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# **St. Timothy's Anglican Church**

## **Safe Church Policies & Procedures: Protection of Children**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Pastoral Letter from the Rector to our Parish Family at St. Timothy's

The Holy Scriptures speak of the Church as the Body of Christ and His bride. God calls His Church and all Her members to a life of holiness, service, and love of neighbor. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, calls us to be ministers of His gospel for a broken world. We are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate in God's redemption of the whole of creation. As a community of faith, the Church stands for truth, justice, mercy, compassion, reconciliation, service, and sacrifice. The Church serves as a field hospital, where the broken may enter and encounter the love, grace, peace, and healing power of Christ's redemption. This is central to our vocation.

To this end, St. Timothy's Anglican Church must be a safe place. Our responsibility to shepherd the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of each person is essential. In our broken world, the vulnerable are often exploited. Statistics demonstrate that approximately one in four girls and one in six boys suffer abuse in their lifetime. This means that it is highly likely that our congregations are made up of men and women who have either experienced abuse or know a survivor/victim of abuse. Unfortunately, this is true for every denomination. To be light in a dark world, the Church must be different. The Church must take action in order to equip leaders to safeguard those in its care.

Therefore, St. Timothy's Anglican Church affirms the following:

### ***Humanity is PART OF creation, yet UNIQUE***

- God's CREATION is a good gift
- IMAGE OF GOD: Every human being is created in the image of God and has inherent worth and dignity.

### ***Humanity is uniquely CALLED to stewardship/care in love***

- STEWARD: The Church is called to steward God's creation and His bride, the Church.
- RESPECT: This understanding of sexuality calls for equal respect for all men, women, and children as persons made in God's image, and for everyone's right to sexual and physical integrity.

### ***Humanity is embodied and communal and has received the good gift of sex to be enjoyed within covenant***

- SEX IS A GIFT: Sexuality is good, blessed, and purposeful; sexuality is understood to be a gift that is celebrated by sexual union within the bond of love found within the covenant of a man and a woman in marriage.

### ***Humanity is Broken***

- VULNERABLE: Children, adolescents, the infirmed, and elderly are particularly vulnerable to the tragic consequences of broken covenants and abusive treatment, and special care must be taken to protect their individual rights and personal integrity.

### ***Church is About the Restoration of Humanity***

- JUSTICE: All types of abuse (verbal, physical, neglect, and sexual misconduct) will be taken seriously by St. Timothy's, and when required by law, will be reported to the appropriate local, state, and/or federal agency.
- PROTECTION: The protection of the vulnerable shall be of utmost concern.
- RESPONSIBILITY: The Church has always recognized that those chosen for ordained ministry bear a particular responsibility to pattern their lives according to Jesus' teaching. Bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders are called to be faithful examples of the Christian life. Any moral offense by clergy or laity entrusted with pastoral and educational ministries is especially hurtful because it betrays the trust committed to each by the Church to nurture and care for every member.

This manual outlines the policies required in our effort to prevent sexual misconduct and harassment by members of the clergy, lay employees, and those working in ministry with youth and children. This manual also prescribes the procedures required in response to an event of sexual misconduct or harassment and articulates the policies that aim to protect potential survivors/victims. It is necessary reading for all parish leaders, including, but not limited to, all affiliated clergy, vestry members, all parish employees, and all lead volunteers/teachers for children/youth. The manual is also recommended for comprehensive understanding of the issues involved with sexual misconduct and harassment and the ramifications of engagement therein.

As the Body of Christ, we are called to be children of light, uncovering what is done in the darkness, and to protect and care for the vulnerable in our midst. I am grateful for your ministry and commitment to this policy below.

The Rev. Stan Gerber

## **B. Purpose of St. Timothy's Anglican's Safe Church Policies & Procedures Manual**

This manual provides guidance, information, instruction, and common practices to direct and inform the clergy and laity of St. Timothy's Anglican Church (Parish). It also serves as a reference manual to inform your decisions and methods regarding safeguarding the children, youth, adults, and families, entrusted to you, providing minimum standards of care and vigilance.

## **C. Safe Church Diocesan Committee**

The Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Council, will establish a Safe Church Diocesan Committee that is responsible for disseminating the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast's (DWGC) Safe Church Policies and Procedures under the authority and oversight of the Diocesan Council and the Bishop in accordance with the canons of the Diocese. From time to time, but not less than annually, the Committee will review and, if necessary, revise the policies and procedures considering practical experiences, medical and other scholarly research, legal developments, and other relevant considerations.

## **D. Responsibility for Implementation and Compliance**

The Rector/Senior Pastor of the Parish, rather than the DWGC or the Province, has overall responsibility for the administration of and compliance with these policies and procedures within the Parish, mission, or church plant he leads and for providing all reports requested by the Diocese. In the absence of a Rector/Senior Pastor, the clergy-in-charge or designated lay leader(s) will be responsible. Duties may be delegated, except in those areas specifically delineating action by the Rector/Senior Pastor. However, these endeavors go far beyond matters of compliance and reporting. We pray that the information and policies in this manual will be shared and implemented in such a manner that creates or strengthens a culture of safety in each of our Parishes that makes protecting our children and youth and the vulnerable among us part of our DNA.

## II. CHILDREN PROTECTION POLICY

### A. St. Timothy's Anglican Church's Policy on Child Abuse

St. Timothy's Anglican Church (the Parish) will not tolerate any form of child abuse involving our clergy, lay employees, volunteers, or other persons. Everyone who serves the Parish through educational, pastoral, recreational or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct against children. That commitment extends to sexual behavior.

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

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

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

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

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said,

*"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."* (Matthew 18:1-6 ESV)

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

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



## B. Pastoral Care of all Affected by Instances of Child Abuse

The Parish's response to instances of child abuse should be survivor-sensitive, i.e. priority should be given to protecting and caring for the alleged survivor/victim<sup>1</sup> and his/her family. However, we are committed to providing pastoral care to all affected by and involved with instances of abuse. Pastoral care grows out of Christ-centered relationships and proceeds with an awareness of the spiritual and emotional needs of both the individual and the community. It may include providing guidance, support, consolation, and even confrontation to minister to each individual as we believe God desires. However, the Rector and any clergy involved in providing pastoral care should refrain from placing conversations regarding allegations of abuse and or sexual misconduct within a sacramental framework (e.g., confession) and are well-advised to show concern for privacy of all individuals concerned.

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

## C. Child Abuse Defined

Child abuse, in practical terms, refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child daily) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.<sup>2</sup> Each state and the District of Columbia has its own definition of what constitutes child abuse under civil and criminal laws, and each parish in the Diocese should be familiar with the relevant laws and legal definitions in its jurisdiction. In general, the definitions of child abuse and child neglect in all states include the following elements (among others):

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

**Texas Definitions.** The Texas Family Code defines abuse and neglect to include a number of acts or omissions. Tex. Fam. Code § 261.001 et seq. The definition is so broad that essentially every action in which a child's physical and mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected is potentially covered. Accidents or reasonable discipline (e.g., spanking) from a parent that do not expose a child to substantial risk of harm are excluded from the definitions of "abuse" and "neglect."

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<sup>1</sup> We use the language "survivor/victim" to acknowledge that individuals may identify with "survivor," "victim," or some other terminology related to their experience. This is a matter of personal preference and we should honor the language someone uses.

<sup>2</sup> Child abuse may also be a term defined by relevant state laws.

## **D. 5-Step Approach to Child Protection (Minimum Standards)**

### **1. SCREENING**

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

#### **a. Screening Clergy**

The screening of clergy is the responsibility of the Diocese. Careful screening of clergy is conducted initially during the ordination and search processes and includes:

- Initial National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks should be done through Oxford Document Management Company (Oxford) or other diocesan-approved screening providers. The Diocese's standard for clergy background checks is the 15-year background referencing performed by Oxford. Checks should be renewed at least every two years and these subsequent checks may be done through Ministry Safe or other diocesan-approved providers. It is the responsibility of all clergy to cooperate fully in all aspects of the screening process and to submit in a timely manner all documents needed to complete such checks.
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks (three sources recommended).
- Conducting a thorough social media search.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews.
- Requiring the clergy person to state whether or not the clergy person and/or other members of the household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. A sample copy of this screening statement is found in Appendix Section A.
- Reviewing this policy with the clergy person and requiring clergy to sign and submit Policy Acknowledgment Form found in Appendix Section F3.

#### **b. Screening Employees & Interns**

Careful screening of employees is the responsibility of the Parish and includes:

- Reviewing signed job applications for employees and interns.
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks (checks should be renewed at least every two years).
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks (three sources recommended).
- Conducting a thorough social media search.

- Conducting face-to-face interviews; if the volunteer or staff member being interviewed is under 18, employers may want to ask the parent(s) if they have any concern about their child (the potential volunteer/employee) regarding sexual misconduct with children.
- Requiring each applicant to sign the screening statement found in Appendix Section A.

### **c. Screening Children & Youth Ministry Volunteers**

Careful screening of children and youth ministry volunteers is the responsibility of the Parish and includes:

- Requiring a six-month minimum church attendance rule for volunteers in children's and youth ministries, except where the Bishop has granted a variance.
- Reviewing signed Application for Volunteers for those working in youth and children's ministries found in Appendix Section Q.
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks should be renewed at least every two years).
- Conducting personal and reference checks and any professional references that relate to childcare experience.
- Conducting a thorough social media search.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews; if the potential volunteer is a minor, it may be helpful to interview the parents or legal guardians; employers can ask the parent(s) if they have any concern about their child (the potential employee) regarding sexual misconduct with children.
- Requiring each applicant to sign the screening statement found in Appendix Section A.

## **2. TRAINING**

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

### **a. Certification of Reading and Understanding the Policies**

All members of the clergy, all members of the vestry or equivalent, and those staff members, long-term contractors, and volunteers with direct supervision over youth or children must certify that they have read, understood, and accepted the St. Timothy's Anglican Church Safe Church Policies & Procedures: Protection of Children & Adults, and sign the St. Timothy's Anglican Church Individual Acknowledgement of Receipt of Policies found in the Appendix Section F.3.

### **b. Training Attendance Requirements**

Upon hiring or first volunteering and thereafter every two years, clergy, vestry or equivalent, and those staff, long-term contractors and volunteers who have contact with youth and children must:

- Complete an awareness training: Awareness training can be completed in person as part of the policy training, or it can be completed online through a diocesan approved curriculum

detailed in Appendix Section B. St. Timothy's Anglican Church has standardized on the Ministry Safe program.

- Complete policy training: Policy training will cover the guidelines set forth in this document as well as any additional policies specific to the Parish. This policy is intended to be used with a Train-the-Trainer model, where the Parish has a lead trainer who holds training for leaders, staff, and members of the Parish (See Appendix Section B).

Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office evidence of completed training every two years. The Parish is responsible for tracking and documenting the training/retraining of its vestry or equivalent, staff and volunteers. Clergy, Vestry (or designated lay leadership board or council) and staff should complete training within three months of hire or election. Volunteers must complete training prior to serving with youth or children.

### 3. INTERACTING

All clergy, employees, and volunteers are encouraged to maintain healthy boundaries with children and students and to strive for emotionally healthy relationships. The Parish leadership is asked to consistently bring awareness to this issue by normalizing the following principles:

- **Choose the Light:** whether it is bullying, inappropriate jokes or comments, flirting, etc., bringing the issue into the light is always the path toward healing, accountability, sanctification, and emotional health.
- **Transparency:** it is a difficult thing to clearly state what you think/feel/see happening, but it is a sign of emotional health. No one can improve or eradicate the inappropriate behavior without understanding the issue.
- **See something, say something:** if something is a concern to you bring it to the appropriate leadership detailed within this document (for clergy that is the Bishop; for laity, that is the clergy at the Parish; for the Bishop, that is the Diocesan Chancellor); including multiple leaders in the discussion will ensure accountability, transparency, and appropriate resolution. The Diocese also provides a hotline for confidential reporting (832-422-8199).

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

#### a. Addictive Behaviors

Clergy, staff members, volunteers and participants in youth and children's ministries, while traveling with or in the presence of children, their parent(s), or other legal guardians during Parish-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children should not: use tobacco products; possess or use any illegal drugs; be under the influence of alcohol; or share / view pornographic materials.

#### b. Communication

All interactions, verbal and non-verbal, between clergy, staff members, or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep

verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents or caregivers in the spiritual growth and development of children.

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

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers should avoid engaging in any sexually oriented communications with children, (except as noted in abuse reporting contexts), and should refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child or youth.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers may employ (subject to limitations imposed by the Rector/Senior Pastor or Rector/Senior Pastor's designee) age-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality/sexual abuse prevention/sexual purity. Any prospective material should normally be made available for review for the parents or legal guardians of participants. Prior to introducing these materials, notice should normally be provided to parents or legal guardians in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.

### **c. First Aid & Medication**

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

### **d. Home Group Procedures**

The Parish does not have, and therefore does not exercise, control over home groups. The care and protection of children in such settings is always the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child. The Parish provides some resources that may help equip the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the home groups as they exercise their care and responsibility. In home groups where children are present, even on an occasional basis, leaders are encouraged to read this policy, take the dual diocesan-approved policy and awareness training, and follow as closely as possible the provisions outlined in this policy, including the development of a Supervisory Plan which should consider the following:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Home group is defined for purposes of this policy as a small group meeting in a home for Bible study, worship, fellowship, etc. A church which holds its primary worship service in a home is, for purposes of this policy, considered to be a church and not a home group.

- Supervision by two screened and trained individuals (supervision by a single individual is never a good idea).
- Inspection and preparation of physical environment – the location should be inspected and prepared for child safety for the developmental age of those being served, keeping in mind outlet coverings, sharp corners, sharp objects, unsecured furniture, access to outdoors, toxic materials, etc.
- Creation of restroom procedure – for any child who requires assistance, parent(s) or legal guardians should be responsible for diapering and meeting other restroom needs.
- Identification and communication of areas of the home that are off-limits to guests.
- Communication of emergency exit plans, and location of fire extinguishers and medical supplies.

### **e. Overnight Events**

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

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

- Communication of emergency exit plans, and location of fire extinguishers and medical supplies.

## **f. Photography**

Photos of children will not be used contrary to the wishes of the parent(s) or legal guardians. Parishes should refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior permission from the parent(s) or legal guardians. This is easily handled by including a consent statement on programming registrations that are signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s). See Appendix Section I for St. Timothy's Anglican Church Release & Permission to Use Images Form.

## **g. Physical Interactions**

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

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

Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In some circumstances physical restraint may be used to prevent self-injury by the child and/or harm to others or to property. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents/guardians, Children's Ministry Pastor, Rector/Senior Pastor, Youth Pastor, and/or clergy.

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

- Appropriate interactions may include:
  - high-fives
  - handshakes
  - fist bumps
  - thumbs up
  - head pats
  - side hugs
  - smiling
  - pats on back
- Inappropriate interactions include:
  - wrestling
  - kissing on the lips
  - forcing unwanted affection
  - sitting in laps (except nursery)
  - tickling
  - full frontal hugs
  - commenting on children's bodies
  - massages

- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to 1) an immediate supervisor, and 2) the designated lay leader(s) and/or clergy.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in youth and children's ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected at all times.

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

## **h. Release of Children**

Staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care at the close of services or activities only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians in accordance with posted *St. Timothy's Anglican Church Supervisory Plan for 2022-2023 for Toddler and Nursery Rooms*. This Supervisory Plan can be found in the Appendix Section L. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

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

## **i. Restroom Use**

### **Nursery Aged and Special Needs Children**

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

#### *Diapering*

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

Note: Nationally, one out of every four women has been the survivor/victim of some form of child sexual abuse, typically by a male offender. To build trust and to minimize exposure based on statistical research, the Parish may determine that diapering, toilet training, and restroom



monitoring of infants will only be done by screened and trained female staff/volunteers or the child's parent(s)/guardian(s). However, it generally is appropriate for male staff/volunteers to change the diapers of male non-infant children and special needs children/young adults. Parents or guardians of non-infant children with late development of toilet habits and special needs children should be consulted and provide direction to staff and volunteers in these situations.

### Toilet Training

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

### **Elementary Aged Children**

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

### **j. Sexual Ethics in the Context of Youth Ministry**

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

## k. Social Media Policy

The term “social media” refers to social networking services, blogs, short-message services, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image- and video-sharing sites, and other methods for real-time information sharing among users. Because this is a constantly evolving area, these principles below apply to all new social media platforms whether they are specifically mentioned here.

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

**Be smart.** A blog or community post is often visible to the entire world and can be shared by others in ways that you cannot control. Remember that what you write is public and will remain public for a very long time.

**Be selective.** There are a variety of communication methods available, and not all communications are well-suited to social media platforms. Consider whether your communication is better suited to face-to-face conversation, a phone call, email, or other method.

**Be respectful.** Your Parish is a thoughtful and prayerful community that encourages free expression and values civil debate. If you disagree with others, do so with civility. Respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, and be respectful of the Church and its teachings.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (usually 13). For those students younger than 13 years old, get parent or legal guardian permission for any communication and welcome the parents or legal guardian into that environment. All screening procedures should be followed and up to date for all staff and volunteers.

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

Virtual spaces are to be treated the same as in-person spaces. This means two adults must be online with any youth (known as the two-adult rule), participants must be appropriately clothed, and conversation should not be held in the adult’s bedroom. The parents or legal guardians should be aware that the student is in conversation with the leaders.

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

Remember that all social media Parish accounts or groups must model appropriate behavior and language. Student pictures should not be shared without parent or legal guardian permission in public groups, and membership into private groups should be monitored by both

the Parish and the parent(s) or legal guardians closely. Use personal interactions on social media avenues to model appropriate behavior and language, both on and off social media.

## **I. Spiritual Direction & Pastoral Counseling with Youth**

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

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

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

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

## **m. Transportation**

Staff members and volunteers of St. Timothy's Anglican Church may from time to time be able to provide transportation for children and youth. The following guidelines should be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children or youth whenever possible:

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to their home parish and St. Timothy's Anglican Church, copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- Adult volunteer drivers must undergo an insurance approved background check including a DMV record check. Every volunteer that will be transporting youth will be required to submit this information to both their home parish and St. Timothy's Anglican Church. Use of child safety seats that meet federal standards is required. Drivers and

passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines. Parishes are advised to consult with their insurance provider regarding the minimum age for adult drivers. Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 18 be allowed to drive children/youth as part of an event.

- At no time shall there be one adult and one child traveling in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). Automobiles will contain either one driver and two or more participants or two adults and any number of children (within the seat belt limitations of the vehicle; seatbelts are ALWAYS required). If there is an extenuating circumstance causing only one adult and one child to travel together in an automobile, permission must be obtained by a parent or legal guardian of the child. This permission should be written and signed by the parent/guardian or documented by the volunteer if only verbal consent is obtainable. The child or youth should be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.
- No cell phones, including hands-free devices, may be utilized by the driver while driving Parish-owned vehicles, unless in an emergency, with the exception of GPS navigation.
- Transport children directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks should be done as a group. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No one under age 25 may drive vehicles rented by the Parish unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement; no drivers under age 25 may drive Parish-owned vehicles unless explicitly covered by the Parish's auto insurance policy.
- In special circumstances these may be altered for emergencies. In these cases, the children/youth pastor (or her/his supervisor) should be notified immediately.
- If a family situation necessitates a special circumstance, the family may sign a waiver stating the deviance from the Parish policy; this policy should note the family's acceptance of responsibility.

## **n. Peer-on-Peer Abuse**

It is imperative for parents, caregivers, legal guardians, and supervising adults to recognize peer-on-peer abuse and not dismiss what they see as “kids being kids”. Peer-on-peer abuse is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between children. It includes bullying, cyberbullying, sexual violence, harassment, and sexting. The behavior in question is harmful to both the perpetrator and the survivor/victim. And the prevalence of peer -on-peer abuse is alarming. According to the U.S. Department of Justice National Sex Offender Website, **30-50 percent of youth are sexually abused by other juveniles.**<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nsopw.gov/en/SafetyAndEducation/QuestionsAndAnswers#QuestionsAndAnswers>

### **Preventing Peer-On-Peer Abuse**

Following are some helpful suggestions to prevent peer-on-peer abuse from the Redwoods Group (a Crumb and Forster Company) that provides insurance to youth-serving organizations.<sup>5</sup>

- **Comprehensive, Engaged Supervision:** Peer-to-peer abuse tends to be opportunistic and happens when there is a lack of supervision. Be sure that youth are always in the presence of staff. That means maintaining ratios and being actively engaged with all youth. Bathrooms, cabins, and locker rooms require enhanced supervision, as these high-risk locations can be seen as a more private area that the instigator believes will make it easier to go undetected.
- **Be Aware of Blind Spots and Unstructured Time:** Peer-to-peer abuse also tends to occur in “easy-to-cover” locations and during unstructured times. Be aware of blind spots such as, play structures, seats on the bus, and even items of clothing that can all provide cover for acts of abuse. Because of the potential for distraction, relatively unstructured transition times at the beginning or end of programming or during transportation also present added dangers.
- **Watch for Red Flag Behaviors:** Peer-to-peer abuse often escalates from bullying, so having a robust anti-bullying culture is key. Address physical aggression or verbal teasing early, especially when repeatedly targeting a specific individual—and intentionally follow-up with the survivor/victim to make sure they are feeling safe. It’s also important to watch for any form of inappropriate sexual behavior or language, which may be a sign of abuse.
- **Plan for Power Imbalances:** Abuse often occurs when one youth holds some form of physical or social power over another. Whether it’s through planning seating arrangements, how we organize group work, or how we supervise bathroom breaks, we can avoid such imbalances turning into potentially abusive situations. In general, seat youth of similar ages and sizes together, and be sure to break up groups where red flag behaviors have been observed or are suspected.

## **4. MONITORING**

Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. Clergy, vestry (or designated lay leadership board or council), staff, and volunteers must be always diligent in monitoring and supervising children’s and youth activities in all settings.

Monitoring procedures should include, but are not limited to:

- **Two-Adult Rule:** All child and youth activities shall be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals, preferably not related to each other.
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a Parish activity.
- Clergy, staff members, and/or volunteers should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://redwoodsgroup.com/resources/preventing-peer-to-peer-child-sexual-abuse/>

- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should take place in a public place or where other persons are present.
- All leaders are expected to watch for policy violations and report them.
- An open invitation should be extended to parents, caregivers, or legal guardians to visit at any time unannounced.
- A careful review of new programs and significant changes to program structure.
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times.
- Keeping unused rooms locked whenever possible.
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the Parish building.
- Supervisory Plans: An onsite or offsite written Supervisory Plan (see below) shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children.

The purpose of the Supervisory Plan for any given activity is to give direction to staff, both volunteer and paid, to ensure appropriate measures are in place to meet the Parish standard for supervision. It is recommended that a copy of the Supervisory Plan be provided to and signed by those responsible for supervision and that the plan be posted in a visible location. Please refer to Appendix Section C for a sample Supervisory Plan. Please refer to Appendix Section L for St. Timothy’s Anglican Church 2022-2023 Supervisory Plan for the Toddler & Nursery Rooms.

**a. Sponsored: On-site Supervisory Plans**

Sponsored On-Site Supervisory Plans should include:

- Description of the nature of the activity.
- Details of the registration process and a sample registration form.
- Personnel responsible for running the activity, including name and cell number.
- Recommended ratio of adults to children, based on the Texas standards. A mixed age group equals the supervisor ratio for the youngest child in the group:

**Age Maximum number of children one caregiver may supervise:**

<b>0-11 months</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>12-17 months</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>18-23 months</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2 years</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3 years</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4 years</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>5 years</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6-13 years</b>	<b>26</b>

- Standards for interacting with, and disciplining, children or youth.
- Description of the physical environment, including which areas are locked or off-limits.
- Bathroom procedures, including showering procedures, if applicable.
- First aid and medication procedures including location of fire extinguishers, first aid kits and defibrillators.
- Procedures for reporting discipline concerns.

- Protocol for the release of children.  
Note: Emergency plans and procedures, including schematics with fire escape routes, shelter-in-place designations, and plans for reuniting children with parents or legal guardians would also be helpful.

## **b. Sponsored: Off-site Supervisory Plans**

Sponsored Off-site Supervisory Plans should include all of the requirements for On-site Supervisory Plans and the following:

- Dining arrangements.
- Sleeping arrangements: see Overnight Events.
- Showering procedures: see Overnight Events.
- Offsite transportation plan(s): see Transportation.

## **c. Non-Sponsored: On-site Events**

Due to the nature of the facilities and shared ministry, the situation might arise where the Parish facilities are used by non-sponsored groups for activities and events (such as Young Life, or the Boy Scouts, or parties, etc.). These events may choose to offer childcare on their own, utilizing the facilities available. The Parish should consult their insurance policy regarding these types of activities and to be compliant with the restrictions and recommendations in that insurance policy. It is also recommended that the Parish use a Facilities Agreement that clearly articulates the outside organization's responsibility and liability for their program and volunteers/employees for every instance of an outside group using the Parish's facilities.<sup>6</sup>

## **d. Non-Sponsored: Off-site Events**

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

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix Section J for the St. Timothy's Anglican Church Facilities Request Form

## **5. RESPONDING & REPORTING**

### **a. Responding & Reporting Overview**

It is essential that the Parish respond to a report or instance of abuse in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse, and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the local Parish and community. One of your Parish's primary missions is sharing the love of God with children. Offer whatever pastoral care and other help is appropriate and available to the survivor/victim and his/her family. (See Appendix Section H).

It is also critical to be prepared in advance if an incident or allegation of child abuse occurs. The Parish shall have an appropriate Response Plan (even if only a very brief one or check list) to use when responding to any allegation of child abuse. (See Appendix Section G for St. Timothy's Anglican Church's Response Plan.)

Among other things, the Parish should be familiar with, and every person responsible for the care of children in the Parish, should understand its state's child abuse reporting laws and requirements. Laws can change over time, however, and it is the responsibility of the Parish to make certain that it has identified and understands the child abuse reporting laws that currently apply to it at any specific time. In short, anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, a child has been abused, abandoned, neglected, or exploited in violation of the law should immediately contact the appropriate state abuse hotline or law enforcement authority, as applicable. All reports are confidential and access to these reports is limited by specific criteria described in the appropriate state's statute(s).

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

As part of any Response Plan, the Parish will have in place appropriate procedures for internal reporting to appropriate Parish leaders of any suspected mistreatment of or injury to a child and any suspicious or unusual information about a child. Other important considerations for a Response Plan include interacting with and providing pastoral care to the survivor/victim and her/his family, interacting with the accused, deciding whether to retain legal counsel, deciding whether to conduct an investigation and notifying the Parish's insurance company.

The Diocese provides a hotline for confidential reporting (832-422-8199). The phone number is published on both the Diocesan website and St. Timothy's Anglican Church's website.



## **b. Responding to the Child Survivor/Victim**

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

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

Write down as accurately as possible what the child disclosed. This information can be used in filing the St. Timothy's Anglican Church Form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse (see Appendix Sections D and E) and helps capture all the information needed to make a Child Protective Services report.

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

## **c. Reporting to Legal Authorities**

### **i) Texas Mandatory Reporting Laws**

Texas has expansive mandatory reporting laws for physical and mental abuse (including sexual abuse) or neglect of children. Potentially anyone is a mandatory reporter if one has reasonable cause to believe that a child's wellbeing has been negatively affected by abuse by any person.<sup>7</sup> "Abuse" and "neglect" are defined expansively, so potentially any act that adversely affects a child's welfare constitutes abuse or neglect (subject to narrow exceptions). Failure to report to the proper authorities—whether law enforcement or Department of Family and Protective Services—carries criminal penalties.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> On September 1, 2021, the Texas Legislature's amendment of that mandatory reporting statute changed the trigger for mandatory reporting from "cause to believe" to "reasonable cause to believe...".

<sup>8</sup> Helpful resources on mandatory reporting in Texas:

<https://www2.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cvs/suspectchildabuse.pdf>; <https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-state-laws-export.cfm?state=Texas&group=4>

## ***To Whom Do I Report in Texas?***

In Texas suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported immediately to any local or state law enforcement agency or to Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). , such abuse or neglect that is not urgent or does not constitute an emergency may be reported online <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx>.<sup>9</sup> DFPS is not required to investigate child abuse or neglect that is done by a person who is not a caretaker; state or local law enforcement agencies handle investigations of reports of abuse or neglect. TEX. FAM. CODE § 261.301(c). For instances of abuse or neglect not involving a person responsible for a child's care (e.g., abuse by a volunteer, Parish member or clergy), reports should be made to local law enforcement.

Please note that the above information regarding mandatory reporting laws should not be considered legal advice and such laws may not be described with complete accuracy or specificity. Accordingly, the Rector/Senior Pastor or other appropriate parish leaders should consult with the Parish's legal counsel for assistance in identifying and complying with the appropriate abuse reporting requirements within the required time frame under applicable state laws.

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

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

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

### **d. Reporting to Church Authorities**

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

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<sup>9</sup> Situations in which one should use the Texas Abuse Hotline rather than the online portal include: (i) Serious injuries; (ii) any injury to a child 5 years or younger; (iii) Immediate need for medical treatment (including suicidal thoughts); (iv) sexual abuse where the abuser has or will have access to the survivor/victim within the next 24 hours; (v) children age five and under are alone or are likely to be left alone within the next 24 hours; and (vi) anytime you believe your situation requires action in less than 24 hours.

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

- i) **Report to the Rector/Senior Pastor & Notification of the Bishop.** The individual(s) suspecting abuse or neglect should immediately notify the Rector/Senior Pastor and designated lay leader (or another person designated by the Rector/Senior Pastor or otherwise identified in the Parish's child abuse reporting procedures as authorized to receive such reports) of the suspected child abuse. The Rector/Senior Pastor, in turn, should immediately notify the Bishop, who should notify the Diocesan Chancellor.
- ii) **Report to the Bishop or Call the Hotline.** The Parish should also identify in its response plan and other children's ministry policies other persons who may receive such a report if the Rector/Senior Pastor or senior warden or other designated lay leader(s) is the person who is the subject of the allegations or is otherwise suspected of having committed abuse or neglect. In the case of clergy misconduct complaints, the Bishop should be contacted immediately or the Diocesan hotline (832-422-8199) should be called. Any person believing that the Bishop has engaged in any sexual misconduct should immediately contact the Chancellor or call the Diocesan hotline.

#### e. **Other Actions / Considerations**

- i) **Pastoral Care & Healing.** The Parish's response should be survivor-sensitive, i.e., priority should be given to protecting and caring for the alleged survivor/victim and his/her family. However, it is essential that the Parish respond in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the congregation and community.
- ii) **Contact with the Parents.** If the accused is not the child's parent or guardian or otherwise a member of the household, the Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee should contact the child's parents or legal guardians and ensure they receive immediate and long-term pastoral care and are offered professional counseling from a counselor with whom they are comfortable and who is experienced in trauma-informed care. Also, consider assigning a member of Parish leadership as a liaison, who will be intentional about staying in regular contact with the family and walking with them through what will be a very challenging season. If possible, select someone who has a relationship with the family and ensure the liaison understands his /her role and limitations. As an example, the liaison should not provide counseling to the family but could help connect them with an appropriate counselor.<sup>10</sup>
- iii) **Contact with and Suspension of the Accused.** The Rector/Senior Pastor, or his designee, should advise the accused of the allegations, the process that will be followed, and his/her right to be represented by legal counsel and ensure the accused receives pastoral care. The survivor/victim and the accused should not receive pastoral care from the same clergy or counselors. The accused should be suspended (with pay if a paid employee) while a confidential investigation is being conducted. This can be

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<sup>10</sup> "Responding with Excellence to an Allegation of Sexual Abuse within the Church" by Basyle Tchividjian, Currents in Theology and Mission, Vol.45 No.3

done quietly and should be done quickly and without exception. The Parish leadership will determine whether the accused will continue in ministry. If the accused is a member of the clergy, any employment-related decisions by parish leadership must be made in consultation with the Bishop and in conformity with the Constitution and Canons of the DWGC.

- iv) **Notification of Insurance Providers.** Unless the Parish's legal counsel advises otherwise, the Parish should promptly notify its liability insurance company. This is important for at least four reasons: (1) the insurance policy may require immediate notification for coverage to be effective; (2) the policy may pay for counseling or legal advice; (3) the policy may not provide coverage for lawsuits involving acts of sexual abuse; and (4) the insurance carrier, having dealt with similar cases, may be a source of helpful advice. Unfortunately, most insurance policies do not generally cover sexual misconduct or negligent hiring/supervision in sexual abuse situations. Separate "riders" can be purchased, although some require strict preconditions to coverage like screening, awareness, and prevention training. See Appendix Section F1.
- v) **Consideration of Retaining Legal Counsel.** The Rector/Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Bishop and Diocesan Chancellor, will determine if legal counsel should be retained. Obtaining competent legal advice at the very outset of the matter may help protect the Parish's interests and be a helpful resource regarding any reporting or other legal requirements. In addition, if the investigation is conducted by legal counsel, the information gathered and conveyed to the attorney may be protected from disclosure as a privileged and confidential attorney/client communication.
- vi) **Designation of a Spokesperson.** Identify a single spokesperson (someone who can communicate clearly and succinctly and with empathy and care) to respond to media inquiries.
- vii) **Communication with the Congregation.** The Congregation should not first hear about an instance of abuse in the Parish from a news report or through the rumor mill. Consequently, it is important to have early and transparent communication of essential and non-confidential facts with the congregation. The communication should be succinct, factual, non-speculative and survivor-sensitive and, among other things, send a clear message that the survivors/victims are being cared for and that the Parish is a safe place.
- viii) **Investigation.** The Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Chancellor, will decide whether or not an investigation will be conducted and by whom. The Bishop shall not participate in the investigation, which should be impartial and bias-free. The person(s) appointed to investigate the matter should not be employed by or a member of the Parish at which the alleged misconduct occurred, be connected in any way to the Children's or Youth Ministry at the Parish or have any type of relationship with the accused, the survivor/victim or the survivor/victim's family. Any investigation should not interfere with or impede, in any way, any investigation conducted by state or local law enforcement. Typically, there are three options for who should conduct an investigation: trained, skilled and impartial individuals from within the Diocese; an independent group that is not a law firm; or an independent lawyer or law firm.
- ix) **Bring closure to the investigation.** If the allegation is substantiated, then discipline or dismissal is generally appropriate, in accordance with the Constitutions and Canons of the DWGC and the Province. Counseling may also be appropriate. If charges are unsubstantiated, the decision about whether to restore the accused to full employment or volunteer service may depend on a number of factors. Consult the Bishop and legal counsel for guidance. All personnel actions must be well documented in writing and kept

in confidential files. Attorney-client privileged material should never be disclosed without first consulting your attorney.

## **f. Release of Information**

- i) **Considering the release of information.** Carefully consider any release of information. Identify a single person to respond to all inquiries (media or otherwise), such as a specially trained management person, and instruct all other workers politely to direct all inquiries to that person. Use an approved, prepared statement to answer media inquiries and to convey news to members of the parish. Such a statement should be reviewed by the Parish's legal counsel. Don't release any information until the Parish has solidly confirmed its factual content. Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved by not releasing names or other identifying information, especially that concerning minors.
- ii) **Maintaining confidentiality.** 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:
  - a. protect the privacy and reputations of those actually or allegedly involved in the incident.
  - b. reduce the risk that defamation may occur.
  - c. help preserve the attorney-client privilege, where otherwise applicable.

## **g. Other Important Internal Church Communication & Reporting**

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers will report promptly to the appropriate ministry leader, supervisor, or Rector/Senior Pastor whenever the clergy, staff member, or volunteer:

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

child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; has committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) has been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism.

Such information is important to enable Parish leaders to see that appropriate child protection mechanisms are in place in accordance with this policy while handling this information in a responsible and confidential manner. The Diocese also has a hotline for confidential reporting (832-422-8199).