



**POLICIES FOR THE
PROTECTION OF
CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM ABUSE**
With additional Safety and Behavioral Guidelines for Children and Youth Programs

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem
333 Wyandotte Street
Bethlehem, PA 18015
610.691.5655

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Letter from the Bishop

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

One of the oldest Christian Collects helps to set the tone as we consider together the task of responding to these policies regarding the protection of children and youth from abuse. We pray, “O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ....”

These policies are our way of responding to the culture we live within with godly respect for the dignity of human nature so wonderfully created and wonderfully restored in Christ Jesus. It is our way of humbly joining with Jesus who humbled himself to share our humanity. It is our way of carrying out the Baptismal Covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons, respecting the dignity of every human being. It is our way of holy love, our way of loving our neighbor as we love ourselves in the love of God.

Faithfully yours,

The Right Reverend Paul V. Marshall
Bishop

Definition of Terms

A. Church Personnel

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

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
3. Those who contract their services to the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
4. Volunteers are persons who enter into or offer themselves for a church related service, or who actually assist with or perform a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, Vestries, Bishop's Committees, and Boards of Directors.

B. Children and Youth

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years.

A youth is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

C. Work With Children and Youth

For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel who Work With Children or Youth:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid or volunteer Church Personnel whose work regularly takes them throughout the facility or grounds or who have keys or codes giving them access to the buildings on the grounds
3. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities.
4. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle.
5. Any paid personnel whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church, school or other related agency.
6. All Vestry members or other members of similar decision-making groups who have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs or activities for children or youth.

Examples of Church Personnel who Work With Children or Youth include, but are not limited to:

- Children’s or youth choir directors
- Organists who work with children or youth
- Lay youth ministers
- Volunteer youth directors
- Church School Superintendents, DREs or equivalent, Church School teachers
- All Church Personnel who work or assist in the Nursery.
- All staff, whether volunteer or paid, at church camps
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth.

D. Representatives of Community Organizations

For the purpose of this policy, those individuals who are members of community organizations who use church facilities on a regular basis, and have keys or codes to give them access to the facilities, are considered to need the same training as Church Personnel.

Safeguards for Children and Youth

A. Screening and Selection

1. Any and all Church Personnel who **Work With Children or Youth** shall be screened and selected utilizing at least the following,
 - a. **A standard application** completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the **Code of Conduct** (Supplemental Material – pgs. 5-9).
 - b. **Criminal records check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church. Pennsylvania form. \$10.00. An FBI check may be used instead of a Criminal records check.
 - c. **Child Abuse History Clearance** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. Pennsylvania form. \$10.00.
 - d. **Sexual offender registry check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. Use www.sexualoffenders.com. No cost.
 - e. **Individual interview** with the applicant.
 - f. **Two or more Reference checks** of persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children.
 - g. **Driving or Motor Vehicle records check** if the person may be transporting children or youth. Pennsylvania form. \$10.00.
 - h. The above information along with additional material may also be obtained by a professional organization.
2. All Church Personnel who work with children or youth must agree to comply with the Diocesan and Parish **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**.
3. No person will be allowed to volunteer to **Work With Children or Youth** until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months.
4. Church Personnel who work with children or youth must have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.

5. Criminal, Child Abuse and sexual offender registry checks will be conducted every five (5) years for Church Personnel who Work With Children or Youth.
6. To the extent possible, no person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with children or youth. For the purpose of this policy, immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar in-law relationship, stepchild, stepparent, stepsibling, grandparent, or co-habitant.
7. Church Personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Bethlehem and apply for, are asked to, or who undertake a new position working with children or youth, are required to undergo the same screening and selection process as in Section 1 above. This requirement may be met through a transfer of a copy of their personnel file to the new employer, together with completion of a new application, individual interview and reference checks with those for whom the applicant has worked since the screening was last done.

B. Education and Training Requirements

1. Church Personnel Who Work With Children or Youth are required to take the full *Safeguarding God's Children* training plus policy review before they start their work, or if that is not possible, within three months of starting.
2. All Church Personnel Who Work With or Children or Youth will update their training with new materials every five years.

C. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

1. It is the responsibility of all who supervise work with children and youth to monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth and other children to prevent inappropriate behavior and interaction. An extensive list of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors is found below under section D.
2. The following ratios for adults and children for all programs, including activities which occur off church premises, must be followed at all times.
 - a. A ratio of one adult per five children or youth, with a minimum of two adults present.
 - b. The ratio requirements apply for each gender should children and youth be separated by gender, such as for sleeping arrangements.
 - c. Two unrelated adults must always be present, even if there are fewer than five children or youth.
3. Children and youth events or meetings are to function with an open-door policy. Church Personnel and parents have a right to observe any activity at any time.
4. Church Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.
5. Church Personnel over the age of 25 must directly supervise Church Personnel under the age of 18 and be physically present during all activities.
6. Five years older rule: All Church Personnel must be at least five years older than the oldest participant they will be supervising for any function.
7. Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
8. An up to date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth will be maintained in the church office or other place where church records are kept.

9. New activities for children and youth require approval from the Rector or canonical equivalent. Requests to develop new activities must be submitted in writing to the Rector, who will consider whether the plan for a new activity includes adequate adult supervision.
10. Each program will develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths.
11. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering, or diapering infants or children, Church Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
12. At least two unrelated Church Personnel must supervise activities. When both boys and girls are participating, male and female adults must be present.
13. These guidelines may be modified to make accommodations for children and youth with disabilities. A child with a physical, emotional or developmental disability may need help with activities of daily living that require more adult contact than typically developing children of the same age. The child's safety may also dictate more physical contact than would be recommended at a particular age. For example, a child with a physical disability may need adult assistance in the bathroom. A young person whose disability caused him/her to wander may need a hand placed on his/her knee when seated to remain in place. All modifications should be made through conversation with the child's parent(s). All accommodations are to remain within the spirit of this policy of protection.

D. Guidelines for Safe Interaction with Children and Youth

1. Church personal will follow the **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection** as follows
 - a. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:
 - Brief hugs.
 - Pats on the shoulder or back.
 - Handshakes.
 - "High-fives" and hand slapping.
 - Verbal praise.
 - Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
 - Arms around shoulders.
 - Holding hands while walking with small children.
 - Sitting beside small children.
 - Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
 - Holding hands during prayer.
 - Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.
 - b. The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry settings because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.
 - Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
 - Kisses on the mouth.
 - Holding children over three years old on the lap.
 - Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
 - Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
 - Occupying a bed with a child or youth
 - Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
 - Wrestling with children or youth.
 - Tickling children or youth.

- Piggyback rides.
 - Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
 - Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
 - Any form of unwanted affection.
 - Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
 - Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
 - Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
 - Private meals with individual children or youth.
2. The use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and the misuse of legal drugs is prohibited at any children’s or youth program, event or meeting.
 3. Smoking in front of children or youth is prohibited. Adults who feel they must smoke must find a designated area separate from the group in a well-ventilated area. Smoking indoors is not permitted.
 4. Church Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic status. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.
 5. One-to-one counseling with children or youth will be done in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
 6. Church Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
 7. Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.
 8. Church Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually-oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
 9. If a delicate or controversial topic will be discussed at a meeting or event, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed of the subject matter.
 10. Church Personnel are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually-oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.
 11. Church Personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
 12. Church Personnel are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.
 13. Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.
 14. Church Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
 15. Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children’s or youth ministry or camp activities.

16. Weapons, firearms, fireworks and paintball activities are prohibited at all children and youth events.
17. Church personnel will uphold the following guidelines for medical and dietary concerns:
 - a. A person trained in First-Aid must be part of the staff for day-long or overnight events. Training must include the American Red Cross CPR and basic first-aid or its equivalent.
 - b. A well-equipped/fully-stocked First-Aid Kit must be available and maintained at all functions.
 - c. No medications will be administered without parental consent; this includes Tylenol and cough drops.
 - d. Medications, such as inhalers for asthma or shots for bee stings, that are required for an individual, should be safely stored with adult staff and procedures reviewed with parent(s)/guardian(s) and event staff before the event begins. Such situations must be noted on the youth's medical release form.
 - e. Dietary concerns and allergies must be obtained from parent(s)/guardian(s) and must be indicated on consent forms.
18. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Church Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose on more than an occasional basis.
19. Church personnel will uphold the following guidelines for transportation and trips
 - a. Only drivers aged 25 or over are permitted to transport children and youth to, from or during any Diocesan children or youth event.
 - b. All drivers must have a valid driver's license and qualify for the vehicle being operated.
 - i. They must have no record of convictions for drunken driving, driving under the influence, driving with a suspended/revoked license, or reckless endangerment.
 - ii. They must have proof of insurance.
 - c. Seat belts must be worn and their usage strictly enforced.
 - d. All State Traffic Laws must be observed. Speeding is not permitted nor will it be tolerated.
 - e. All luggage and equipment must be securely fastened and exits clear of obstructions.
 - f. When more than one vehicle is in transit, periodic stopping points will be pre-planned and adhered to. Driving with headlights on is required. The "leader" vehicle must always be sure the "follower" vehicles can see him/her and vice versa.
 - g. There will be designated departure sites and explicit times set where/when parent(s)/guardian(s) are to pick-up/drop off youth for each event.
 - h. Exact event location(s), site phone numbers, and event addresses will be provided to all parent(s)/guardian(s). Adult leaders will also provide their cellular phone numbers to parent(s)/guardian(s), if applicable, prior to departure.
 - i. Adults may not be alone with a child or youth in a vehicle. Arrange pick-up/drop off where two children or youth can be the last dropped off or the first to be picked up.
20. Church Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, or tents with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the bed, sleeping bag, or tent. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.
 - a. Only the number of people allotted to a hotel room will be allowed. For example, no more than four people to a room with two double beds. Arrangements for extra

- cots in a room may be made in advance with the hotel and Church Personnel and parent(s)/guardian(s) permission only.
- b. Children and Youth sleeping areas, if they are separate from adults, are to be on the same floor as church Personnel, nearby and with easy access. Church Personnel must have a key for each Children and Youth room.
- c. If closer supervision is necessary, adults may sleep in the same hotel room or other room with children or youth participants. In this case, at least two unrelated adults of the same gender as the children or youth must be present at all times. Within the shared space, sleeping areas for children/youth and adults are to be clearly defined. Adults must be separated from children/youth by a distance of at least five feet. As noted above, adults are prohibited from sleeping in the same bed or sleeping bag with children or youth
- d. There will be no housing of mixed genders permitted.

E. Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations with Children or Youth or Suspected abuse of Children or Youth

1. When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**, or which may violate any provision of these **Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse**, they must immediately report their observations following the procedure guidelines in the Diocese of Bethlehem Safeguarding Handbook. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using staff or volunteers without the required screening.
2. All Church Personnel are required by this policy to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state and local authorities, whether or not the suspected abuse occurs within the Church context. **ChildLine 800-932-0313**.
3. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, “in good faith” means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
4. In addition to reporting to local and state authorities, Church Personnel are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel following the procedure guidelines in the Diocese of Bethlehem Safeguarding Handbook.

Implementation of Policies

1. Complete guidelines to the implementation of these policies within each parish are found in the **Diocese of Bethlehem Handbook for Safeguarding God’s Children**.
2. The Handbook includes:
 - a. Philosophical and theological foundation for the Diocesan Safeguarding policies.
 - b. The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth.
 - c. Complete definition of terms.
 - d. The Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
 - e. Procedures for reporting inappropriate behaviors, violations of these policies, and suspected abuse of children or youth.
 - f. Sample applications, medical release forms, event permission forms and Community Life Standards forms for use at children and youth events.
 - g. Forms for church personnel and vestries for Acknowledgment of receipt of the Handbook.