disabilities were victims of 26% of all nonfatal violent crime while accounting for about 12% of the population.
- The rate of violent victimization against persons with disabilities (46.2 per 1,000 age 12 or older) was almost four times the rate for persons without disabilities (12.3 per 1,000).
- Persons with cognitive disabilities had the highest rate of violent victimization (83.3 per 1,000) among the disability types measured.
- Nineteen percent of rapes or sexual assaults against persons with disabilities were reported to police, compared to 36% of those against persons without disabilities.

Appendix III

Parental Consent Form for Use of Videos and Photos of Minors

_____ *[Church name]* recognizes the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all young people taking part in any activity associated with our organization. In accordance with our child and youth protection policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of children or youth to be taken without the consent of a parent. As your child will be taking part in _____*[Insert name of specific event, or reference continuing child and youth classes or programs]*, we would like to ask for your consent to take photographs/videos of the event or activity that may contain images of your child. It is likely that these images may be used as

- a record of the activity or the event which may be presented on the church website or social media
- in a written evaluation report of the activity or event that will be viewed by the church
- publicity material for further activities or events on leaflets/websites/brochures
- illustrations of the activities or events in published articles

The church will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately, you should inform the Rector or child protection coordinator immediately.

We would be grateful if you would return this form to the child protection coordinator by _____*[Date]*.

I, _____ *[Parent],* consent to / do not consent to *[circle one]*

_____

[Church]

photographing or videoing _____*[name of minor]*. Date:

Appendix IV:

Personal History Statement for Employees/Volunteers

Congregation Name:

_____

Congregation Coordinator Name & Preferred Contact Method:

_____

The subject of abuse and neglect can trigger powerful feelings and sensitivities. The statistics indicate that our parish includes people who have been abused, and some who have abused others. Like you, we are grieved by its prevalence and long-term impact, often felt well into adulthood. As His children, we are called to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

We are respectfully requesting information to discern whether you may need special care and/or considerations as a result of your personal history. Our purpose in asking is to initiate the conversation, make informed decisions and care for you as your church family.

Have you ever:
Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged? Yes _____ No _____

Been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding? Yes _____ No _____

Been charged with child neglect in a civil proceeding? Yes _____ No _____

Committed an act of child sexual abuse? Yes _____ No _____

Committed an act of child neglect or physical abuse? Yes _____ No _____

Are you aware of:
Having any traits or tendencies that could pose any threat to children, youth or others? Yes _____ No _____

Any reason why you should not work with children, youth or others? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, further questions may be asked in the interview process.

Printed Name Date

Signature

Appendix V:

Sample On-Site Supervisory Plan

The following provides an example of a Supervisory Plan for an on-site nursery at a local church. Each church will devise specific supervisory plans for all onsite and offsite programming that involves children, youth and vulnerable adults. This plan is offered for information only. It is a sample of what a supervisory plan may look like. Each congregation will need to personalize such a plan to its own specific policies and procedures.

NURSERY SUPERVISORY PLAN

Personnel: Only screened staff and volunteers may work in the nurseries. No one under the age of 18 may be hired to work in the nurseries and no one under the age of 16 may volunteer in the nurseries.

A minimum of two screened and trained staff/volunteers must provide supervision at all times. Insofar as it is possible, these staff/volunteers should not be related to one another.

Nursery staff and volunteers are not permitted to allow unscreened friends or family members to assist in the nursery.

Supervision: On Sunday mornings, _____ will check to ensure that the nurseries are fully staffed at each of the service/Sunday School times. _____ will conduct random visits to the nurseries during all programming times or appoint someone else to take on a supervisory role to observe staff/volunteer/child interactions. _____ will meet with staff to provide training and solve problems.

Ratio: No less than one staff/volunteer per five children at any time. Minimum of two staff/volunteers at all times.

Physical Environment: Windows on nursery doors will not be obstructed. Toys, books and furniture and apparatus will be cleaned on a weekly basis. Rugs and other moveable items that could pose danger will be secured.

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

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

Reporting Concerns: Concerns about the nurseries should be reported to _____.

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