



THE GULF ATLANTIC DIOCESE  

---

of the Anglican Church in North America

Safeguarding Our People:  
Policy for Protection Against Abuse in the Church

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## Overview

**T**o the Clergy, Wardens, Vestry Members, Staff, Volunteers, and People of the Gulf Atlantic Diocese,

The Holy Scriptures speak of the Church as the Body of Christ and call its members to live lives that are rooted in Christ and grow together in love, thanksgiving and service to God and neighbor. To be a Christian is to be part of a new creation, a new humanity guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Church is to be a community of truth, justice and mercy, compassion and reconciliation, mutual service and steadfast faithfulness. The Church’s relationships should exemplify this as a sign to the world.

In company with the Bishops and people of the Anglican Church in North America, as well as the entire Anglican Communion, the congregations of the GAD affirm:

- that every human being is created in the image of God and we are called to be stewards of God’s creation;
- that 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 heterosexual marriage;
- that 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;
- that 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;
- that all types of abuse (verbal, physical, neglect, and sexual misconduct) will be taken seriously by the Diocese and, when required by law, will be reported to the appropriate local, state, and/or federal agency;
- that the protection of the vulnerable shall be of utmost concern;
- that 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 developed to respond to the issue of sexual misconduct and to confront the reality of inappropriate sexual misconduct by members of the clergy, lay employees, and volunteers, as well as to explain the issues related to sexual misconduct with special concern for the prevention of incidents and the protection of potential survivors. **It is necessary reading for all church leaders, including, but not limited to, all affiliated clergy, vestry members, all church employees, and all lead volunteers/teachers for children/youth.** The manual is also recommended to the people of the Diocese for comprehensive understanding of the issues involved with sexual misconduct and the ramifications of engagement therein.

“<sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”  
I John 1:5-7

As the Body of Christ, we are called to walk in the light, uncovering that which is done in the darkness, and to protect the vulnerable. We are grateful for your ministry and your commitment to choosing the Light.

In Jesus the Messiah,

+Neil G. Lebhar  
Bishop, Gulf Atlantic Diocese  
Anglican Church in North America

## Policy Summary

The Gulf Atlantic Diocese requires that each congregation (or parish, mission, or church plant) is expected to have in place these four procedures (or their equivalent) for preventing abuse of both adults and children:

### A. Procedure 1: Awareness

- a. Background checks: all clergy, all seeking ordination, all employees, and all leaders of children/youth ministries must be background checked in compliance with their insurance carrier's requirements; Diocese maintains copy of documentation for clergy; churches maintain documentation for all employees/volunteers including copy of documentation for clergy (see pages 12-14; 22).
- b. Training: at minimum, the following must be completed (see pages 14, 23):
  - i. All employees, vestry, clergy, and those in leadership of children/youth must complete the **diocesan training** on this policy, as well as their individual church's policy, within six months of accepting a leadership role and renew every two years;
  - ii. All clergy, and those in leadership of children/youth must complete **Ministry Safe Awareness** training in child protection prior to leadership and must re-certify every two years;
  - iii. All new/transfer clergy must complete **Keeping Our Sacred Trust**;
  - iv. All Camp Directors must complete **Ministry Safe Camp Leadership** prior to leadership and renew every two years;
  - v. All camp leaders must hold a current certificate for either *Camp Awareness* training prior to serving at camp and must renew every two years.

### B. Procedure 2: Interaction

- a. Verbal interaction: pastoral counseling recommended to be limited to 6 sessions or fewer per person; keep verbal interaction kind, clean, legal, and age-specific (see pages 15, 24).
- b. Physical interaction: hands off, especially with restroom policies, affection, and discipline; remain in public view (see pages 16, 26).
- c. Supervision: two-adult-rule is recommended; kids are never alone; remain in public view; be open to parents being present; follow plans (medical, restroom, transportation, overnight, off-campus, responding, and reporting); provide a safe environment; follow the recommended ratio of leaders to students (see pages 28-33).

### C. Procedure 3: Reporting

- a. Any report of a person in danger, or a report of abuse in the past, should be immediately reported to the proper authorities.
- b. Allegations against the Bishop are to be reported directly to the Diocesan Chancellor.
- c. Allegations against all clergy and diocesan employees are to be reported directly to the Bishop, the Chancellor, and the President of the Standing Committee.
- d. Allegations against all lay persons are to be reported directly to senior leadership (Rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge).
- e. All congregations must post the **#ChooseTheLight** poster with hotline #904-300-0512 in a visible location to encourage reporting (see pages 18, 35).

### D. Procedure 4: Compliance:

- a. Churches are responsible for all documentation regarding screening, training, and implementation for volunteers and employees (non-clergy), in compliance with this policy and with their insurance carrier's requirements.
- b. Diocese is responsible for all documentation regarding screening, training, and implementation for clergy, in compliance with this policy and with the diocesan insurance carrier's requirements.
- c. Documentation is to be completed, submitted, and filed no later than Jan 31<sup>st</sup> each year (see Appendix A, B, and E).

## Definitions & Assumptions

This document serves as recommendations for the churches in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese (GAD) of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), as approved by the Bishop. These policies are provided as necessary reading and acknowledgment for all church leadership and ministry groups. It is also expected that all individuals associated with the Diocese in any capacity, clergy or lay, employee or volunteer, of the Diocese its churches, congregations, and ministry groups will read, learn, and apply its content regarding the protection of our people.

The Joint Leadership (JL) of the Diocese is comprised of the Standing Committee and the Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Council will review this manual prior to July of each calendar year and will provide any recommendations for possible revision of the document to the Bishop for approval. This review will be recorded as proof of the policies' amendment and annual approval by the Diocesan Council. All of the members of the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council will be expected to sign the Policy Acknowledgment (see Appendix B) before August 31<sup>st</sup> and it will be submitted to the Diocesan Administrator for filing and distributed to each Rector. The signed policy will take effect the following year; congregations are expected to complete compliance by the first vestry meeting of the following calendar year. Signed forms for the leadership of the congregation are due to the diocese by January 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year.

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

- **Bishop:** this includes the Bishop of the Diocese, but also includes the ecclesiastical entity authorized to act in the absence of the Bishop, the Standing Committee.
- **Rector:** the person in charge of a parish, including instances where such person has a title other than rector (such as vicar, deacon, or lay pastor).
- **Survivor:** anyone who has experienced abuse in any form.
- **Complainant:** the person making an accusation (can be the survivor).
- **Offender:** anyone who physically, mentally, sexually, or spiritually abuses others.
- **Congregation:** all parishes, worshipping communities, and any other entity affiliated or in association with the Diocese.
- **Advocates:** persons appointed by the Bishop to assist the survivors and complainants in understanding and participating in the disciplinary processes of the Church, including obtaining assistance to formulate and submit an appropriate charge and in obtaining assistance in spiritual matters. Advocates are not to serve as legal advisors or pastors. Each church should consider a congregational list of advocates not employed by the church or diocese.
- **Consultants:** person(s) appointed by the Bishop to consult with and advise the member of the clergy accused of sexual misconduct and his or her legal advisors at reasonable times prior to the issuance of a Presentment. The consultant shall explain the rights of the member of the clergy and the alternatives.
- **Child or Youth:** any unmarried person under the age of 18 years who has not been emancipated by order of the court. In most cases, child refers to infants through elementary school, and youth refers to middle/junior high through high school aged minors.
- **Dating Relationships:** consensual relationships of clergy or employees with a parishioner in which two parties are publicly engaged intending a Christian marriage, or when two persons

are exploring a consensual relationship that may lead to a Christian marriage. In such situations, the relationship is to be conducted with the knowledge of the rector (or Bishop in the case of clergy). Consensual dating between individuals not involved in supervisory relationships are excluded from the definition of Sexual Exploitation, which is defined on page 12.

- **Pastoral Relationship:** a relationship between a member of the clergy, employee, or volunteer, and any person to whom such member of the clergy, employee, or volunteer, provides formal counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance, or from whom such member of the clergy, employee, or volunteer has received a confession or confidential or privileged information.
- **Privileged Relationship:** a relationship between a person and a member of the clergy in which communications between the person and the member of the clergy are deemed confidential.
- **Response Team:** team drawn from psychologists, counselors, attorneys, and members of the clergy or other persons appointed by the Bishop of the Gulf Atlantic Diocese to oversee the policies and procedures regarding misconduct in the diocese. This team will coordinate with the survivor advocates.

For the purposes of this policy, please assume:

- Allegations of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse within the church will be taken seriously, and deserve a timely response from the Diocese.
- The Bishop holds both pastoral and disciplinary responsibilities. The Bishop's pastoral concern is directed to the survivor(s); the response team and advocates may provide additional care, as well. His pastoral concern is also directed to alleged offender(s), complainants, and congregation(s) involved. He may also utilize advocates and the response team to share in pastoral care for them.
- A person can be wrongly accused of sexual misconduct.
- The Bishop cannot be the only one to actually assess or evaluate the substance of allegations. An approach involving legal, mental health, and pastoral components is desirable as a uniform procedure ensures all cases will be treated with compassion and justice. The protection of the survivor(s), complainant(s) and the survivor/complainant's family will be of paramount concern.
- Investigations will be conducted by a third party for further investigation under relevant canonical procedures at the direction of the Bishop.
- The Bishop and any clergy involved 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.
- With limited exceptions occurring in a privileged relationship (as defined in the relevant state's statutes), anyone subject to this Policy who learns of suspected sexual misconduct (i) by anyone subject to this Policy or (ii) against anyone intended to be protected by this Policy, has a responsibility to report the information to appropriate ecclesiastical authorities promptly. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary or corrective action.
- Leaders who learn of sexual misconduct of colleagues, even if the information is gained in a counseling setting, have an ethical responsibility to follow up on this information by reporting the information to the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities.

- This document deals with conduct within the church. As such, the issue of spiritual abuse must also be considered. Spiritual abuse is characterized by a pattern of control, intimidation, and/or manipulation by someone in a position of spiritual authority such as clergy in order to benefit themselves. This abuse may include behaviors such as coercion, demanded obedience, isolation, elitism, censorship of decision making, exploitation, or the use of the name of God to get someone to do something. This pattern may include the use of spiritual truths or Scripture to harm others. There is a potential for any abuse in the church to be considered spiritual abuse as it can damage a survivor's spirituality or relationship with the Lord. Spiritual abuse is unacceptable in our churches (see Matthew 7, Matthew 11, Matthew 23; see the [National Association for Christian Recovery](#) or the [Allender Center](#) for more information). Any accusation of spiritual abuse should follow the reporting procedures found in section C of this document.

## Policy Oversight & Applicability

**Sexual Misconduct Prohibited:** The Bishop of the GAD and the GAD strictly prohibit all types of abuse, (verbal, physical, neglect, paraphiliac, and sexual misconduct), as defined in this document, by any member of the clergy, aspirant, postulant, candidate, or seminarian sponsored by or working in the Diocese, and by any lay employee, staff person, or volunteer working in any capacity for the GAD or any diocesan related institution/congregation in this Diocese.

**Protection of Children:** The GAD strictly prohibits interaction with children and youth under the age of 18 at any church-sponsored or church-related activity or program, on or off church property, by anyone with a civil or criminal record of child sexual abuse or other sexual crime(s), or who has admitted prior sexual abuse, or by anyone known to have a paraphiliac diagnosis (e.g. pedophilia, hebephilia, ephebophilia, exhibitionism or voyeurism) as defined in this manual.

This policy notes the following oversight:

**The Bishop's office is responsible for:**

- setting clear diocesan policies and disciplines;
- reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law when necessary.

**Clergy are responsible for:**

- knowing and abiding by the diocesan policies and disciplines;
- ensuring that timely training, and resulting written acknowledgements, occur for all parties identified within these policies that are under their supervision;
- reporting to the Bishop's office any allegation toward clergy of misconduct;
- reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law when necessary;
- providing proof of compliance of all such policies and disciplines to the Bishop upon request.

**Rectors and Wardens are responsible for:**

- upholding the policies set forth in this document, which represent an appropriate standard of care, by adopting them as their own (Appendix A);



- reconciling this policy with the conditions of your particular congregation's insurance coverage and the need for a contextualized policy (Appendix E); **ensuring the conditions to your insurance coverage are met;**
- reviewing your insurance policy and calling the Diocesan Office if you have any questions. The Diocese assumes no responsibility for a congregation's non-compliance with its insurance carrier's policy;
- providing proof of compliance of all such policies and disciplines to the Bishop upon request.

**Employees and lay persons in leadership are responsible for:**

- abiding by the diocesan policies and disciplines;
- reporting to the Rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge any allegation of employee/lay person of misconduct (allegations of clergy are to be reported directly to the Bishop);
- reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law when necessary.

The policies contained in this document are applicable to all members of the domiciled clergy, or clergy who are licensed or serving in the GAD, as well as all lay employees and church volunteers affiliated with any activities and programs of the GAD, or its churches, congregations and fellowships, including any committee, commission, ministry group, or similar body of the GAD.

This document is provided to the churches and congregations in the GAD to use as a sample policy of minimum expectations. If an individual GAD church or congregation would like to utilize an equivalent policy of their own, they may do so provided they submit it to the diocese. If an individual church would like to use this sample policy and increase expectations/guidelines, they may add their supplemental requirements by submitting the individual addendum to this policy (see Appendix E, optional). Insurance companies report a disturbing increase in claims alleging sexual misconduct against members of the clergy and secular mental health practitioners. A congregation's adoption of written standards of conduct may be required by insurers as a condition of coverage. Strong warranty language in some policies requires careful compliance on the part of insured entities. Failure to comply with policy standards could result in denial of insurance coverage in the event of a claim. If a church utilizes the addendum (optional), it must be signed by the Rector and Senior Warden and then **a copy should be sent to the diocesan administrator.**



# Sexual Misconduct: Protection of Adults

The Bishop, in consultation with diocesan staff and Diocesan Council, is responsible for the creation and promulgation of the diocesan Sexual Misconduct Policy for Prevention and Reporting, in accordance with the Canons of the Diocese.

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

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

The Gulf Atlantic Diocese requires that, at a minimum, each congregation (or parish, mission, and church plant) is expected to have in place these four procedures for sexual misconduct with regard to adults:

- A. Procedure 1: Awareness
- B. Procedure 2: Interaction
- C. Procedure 3: Reporting
- D. Procedure 4: Compliance

## A. Awareness

While being aware that the issue of sexual misconduct exists is a fraction of what must be understood in order to build an environment that protects adults from abuse, awareness and clarity about various aspects of sexual misconduct are essential to create a healthy church that seeks to protect its people.

**Adult abuse:** actions that involve unwanted physical, sexual, psychological, or other actions that are intentionally taken to disadvantage another.

**Sexual misconduct:** In particular, adult abuse includes a variety of forms of sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct includes a range of unwelcome and unwanted sexual conduct, including grooming; verbal, emotional, and/or physical sexual harassment; sexual assault; and all forms of sexual violence. Sexual misconduct is not restricted to intercourse but includes a wide range of inappropriate behaviors including inappropriate emotional intimacy, as well as the following:

- **Sexual Malfeasance** is defined by the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship. This can include emotional misconduct where inappropriate emotional intimacy is encouraged, coerced, forced, or implied as necessary.
- **Grooming** is a technique used to break down barriers of protection. Abusers will use grooming techniques to gain trust. Recognize the pattern of continual testing of boundaries in such a way that inappropriate behavior seeps into the relationship without consent or even acknowledgement. Grooming usually includes gaining access through trust, targeting a particular type of person as a victim, slowly eroding boundaries, and methods to keep the victim quiet.
- **Sexual harassment** (unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, hostile work environment, quid pro quo behavior, sexually motivated physical contact or other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature) in a situation where there is an employment, mentoring, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, regardless of biological sex, including but not limited to, sexually oriented humor or language, questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications, undesired physical contact, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements. This might include:
  - Unwelcome and intentional touching;
  - Sexually oriented comments about an individual's body;
  - Sending sexually explicit or offensive communications (e.g., text messages, emails, social media messages or posts);
  - Voyeurism, including viewing or displaying objects or pictures that are sexual in nature;
  - Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution;
  - Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual;
  - Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or

- An individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.
- **Sexual coercion** including the use of physical or emotional power to gain sexual gratification.
- **Sexual exploitation** including but is not limited to, the development of or the attempt to develop, a sexual relationship between a member of the clergy, employee, or volunteer affiliated with the GAD and a person with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual. Sexual exploitation includes activity during the course of a pastoral relationship such as sexual involvement or sexually demeaning comments. The apparent consent of a possible victim to the sexual or romantic relationship seldom determines whether there has been sexual exploitation.
- **Consent:** Consent is when someone agrees, gives permission, or says “yes” to sexual, romantic or emotional activity with another person. Consent is always freely given and all people in a sexual, romantic, or emotional situation must feel that they are able to say “yes” or “no” or stop the sexual, romantic, or emotional activity at any point. Any inappropriately, emotionally intimate, or sexual relationship between two individuals of unequal weight in power (including ecclesial authority) is considered inappropriate. The imbalance of power between a church worker and the person in a pastoral relationship may undermine the validity of consent. Similarly, the imbalance of power between a supervisor and a subordinate employee undermines the validity of the consent. The fact that sexual activity is initiated by someone other than the church worker does not relieve that worker of responsibility, nor does it make sexual activity under those circumstances acceptable.
- **Misuse of technology:** use of technology or communication through technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, regardless of biological sex, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.
- **Pornography:** printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings. All clergy are required to avoid viewing pornography at all times, not just while working or in church facilities. Any clergy struggling in this area should reach out to the Rev. Sam Pascoe (904-553-0017) for an assessment and help with recovery. This is offered without the involvement of the bishop unless clergy fail to follow through with recovery plan.

## SCREENING

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

- The Gulf Atlantic Diocese’s policy requires complete background checks of all members of the clergy seeking canonical residence or license in the Diocese prior to the acceptance of Letters Dimissory or issuance of a License to Officiate. It is the responsibility of the parish to

notify the Diocesan Office to begin a background check as soon as the vestry has decided who they would like to call. A call should not be considered final until the results of the background check are received. The parish is responsible for the cost of the background check; however, assistance may be requested in special cases.

- Each member of the clergy domiciled or licensed in the Diocese will be required to update and pay for (currently \$150) their background check on a five-year rotating schedule to be administered by the Diocese. Their congregation may choose to pay this fee.
- **Clergy Background checks** will be conducted of all individuals in the Diocese who are considered a Postulant for Holy Orders and may be conducted again prior to ordination to the Diaconate at the discretion of the Bishop; background checks will also be conducted of all members of the clergy seeking domicile or licensing in the Diocese prior to the acceptance of Letter of Transfer, or issuance of a License to Officiate; background checks should also be conducted by all congregations of all employees of a congregation prior to employment. Oxford Document Management Company (ODM; or another approved agency) will conduct a background check that will include:
  - (1) Inquiries of all Bishops having past or present canonical authority over the individual, all schools attended by the individual during the past five years, and all employers of the individual during the past five years. Those coming from the Episcopal Church may substitute a previous senior warden in place of their Bishop. If the individual has had more than one employer for over five years, then inquiries will be made of the two most recent employers. In the case of clergy, “employer” shall be the senior wardens of congregations served during the past five years.
  - (2) Credit Bureau Record Check: This check is required for clergy, treasurers, bookkeepers, check signers, and those having access to church credit cards only.
  - (3) Motor Vehicle Record Check.
  - (4) Sexual Misconduct and Criminal Record Check.
  - (5) NOTE: ODM (see above) will not divulge, furnish or make accessible to any person, or use in any other way, any confidential information other than as specifically set forth by written instruction of the Diocese. Completed background checks will be evaluated and stored on behalf of the Bishop by his Canon to the Ordinary or the Diocesan Administrator. ODM retains and stores all records under lock and key for a minimum period of five years, unless instructed otherwise by the Diocese. Congregations may use the services of ODM or other equivalent agencies at congregational expense to conduct background checks.
  - (6) Local criminal history records check through local law enforcement agencies.
  - (7) Statewide criminal history records check through the appropriate state law enforcement agencies.
  - (8) References will be secured from immediate supervisors at the three most recent places of employment and results documented.
  - (9) When available, a thorough social media search will be conducted.
- **Employee background checks** (non-Oxford, but classified as Level II or higher) should also be conducted by congregations and diocesan institutions conduct for all employees in diocesan institutions, programs, and congregations, prior to employment in compliance with their insurance carrier’s requirements.
- It is recommended that when applicants for employment (or lay volunteers working with children and youth) are considered by the congregation, the congregational leaders:
  - (1) Require six-month minimum attendance which includes active participation in Sunday morning worship and congregational programs;

- (2) conduct a face-to-face interview;
  - (3) check the applicant's references;
  - (4) have the applicant fill out a complete application (see sample online) which includes:
    - (a) whether or not they have been convicted of, pled nolo contendere, had adjudication withheld, or have an active arrest for any crime involving abuse or neglect;
    - (b) whether or not they have been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition;
  - (5) cross-reference the National Sexual Offender Registry with the applicant information.
- *Ministry Safe* offers a training on skilled screening for employees. It is recommended that churches familiarize themselves with effective screening practices and recognizing high-risk applicants.

## TRAINING

Employees, clergy, and volunteers must be properly trained to care for those they serve in ministry. This training includes job functions but also training on recommended practices outlined in this policy to ensure the environment is safe for our people. This training includes policies, *Ministry Safe*, *Keeping Our Sacred Trust* (clergy), and anything an individual church might need that is specific to their congregational context as it seeks to protect against abuse.

- **Misconduct and Sexual Abuse Training:** please see the Protection of Children section in this document to view required training for the protection against sexual misconduct with children.
  - **Clergy:** All members of the clergy domiciled, licensed, or serving in the Diocese, and all employees of the Diocese, need to have a minimum of six hours of diocesan approved training on issues of sexual harassment, mentoring and colleague relationships, and sexual exploitation in pastoral relationship within 6 months of employment (or volunteering) in the Diocese. Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office the evidence of completion. Additional training on ethical behavior is required of all new/transfer clergy through *Keeping Our Sacred Trust* (completed online <https://www.keepingoursacredtrust.org>).
  - **Employees/Vestry/Leaders of Children/Youth:** All employees of diocesan congregations, all vestry members, and all leaders of children and youth need to complete diocesan approved training, and training for their individual church's policy, on issues of sexual misconduct. The first portion of training is currently completed through *Ministry Safe* and will be completed online; *Ministry Safe Awareness* must be completed prior to service/employment. The second portion will be offered in person by a trained diocesan representative; this training must be completed within six months of service/employment. Churches are responsible to submit to the diocesan office the evidence of completion (Appendix A and B) and should be proactive in sending their employees and vestry members to training within their deanery or parish, as well as recertification every two years.
- Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office the evidence of completed *Ministry Safe Awareness* training every two years as well as completion of diocesan training.
- Each church is responsible to track and document the training/retraining of its vestry, staff, and volunteers (see Appendix B).
- Churches are asked to utilize this policy as well as the optional addendum with any additional, contextual considerations (see Appendix E). Churches are asked to create their own supervisory plans for events (see Appendix C and the GAD website section on resources for sample policies).

## B. Interaction

There are two key types of interaction clergy regularly engage in ministry: Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction.

### PASTORAL COUNSELING

One of the expectations of all clergy and other pastoral caregivers serving in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese is that they offer pastoral counseling to members of the congregation if/when necessary and appropriate. Pastoral counseling occurs when church personnel offer spiritual direction or advice concerning moral or spiritual matters. This counseling is recommended to be offered for a maximum of six (6) sessions per person. Fees or donations for pastoral counseling are prohibited. If there is a need for ongoing counseling, church personnel must refer to a professional if the church personnel are not certified or licensed.

Any person charging fees for counseling outside the scope of church employment must possess appropriate professional credentials and proof of separate professional liability insurance including coverage for sexual misconduct, in force at all times. Persons offering spiritual direction or professional counseling to members of the congregation or outside the congregation that includes additional compensation shall submit that ministry for approval by the Bishop.

During these pastoral counseling sessions, clergy and pastoral caregivers are expected to maintain an environment that minimizes any existence, or appearance, of potentially inappropriate behavior or exploitation.

Exploitation occurs when church personnel take advantage of the pastoral counseling relationship for the benefit of the pastoral counselor. Sexual exploitation is sexual contact between church personnel and the recipient of the pastoral counseling services, regardless of who initiates the contact. A conflict of interest occurs when church personnel take advantage of pastoral counseling relationships in order to further their own interest.

Staff members, clergy, and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission, avoiding sexually-oriented communication. If available, counseling in pairs by same biological sex of participants is recommended to minimize these risks.

All clergy, employees, and volunteers are encouraged to maintain healthy boundaries and to strive for emotionally healthy relationships. Each congregation's leadership is asked to consistently bring awareness to this issue by normalizing the following principles:

- **Choose the Light:** whether it is porn addiction, gossip, an affair, bullying, sexual jokes or comments, flirting, etc., bringing the issue into the light is always the path toward healing, accountability, sanctification, and emotional health.
- **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. Avoid triangulation and protection for individuals who are acting inappropriately.

- **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 one's church; for the Bishop, that is the Diocesan Chancellor); including multiple leaders in the discussion will ensure accountability, transparency, and appropriate resolution.

If physical contact is warranted for professional, clinical reasons, it should always be respectful and consistent with the intent to provide a safe and comfortable pastoral counseling environment. Pastoral counseling should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times and should not be held at places or times that would cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.

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

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek discipleship opportunities. This frequently manifests in 1:1, 1:2, or 1:3 relationships where participants meet regularly for a long-term partnership. This is not the same situation as pastoral counseling, which is intended for a singular focus and therefore is limited in scope. Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, crisis counseling, pre-marital counseling and marriage counseling. If those crises seem to linger beyond six sessions, refer congregant(s) to a professional, as described above.

If a partnership of spiritual direction is entered into long-term, consider these safeguards:

- Ensure this relationship is brought into the light among the leadership team of the church by informing multiple people of this partnership;
- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction in your church, consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the church, as well as accountability;
- If one clergy person is offering long-term spiritual direction to another clergy person, bring the arrangement into the light by informing the office of the bishop of the relationship;
- Meet in a public place, not 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, or the #ChooseTheLight reporting hotline);
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together.

In order to protect the emotionally healthy spirituality of all clergy, it is recommended that clergy also seek regular spiritual direction to ensure accountability and a strong support system.



## C. Reporting

Anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, an adult who has been abused, neglected, or exploited in violation of the law should immediately contact the appropriate state abuse hotline (see diocesan website resources and Appendix D). All reports are confidential and access to these reports is limited by specific criteria described in the appropriate state's statute(s).

In the case of clergy misconduct complaints, the Bishop should be contacted immediately to describe the situation. If it is a reportable incident, the state would then be informed by that person, not by the Bishop. This allows the Bishop the opportunity to put into motion the internal procedures described below at the same time as the legal requirements are being initiated.

### Allegations involving lay persons:

1. All reports of abuse of children or vulnerable adults must be reported to state authorities immediately. If someone discloses information of abuse, it is not the responsibility of the recipient of that information to investigate or verify; they should report to authorities who will investigate.
2. Complaints of sexual misconduct by a **lay employee or volunteer of a church**, congregation, or fellowship will be reported immediately to the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge of the congregation. The head of any diocesan agency or institution or the rector of a parish or clergy in charge of a congregation who receives a complaint about a lay employee or volunteer will notify the Bishop, Wardens, and/or lay leadership boards immediately.
3. The complainant will be assured that the church is concerned and that the complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The initial, verbal response should not convey doubt.
4. Complaints of sexual misconduct by a **lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese** will also be reported immediately to the Bishop by the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge.

### Allegations involving clergy or diocesan employees:

1. All reports of abuse of children or vulnerable adults must be reported to state authorities immediately. If someone discloses abuse, it is not the responsibility of the recipient of that information to investigate or verify; they should report to authorities who will investigate.
2. All clergy domiciled or licensed in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese are under the authority of the Bishop. Therefore, any complaints of sexual misconduct by any member of the clergy shall be reported immediately to the Bishop. Upon receiving a complaint of sexual misconduct, the Bishop will personally assure the complainant that the church is concerned and that the complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The initial, verbal response should not be that the complainant is not believed.
  - A. If the complaint is against a member of the clergy, the Bishop will notify the Chancellor and the President of the Standing Committee in order to ensure accountability.
  - B. If the complaint is against a member of the clergy, the Bishop will appoint an impartial investigator to look into the complaint and report back to the Bishop. Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator will report his/her findings and conclusions to the Bishop so that the Bishop can take whatever action he and the chancellor deem appropriate.
  - C. Suspension of employment or volunteer activities:
    - i. If the alleged offender is a non-clergy employee/volunteer of **the Diocese or a congregation**, the alleged offender's employment or volunteer activity may be suspended by the Bishop, the rector of the parish, clergy in charge, or other person

in charge of a congregation until such time as the allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse are resolved. This leave of absence is without prejudice (i.e. does not imply guilt or innocence of the person under investigation) and payment of benefits to the employee may continue at the discretion of the Bishop, the rector of the parish, clergy in charge, or other person in charge of a congregation.

- ii. If the alleged offender is a non-clergy employee/volunteer of a **ministry group related to the Diocese or congregation**, the alleged offender's employment or volunteer activity may be suspended by the employer or person responsible until such time as the allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse are resolved. This leave is without prejudice and does not imply guilt or innocence of the person(s) under investigation; and payment of benefits to the employee(s) may continue at the discretion of the employer or person responsible. The employer or person responsible will notify the Bishop of the suspension immediately.
3. Any member of the clergy who believes himself or herself to be under imputation of sexual misconduct may request the Bishop to begin a third-party investigation.
4. Any person believing that the Bishop has engaged in any sexual misconduct should immediately contact the Chancellor, via the hotline (see below).
5. The Bishop, or anyone who may subsequently be involved in the process, will not, at any time following the first receipt of the complaint, hear the sacramental confession of any person(s) involved.
6. The Bishop will comply with the reporting and notification requirements as contained in the diocesan, parish or other liability policies for insurance claims. A sample form for reporting suspected child abuse can be found on the diocesan website and in this document as Appendix D.
7. The Diocese provides a hotline for confidential reporting (904-300-0512). The phone number is published on the website and is included on the #ChooseTheLight poster, available in every church administration space, per diocesan policy. The poster is available for download from the GAD website, as well.

Throughout any investigation: (1) reach out to, and care for, any potential survivors (an advocate and the response team may be utilized in pastoral care); (2) alleged offenders should be treated with dignity and support; (3) maintain confidentiality utilizing maximum discretion.

**Allegations of spiritual abuse involving clergy or diocesan employees:**

All reports of spiritual abuse (defined as a pattern of control, intimidation, and/or manipulation by someone in a spiritual authority such as clergy in order to benefit themselves) should be reported to the diocese. Survivors can report patterns of spiritual abuse to the diocesan Director of Safeguarding, through the hotline at 904-300-0512, by emailing [safeguarding@gulfatlanticdiocese.org](mailto:safeguarding@gulfatlanticdiocese.org), or bringing the matter to the attention of their supervising clergy or bishop.

## D. Compliance

The Bishop's office will notify all members of the clergy domiciled, licensed and serving in the Diocese, employees of the Diocese, Postulants for Holy Orders, volunteers for the Diocese who regularly supervise youth activities, lay members of Diocesan Council, and other diocesan leadership groups, including boards of any diocesan ministry or institution, of the contents of and requirements for this policy. The policy document will be reviewed annually by Diocesan Council and, if changes are made, a revised copy will be provided to each of the listed parties with a signed receipt required (Appendix B).

This copy will be distributed to each congregation in the fall of the calendar year with the understanding that the congregation has the rest of the calendar year to come into compliance with any changes. It will be the responsibility of the rector of each parish or clergy in charge of a congregation to ensure all clergy, vestry, employees (full or part-time), and leaders who regularly supervise children/youth activities, are made aware of the parish or congregation's policies and that those who are required to complete approved training do so. Appendix B may be used as an example of acknowledgment of receipt of parish policies and procedures.

Churches are responsible for obtaining and keeping documentation of adherence to this policy in perpetuity. Please view the congregational checklist in Appendix A to ensure compliance. The Diocese assumes no responsibility for a parish or congregation's non-compliance with their insurance carrier's policy on acknowledgment of receipt of parish or congregation's policies and procedures or insurance carrier training requirements.

This documentation (Appendix A, B, and E) must be completed, submitted, and filed prior to Jan 31<sup>st</sup> of every year. The policy will be in effect through that calendar year. The expected timeline is:

- July: Diocesan Council will review the policy and make recommended changes.
- August 31: All changes have been accepted, Diocesan Council submits signed acknowledgement and approval (Appendix B); new policy is sent to Rectors.
- Fall semester: Any changes to be implemented the following year are introduced, training is updated accordingly, staff/employees/volunteers/vestry sign acknowledgement forms (Appendix B).
- January: New vestry members are trained and sign acknowledgement form (Appendix B).
- January 31<sup>st</sup>: all forms are submitted to the Diocesan Administrator for filing (Appendix A, B, and E).



# **Sexual Misconduct: Protection of Children**

The Bishop, in consultation with diocesan staff and Diocesan Council, is responsible for the creation and promulgation of the diocesan Sexual Misconduct Policy for Prevention and Reporting, in accordance with the Canons of the Diocese.

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

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

The Gulf Atlantic Diocese requires that, at a minimum, each congregation (or parish, mission, and church plant) is expected to have in place these four procedures for sexual misconduct with regard to the protection of children:

- A. Procedure 1: Awareness
- B. Procedure 2: Interaction
- C. Procedure 3: Reporting
- D. Procedure 4: Compliance

This minimum standard applies even if there are no children currently in attendance at church events. All churches must comply to be prepared for children/youth to join their congregation.

## A. Awareness

While being aware that the issue of sexual misconduct exists is a fraction of what must be understood in order to build an environment that protects children from abuse, awareness and clarity about various aspects of sexual misconduct are essential to create a healthy church that seeks to protect its people.

**Child Abuse:** any willful act or threatened act resulting in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes, or is likely to cause, the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts and/or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child. Each church within the Gulf Atlantic Diocese should review and be familiar with the relevant laws within its jurisdiction. This information is easily obtained through the Department of Children and Families, or like entities, within each state.

**Sexual Misconduct:** Sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent. Misconduct also includes:

- **Grooming:** a technique used to break down barriers of protection. Abusers will use grooming techniques to gain trust. Recognize the pattern of continual testing of boundaries in such a way that inappropriate behavior seeps into the relationship without consent or even acknowledgement. Grooming usually includes gaining access through trust, targeting a particular type of person as a victim, slowly eroding boundaries, and methods to keep the victim quiet.
- **Sexual harassment:** unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, quid pro quo behavior, sexually motivated physical contact or other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature; including but not limited to, sexually oriented humor or language, questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference, undesired physical contact, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements.
- **Sexual coercion:** the use of physical or emotional power to gain sexual gratification.
- **Sexual exploitation:** including, but not limited to, obscene or pornographic photographing, filming or depiction of children for commercial purposes or exploitation, the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in or assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct, or any simulation of any sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of any sexually explicit conduct, or the rape, molestation, incest, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children.

## SCREENING

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

- Please see this policy’s section on the Protection of Adults for details regarding Oxford background checks of clergy, ordinands, transfer clergy, and Level 2 for full/part time employees for churches and the Diocese itself.
- It is also necessary for congregations and diocesan institutions to conduct equivalent Level 2 **background checks** of all volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities in diocesan institutions, programs, and congregations, prior to serving, in compliance with their insurance carrier’s requirements.
- It is recommended that when applicants for employment (or lay volunteers working with children and youth) are considered by the congregation, the congregational leaders:
  - (1) Complete a six-month minimum attendance which includes active participation in Sunday morning worship and congregational programs;
  - (2) conduct a face-to-face interview;
  - (3) check the applicant’s references;
  - (4) have the applicant fill out a complete application (see sample online) which includes:
    - (a) whether or not they have been convicted of, pled nolo contendere, had adjudication withheld, or have an active arrest for any crime involving abuse or neglect;
    - (b) whether or not they have been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition;
  - (5) cross-reference the National Sexual Offender Registry with the applicant information;
  - (6) references will be secured from immediate supervisors at the three most recent places of employment and results documented;
  - (7) when available, a thorough social media search will be conducted;
- *Ministry Safe* offers a training on skilled screening for employees. It is recommended that churches familiarize themselves with effective screening practices and recognizing high-risk applicants.

## TRAINING

Employees, clergy, and volunteers must be properly trained to care for those they serve in ministry. This training includes job functions but also training on recommended practices outlined in this policy to ensure the environment is safe for our people. This training includes policies, Ministry Safe, and anything an individual church might need that is specific to their congregational context as it seeks to protect against abuse.

- **Sexual Misconduct: Protection of Children Training:** The first portion of sexual misconduct and the protection of children training is currently completed through *Ministry Safe* and will be completed online. The second portion will be offered in person by a trained diocesan representative. This training covers details of sexual misconduct and must be renewed every two years.
  - **Clergy training:** In addition to *Keeping Our Sacred Trust* (see Protection of Adults section), all members of the clergy domiciled, licensed, or serving in the Diocese, and all employees of the Diocese, should complete sexual abuse training on issues of child abuse in a church setting or online through *Ministry Safe Awareness*. This training shall include a review of all types of child abuse (as outlined in this document), and youth protection safeguards. Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office the evidence of completed *Ministry Safe Awareness* training every two years as well as completion of diocesan training. These trainings should be completed prior to employment.
  - **Leaders of Children/Youth training:** All leaders of children and youth within a congregation or through a diocesan program should complete diocesan approved training on issues of sexual harassment within 6 months of employment (or volunteering) in the Diocese and to be renewed every two years. Churches are responsible to submit to the diocesan office the evidence of completion and should be proactive in sending their employees to training within their deanery. **Leader is defined as the primary person responsible for youth or children’s ministry, including if the person is the lead teacher in a Sunday school class or a discipleship group.** A non-lead teacher/volunteer is defined as someone not considered the primary person responsible but who works with children during church or school hours in public places where at least one other adult is present at all times. It is recommended that non-lead teachers/volunteers complete training also. If an individual has attended these classes in another Diocese, he/she may submit certification that the training has been completed in lieu of attending a second class or program. In addition to the diocesan training offered through the deanery, leaders of children/youth must also complete *Ministry Safe Awareness* prior to employment/volunteering and re-certify every two years (<https://ministrysafecom.com>).
  - **Directors of diocesan sponsored camps** must complete *Ministry Safe Camp Leadership Training* prior to serving as Director (found under the awareness tab). Each diocesan sponsored camp is responsible for ensuring all leaders have taken *Ministry Safe Awareness*. Leaders may submit copies of their certificate to satisfy this requirement. If directors or leaders arrive to camp without certification, the camp should immediately have the leader complete it prior to serving or the leader should not attend.
  - **All employees of diocesan institutions** and congregations must attend the diocesan sponsored training (or equivalent training) in compliance with their insurance carrier’s requirements every two years and within six months of employment. This includes those in the **ordination** process, those clergy applying for **transfer** into GAD, and employees not currently supervising children or youth.

- Each church is responsible to track and document the training/retraining of its vestry, staff, and volunteers.
- Churches are asked to utilize this policy as well as the optional addendum with any additional, contextual considerations (see Appendix E). Churches are asked to create their own supervisory plans for events (see Appendix C and the GAD website section on resources for sample policies).

## B. Interaction

### COMMUNICATION

Verbal interactions between clergy, staff members, or volunteers and children should be encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

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

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

**Sexually-Oriented Materials:** Staff members and volunteers may employ (subject to limitations imposed by the Rector) age-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality/sexual abuse prevention/sexual purity. Any prospective material should be made available for review for the parents of participants. Prior to introducing these materials, notice should be provided to parents in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.

**Addictive substances:** While in church facilities, while traveling with or in the presence of children or their parents, during church-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children, clergy, staff members, volunteers, and participants in youth and children's ministries should not use tobacco products, possess or use any illegal drugs, be under the influence of alcohol, share or view pornographic material.

**Social Media:** Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Their world is often constructed around social media, for better or worse. Having personal interactions in this venue allows adults to model appropriate behavior in social media, and it forms valuable connections with students.

The Diocese strongly recommends that each church have a proactive policy for social media and other forms of electronic communication in the context of children's and youth ministry. Clergy, staff



members, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (usually 13).

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.

Virtual spaces are to be treated the same as in-person spaces. This means two adults must be online with one youth (known as the two-adult rule), participants must be appropriately clothed, and conversation must be within 'public' view. For online conference calls, this means calls are not completed in the bedroom, and the parents are aware that the student is in conversation with the leaders. Use group apps rather than private messages. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present.

For those students under 13 (this is the usual minimum age for social media platforms by the platforms themselves), get parent permission for any communication and welcome the parents into that environment.

Background checks and *Ministry Safe* training should still be completed and up-to-date for all online volunteers.

Use personal interactions on social media avenues to model appropriate behavior and language, both on and off social media. Church leaders should be aware that their behavior reflects Christ and the Church.

**Photography:** Photos of children will not be used contrary to parental wishes and must not contain any personally identifying information about children either online or in print publications without prior parental permission. This is easily handled by including a consent statement on programming registrations that are signed by the parent/guardian.

## PHYSICAL INTERACTION

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 congregational 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.

This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In some circumstances physical restraint may be used to prevent self-injury by the child and/or harm to others or to property. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents, the Children's Ministry Director, Youth Pastor, and/or clergy.

Appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's development and is generally suitable in the church setting.

Appropriate physical affection includes:

- high-fives
- handshakes
- fist bumps
- thumbs up
- side hug
- smiling
- pats on the back

Inappropriate physical affection includes:

- wrestling
- tickling
- sitting in laps (except for nursery-aged children)
- kissing in any form
- full frontal hugs
- commenting on children's bodies
- forcing unwanted affection

**Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden.** Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a church staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to 1) an immediate supervisor, **and** 2) the Rector and/or clergy in charge. If neither are available, report to the Senior Warden.

**Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places.** It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of 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.

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION WITH YOUTH

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek discipleship opportunities. This frequently manifests in 1:1, 1:2, or 1:3 relationships where participants meet regularly for a long-term partnership. This is not the same situation as pastoral counseling, which is intended for a singular focus and therefore is limited in scope. Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, and crisis counseling. If those crises seem to linger beyond six sessions, refer congregant(s) to a professional, as described previously.

If spiritual direction with a youth is entered into long-term, consider these safeguards:

- Ensure this relationship is brought into the light among the leadership team of the church by informing multiple people of this partnership; this includes obtaining parental consent and knowledge of discipleship meetings;
- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction to youth in your church, consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the church, 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, or the #ChooseTheLight reporting hotline by calling 904-300-0512 or emailing [safeguarding@gulfatlanticdiocese.org](mailto:safeguarding@gulfatlanticdiocese.org));
- Guidelines outlined in this policy for interaction with youth (regarding awareness, screening, interaction, and reporting) must still be followed;
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together.

In order 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.

## SUPERVISORY PROCEDURES

### Monitoring Procedures

Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. Vestry, clergy, staff, and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising children's and youth activities in all settings at all times.

Monitoring procedures should include, but are not limited to:

- All children and youth activities shall be designed to be supervised by two or more 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 church activity;
- Clergy, staff members, and/or volunteers should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children. In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should take place in a public place or where other persons are present;
- Watching for policy violations;
- An open invitation for parents to visit at any time unannounced;
- A careful review of new programs and/or significant changes to a program structure;
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times. Keeping unused rooms locked whenever possible;
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the church building;
- 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.

### Restroom Use

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 biological sex. (Churches are encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that nationally one out of every four women has survived some form of child sexual abuse, typically by a male offender. To build trust and to minimize exposure based on statistical research, churches may determine that diapering, toilet training, and restroom monitoring will only be done by screened and trained female staff/volunteers or the child's parent/guardian.)
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers; children should not be left unattended while being changed.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

### *Toilet Training*

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only 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 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 verbally to assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

### **First Aid and Medication**

If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parent. Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer as authorized by the parent. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over-the-counter medication.

When medically necessary, medication or first aid may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer consistent with the Supervisory Plan (see Appendix C). Parents should be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.

### **The Release of Children**

Any time that a child has been entrusted to church staff members or volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries 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. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

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

## Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children whenever possible:

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the church copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- It is understood that the adult driving the child must have undergone an insurance approved background check including a DMV record check. 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. Churches are advised to consult with their insurance provider regarding the minimum age for adult drivers. Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 18 be allowed to drive children/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 church-owned vehicles, unless in an emergency, with the exception of GPS navigation.
- Children should be transported 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 a church unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement.
- No drivers under age 25 may drive church-owned vehicles unless explicitly covered by the church's auto insurance policy.
- In special circumstances these may be altered for emergencies. In these cases, the children/youth director (or supervisor) should be notified immediately.
- If a family situation necessitates a special circumstance, the family may sign a waiver stating the deviance from the diocesan or church policy; this policy should note the family's acceptance of responsibility.

## Home Group Procedures

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

- Supervision by two screened and trained individuals;
- Safety of the environment;
- Restroom procedures specific to the environment and needs of children.

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

The leader from any church offering frequent (2+ per year) overnight events, trips, and camps, as well as diocesan sponsored Camp Directors, should complete *Ministry Safe Camp Leadership Training* every two years.

All camp volunteers and counselors must complete *Ministry Safe Awareness* every two years. If a volunteer has completed the required training through their church and their certificate is current, they may submit that to the diocesan Camp Director to waive additional training.

These additional procedures must be followed:

- The two-adult rule should be followed; 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.
- All adult leaders must have previously completed the Church’s screening and training process.
- Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Student Minister prior to the activity.
- As long as any students are awake, one trip leader must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
- Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. R-rated movies require Rector and parental approval.
- Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
- In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same biological sex.
- 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.
- Whenever possible, staff members or volunteers will sleep in the same room, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff 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.

**Off-campus, non-sponsored youth activities and 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 church and may only be open to certain youth due to the nature of contact work. It is recommended that these events remain in compliance with the diocesan policy and with the individual church’s policy, specifically with regard to the ‘minimum of two adults’ rule. It is consistent with best practices and research, protects the church, the volunteer/employee, and the children involved.

**On-campus, non-sponsored activities and events**

Due to the nature of the facilities and shared ministry, the situation might arise where the church 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. All churches should consult their insurance policy regarding these types of activities and to be compliant with the restrictions and recommendations in that insurance policy. It is also recommended that all churches use a Facilities Agreement (see sample on diocesan website) 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 church’s facilities.

**Nudity**

Staff members and volunteers should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, a weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the Children’s Ministry Director or Youth Pastor will detail procedures for showering or changing clothes in the supervisory plan for the scheduled event.

**Minimum Standard Compliance**

It is necessary that this diocesan policy is followed at minimum by each congregation. If an individual church’s optional addendum to this policy includes additional, reasonable safety measures, the volunteers/employees should be held accountable to that addendum as well as this policy and any refusal to do so allows the individual church the ability to remove the volunteer/employee from youth leadership with Rector’s knowledge and approval. See Appendix E for the optional addendum.



## SUPERVISORY PLANS

The purpose of the supervisory plan for any given activity is to give direction to staff, both volunteer and paid, to insure appropriate measures are in place to meet the diocesan standard for supervision. All staff for the activity needs to be informed of the contents of the supervisory plan. It is recommended that a copy of the plan be provided for staff persons, and that the plan be posted in a visible location. Please refer to Appendix C for resources for sample Supervisory Plans.

On-site Supervisory Plans should include the following:

- A description of the nature of the activity
- The details of the registration process and registration form
- The personnel responsible for running the activity
- The following is the recommended ratio of adults to children, (recommendation based on Florida standards and *Ministry Safe* standards; each congregation should consult their individual state's recommended ratios):
  - **Infants:** 2 adults for up to 8
  - **Young toddlers:** 2 adults for up to 12
  - **2 and 3 years:** 2 adults for up to 16
  - **4 years:** 2 adults for up to 20
  - **School age:** 2 adults for up to 40
  - **Mixed age group:** ratio for the youngest child in the group
- The physical environment
- Bathroom procedures, including showering procedures if applicable
- First aid and medication procedures
- The reporting of discipline concerns
- The release of children

Off-site Supervisory Plans should include all of the items listed above in the on-site supervisory plan, plus the following:

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

## C. Reporting

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 (see diocesan website resources and Appendix D). All reports are confidential and access to these reports is limited by specific criteria described in the appropriate state’s statute(s).

In the case of clergy misconduct complaints, the Bishop should be contacted immediately to describe the situation. Then, if the Bishop concurs that it is a reportable incident, the state would then be informed by that person, not by the Bishop. This allows the Bishop the opportunity to put into motion the internal procedures described below at the same time as the legal requirements are being initiated.

### **Allegations involving lay persons (following any required reporting to state authorities):**

1. When responding to a child complainant, consider responding in a private environment with at least one other adult present; keep calm, listen, and avoid expressing shock, disbelief, or outrage; let the child know they are believed and it is not their fault; avoid providing additional details or planting ideas that could taint the child’s recollection; write down what the child disclosed (see diocesan resources online); discussion with others should be limited to appropriate church and legal authorities.
2. If required by law, the complaint alleging abuse of a minor or incapacitated adult will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement officials immediately. Refer to the reference guide (found online in the diocesan resources) or other readily available resources for the officials within your jurisdiction. A sample form for reporting suspected child abuse can be found on the diocesan website and within this document as Appendix D.
3. Complaints of sexual misconduct by a **lay employee or volunteer of a church**, congregation, or fellowship will be reported immediately to the Rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge of the congregation. The head of any diocesan agency or institution or the rector of a parish or clergy in charge of a congregation who receives a complaint about a lay employee or volunteer will notify the Bishop, Wardens, and/or lay leadership boards immediately.
4. The complainant will be assured that the church is concerned and that the complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The initial, verbal response should not convey doubt.
5. Complaints of sexual misconduct by a **lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese** will also be reported immediately to the Bishop by the Rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge.

### **Allegations involving clergy or diocesan employees (following any required reporting to state authorities):**

1. All reports of abuse of children or vulnerable adults must be reported immediately. If someone discloses abuse, it is not the responsibility of the recipient of that information to investigate or verify; they should report to authorities who will investigate.
2. All clergy domiciled or licensed in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese are under the authority of the Bishop. Therefore, any complaints of sexual misconduct by any member of the clergy shall be reported immediately to the Bishop. Any complaints of sexual misconduct by the Bishop shall be reported immediately to the Chancellor. Upon receiving a complaint of sexual misconduct, the Bishop will personally assure the complainant that the church is concerned and that the complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The initial, verbal response should not be that the complainant is not believed.

- A. If the complaint is against a member of the clergy, the Bishop will notify the Chancellor and the President of the Standing Committee in order to ensure accountability.
- B. If the complaint is against a member of the clergy, the Bishop will appoint an impartial third-party investigator. Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator will report his/her findings and conclusions to the Bishop so that the Bishop can take whatever action he and the chancellor deem appropriate.
- C. Suspension of employment or volunteer activities:
  - i. If the alleged offender is a non-clergy employee/volunteer of **the Diocese or a congregation**, the alleged offender's employment or volunteer activity may be suspended by the Bishop, the rector of the parish, clergy in charge, or other person in charge of a congregation until such time as the allegations of sexual misconduct or child abuse are resolved. This leave of absence is without prejudice (i.e. does not imply guilt or innocence of the person under investigation) and payment of benefits to the employee may continue at the discretion of the Bishop, the rector of the parish, clergy in charge, or other person in charge of a congregation.
  - ii. If the alleged offender is a non-clergy employee/volunteer of a **ministry group related to the Diocese or congregation**, the alleged offender's employment or volunteer activity may be suspended by the employer or person responsible until such time as the allegations of sexual misconduct or child abuse are resolved. This leave is without prejudice and does not imply guilt or innocence of the person(s) under investigation; and payment of benefits to the employee(s) may continue at the discretion of the employer or person responsible. The employer or person responsible will notify the Bishop of the suspension immediately.
3. Any member of the clergy who believes himself or herself to be under imputation of sexual misconduct may request the Bishop to begin a third-party investigation.
4. Any person believing that the Bishop has engaged in any sexual misconduct should immediately contact the Chancellor, via the hotline (see below).
5. The Bishop, or anyone who may subsequently be involved in the process, will not, at any time following the first receipt of the complaint, hear the sacramental confession of any person(s) involved.
6. The Bishop will comply with the reporting and notification requirements as contained in the diocesan, parish or other liability policies for insurance claims. A sample form for reporting suspected child abuse can be found on the diocesan website and in this document as Appendix D.
7. The Diocese provides a hotline for confidential reporting (904-300-0512 or [safeguarding@gulfatlanticdiocese.org](mailto:safeguarding@gulfatlanticdiocese.org)). The phone number is published on the website and is included on the #ChooseTheLight poster, available in every church administration space, per diocesan policy. The poster is available for download from the GAD website, as well.

Throughout any investigation: (1) reach out to, and care for, any potential survivors (an advocate and the response team may be utilized in pastoral care); (2) alleged offenders should be treated with dignity and support; (3) maintain confidentiality utilizing maximum discretion.

## D. Compliance

The Bishop's office will notify all members of the clergy domiciled, licensed and serving in the Diocese, employees of the Diocese, Postulants for Holy Orders, volunteers for the Diocese who regularly supervise youth activities, lay members of Diocesan Council, and other diocesan leadership groups, including boards of any diocesan ministry or institution, of the contents of and requirements for this policy. The policy document will be reviewed annually by Diocesan Council and, if changes are made, a revised copy will be provided to each of the listed parties with a signed receipt required (Appendix B).

This copy will be distributed to each congregation in the fall of the calendar year with the understanding that the congregation has the rest of the calendar year to come into compliance with any changes. It will be the responsibility of the rector of each parish or clergy in charge of a congregation to ensure all clergy, vestry, employees (full or part-time), and leaders who regularly supervise children/youth activities, are made aware of the parish or congregation's policies and that those who are required to complete approved training do so. Appendix B may be used as an example of acknowledgment of receipt of parish policies and procedures.

Churches are responsible for obtaining and keeping documentation of adherence to this policy in perpetuity. Please view the congregational checklist in Appendix A to ensure compliance. The Diocese assumes no responsibility for a parish or congregation's non-compliance with their insurance carrier's policy on acknowledgment of receipt of parish or congregation's policies and procedures or insurance carrier training requirements.

This documentation (Appendix A, B, and E) must be completed, submitted, and filed prior to Jan 31<sup>st</sup> of every year. The policy will be in effect through that calendar year. The expected timeline is:

- July: Diocesan Council will review the policy and make recommended changes.
- August 31: All changes have been accepted, Diocesan Council submits signed acknowledgement and approval (Appendix B); new policy is sent to Rectors.
- Fall semester: Any changes to be implemented the following year are introduced, training is updated accordingly, staff/employees/volunteers/vestry sign acknowledgement forms (Appendix B).
- January: New vestry members are trained and sign acknowledgement form (Appendix B).
- January 31<sup>st</sup>: all forms are submitted to the Diocesan Administrator for filing (Appendix A, B, and E).

As a helpful resource, recognizing such laws can change over time, please visit the following website to view links to the child abuse reporting laws in each jurisdiction:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/?hasBeenRedirected=1>



## Resources

The following appendices are offered to assist churches, lay workers, and clergy in their protection of individual members of each congregation. Some forms included here are necessary for the Diocese and are marked by an asterisk; others are offered as templates for each congregation to adjust to their individual needs (recognizing the minimum standard set forth by the Diocese within this policy document); and some are simply provided as helpful resources. Included in the appendices are:

**Appendix A:** Certificate of Compliance and Checklist for Congregations and Ministry Programs\*

**Appendix B:** Individual Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policies\*

**Appendix C:** Sample Church Policy & Sample Supervisory Plan

**Appendix D:** Sample Reporting Checklist

**Appendix E:** Individual Church Addendum to Diocesan Policy (if utilized)\*

**Appendix F:** Caring for the Community

Please note: all churches shall establish and keep current an account with *Ministry Safe*. GAD offers a discounted rate that churches can apply by calling 817-737-7233 and asking for the ACNA2021 rate (\$100) which includes their free templates for a variety of documents and policies which include (all samples):

- Sample screening statement
- Sample form for report of suspected abuse
- Disclosure forms (both volunteer and employee)
- Driving history requests and release forms
- Children’s Ministry and/or Youth Ministry policies
- Child Services policies (sample)Camp policies and School policies
- School and/or Youth athletic policies and plans
- Child services/Daycare policies
- Employment applications
- Applicant statements/Code of Conduct Agreements
- Safety applications (volunteer and employee)
- Reference forms
- Interview forms
- School forms

## Appendix A:

### Congregational Certificate of Compliance

We, the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby certify that the Congregation has adopted the POLICY FOR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT by CLERGY, EMPLOYEES, AND VOLUNTEERS in the GULF ATLANTIC DIOCESE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA.

And we further certify that the congregation has obtained and will maintain at all times, sexual misconduct insurance coverage.

We further certify that all clergy, employees (full or part-time), and leaders of children/youth will complete *Ministry Safe Awareness* prior to service/employment. We certify that all clergy, employees (full or part-time), leaders of children/youth, and vestry will complete the diocesan approved training, and individual church training, within six months of service.

We further certify that we will strive to exceed the minimum standard of compliance set forth in this policy document at all times.

We further certify that the vestry has developed, if necessary, and will maintain its own addendum to this policy for Sexual Misconduct specific to this church congregation.

Finally, we certify the following have been completed; if you are unable to, please explain why on the next page:

#### Awareness:

- Have you utilized a screening statement for applicants for employment? Have you maintained documentation of these statements and all applications for those hired?
- Have you completed background checks on all employees and leadership involved with children/youth? Did you contact personal and professional references for all employees prior to hiring?
- Have you reviewed this policy with all employees and leadership in preparation for this coming year?
- Are all of your volunteers/employees/clergy up to date on diocesan-approved training for sexual misconduct and the protection of children?
- Are you maintaining documentation of training, and is this training renewed every two years? Is everyone current?

#### Interaction:

- Do you have a personalized church addendum to this policy (optional)? Have you submitted a copy to the Diocesan Administrator? If not using one, please write n/a.

- Do your volunteers/employees routinely uphold your personalized addendum to this policy? Do you have a plan if they do not? If not using one, please write n/a.
- Do you have a *Supervisory Plan* for every type of planned event that includes children and youth for this coming year?

**Reporting:**

- Have you posted the #ChooseTheLight poster in a location visible to staff and volunteers?
- Do you have a point person who is responsible for understanding reporting procedures and compliance outlined in this policy?

**Compliance:**

- Did you submit your congregation's *Certificate of Compliance* by Jan 31<sup>st</sup>?
- Have you maintained copies of the *Individual Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policies* for every volunteer/employee/clergy?
- Do you have a copy of your sexual misconduct insurance policy available, and have you ensured your safety policy addendum is compliant with your insurance policy?

If you are unable to confirm anything on this checklist, please explain why you are unable and what the timeline is to correct the issue:

---

|                         |      |               |      |
|-------------------------|------|---------------|------|
| Rector/Priest-in-Charge | Date | Senior Warden | Date |
|-------------------------|------|---------------|------|

**Return this signed form to the Gulf Atlantic Diocesan Office not later than January 31<sup>st</sup> of every year.**

**Gulf Atlantic Diocese  
4042 Hartley Rd  
Jacksonville, FL 32257**





## Appendix C:

### Sample Supervisory Plan

Each church should devise specific supervisory plans for all onsite and offsite programming that involves youth and children of any age. The Gulf Atlantic Diocese has provided editable templates for a Supervisory Plan for an on-site nursery at a local church as an example. The sample plan offered is for information only. It is a sample of what a supervisory plan may look like. Each congregation will need to personalize such a plan to its own specific policies and procedures and do so with the consultation of its legal counsel before implementation. An editable template of this document may be found on the diocesan website:

<http://gulfatlanticDiocese.org/forms-and-policies/>

Please view additional resources on this same webpage for helpful documents. For example, the Brotherhood Mutual source found on the GAD website includes the following sample documents for churches:

- Worker selection
- Morals clause
- Youth Ministry communication policy
- Volunteer applications
- Reference response information
- Activity participation agreement
- Sample facilities use agreement
- Health information form
- Notice of injury form
- Suspected abuse or neglect report form
- Letter to congregation
- Background screening checklist
- Children's ministry procedures checklist
- Creating your program, policies, and procedures checklist
- Eliminate secluded areas checklist

## Appendix D:

### Sample Reporting Checklist

Use the following steps, considering the situation. Please see the next page for the report.

SITUATION A: Abuse is suspected (in cases wherein there be no potential survivor coming forward, or enough concrete evidence or first-hand experience, yet reason for suspicion).

1. Document the Complaint.
2. Does this suspicion involve a minor? If YES, immediately notify 1-800-96-ABUSE.
3. Notify bishop (if allegation concerns clergy/employees) or Rector/Sr. Warden (if allegation concerns lay person/volunteer) immediately.

SITUATION B: A complaint is received from an individual alleging abuse by a clergy person or church employee.

1. Document the Complaint.
2. Is the complainant a minor? If YES, immediately notify 1-800-96-ABUSE
3. Notify the bishop immediately.
4. Notify Sr. Warden of the Vestry and Rector/Other Clergy (other than the accused).

SITUATION C: A complaint is received from an individual alleging abuse by a lay person or volunteer.

1. Document the Complaint.
2. Is the complainant a minor? If YES, immediately notify 1-800-96-ABUSE
3. Notify Rector immediately.

#### IN ALL CASES

- Assure complainant of pastoral concern, and that the matter is taken seriously. Explain the policy notifications and procedures that are being initiated to the complainant/survivor.
- Secure an advocate who will keep the complainant/survivor informed and ensure pastoral care. This person should not be under the power of the institution.
- Keep strict confidence and do not discuss the matter with anyone who is not required to be informed.
- Note to clergy: after receiving notification of an incident, do not hear sacramental confessions from or agree to privileged communication with the accused.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>YOUR INFORMATION</b>   | Name: _____                                   |
|   | Title/Position: _____ Supervisor: _____       |
|   | Address: _____                                |
|   | Phone: _____ email: _____                     |
| <b>INJURED PERSON/COMPLAINANT</b>   | Name: _____ Age: _____                        |
|   | Address: _____                                |
|   | Parents/Guardians (if a minor): _____         |
|   | Phone: _____ email: _____                     |
| <b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACCUSED</b>  | ____ Unknown Description: _____               |
|   | ____ Known Name: _____ Age: _____             |
|   | Relationship to suspected victim: _____       |
|   | Address or location of suspected abuse: _____ |
| <b>REASON FOR REPORT/DETAILS OF INCIDENT</b><br>(What happened? When? Etc.)<br><br><i>Ask: "Is there anything else you would like to tell me today?"</i>  | _____   |
|   | _____   |
|   | _____   |
|   | _____   |
|   | _____   |
|   | _____   |
|   | _____   |
|   | _____   |
| <b>WITNESSES (IF ANY)</b>   | Name: _____ Phone: _____                      |
|   | Address: _____ email: _____                   |
|   | Name: _____ Phone: _____                      |
|   | Address: _____ email: _____                   |
| <b>TO WHICH SENIOR AUTHORITY IS THIS REPORT SUBMITTED?</b>  | Title: _____ Name: _____ Phone: _____         |
|   | Address: _____ email: _____                   |
| <i>[Additional copies of this report shall be filed, in envelopes, with both the Administrator &amp; the Sr. Warden]</i>  |   |
| Is the Accused an employee? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>[If YES, the Bishop/Rector/Sr. Warden shall immediately suspend the employee without prejudice until further investigation clarifies the appropriate next steps.]</i> |   |
| Did you notify state/local authorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  |   |
| If NOT, whom did you call? Agency/Contact Name & Phone: _____ Date/Time: _____  |   |
| Reporter's Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____   |   |
| Date of Report: _____ Time of Report: _____   |   |

Consider posting the following in a location for employees, also downloadable from the website:



## A child just disclosed sexual abuse to me. **What do I do now?**

### SAY

Say, "I believe you, and it's not your fault."

- DO ask open-ended questions that do not make assumptions.
- DON'T express anger, disbelief, or judgment (including stating that you don't think "that person" could do such a thing).

# 1

### ASK

Ask open questions that enable the child to tell their story without leading.

- Ask, "What else do you want to tell me?"
- Ask, "What happened next?"
- DO determine what, when, where, and whom, if at all possible.
- DON'T probe or ask for details.

# 2

### REPORT

Report immediately.

- DO tell law enforcement and/or child protective services.
- DON'T investigate.
- DON'T promise not to tell anyone. Thank the child for trusting you, but let them know your main job is to help keep them safe.

# 3

In over 90% of cases, the child is telling the truth.



# Appendix F:

## Caring for the Community

### 1. Caring for the Congregation

Incidents of child abuse, and the secrecy that often surrounds them, can cause devastating harm to the church as well as to the survivors. Therefore, where current or past child abuse has been perpetrated by clergy, staff, or volunteers of the church, the church shall provide consultation to encourage the discussion of such incidents and to provide a means to facilitate healing within the church. Appendix F, Section 3 includes a suggested model of how this may be done: a congregational trauma debriefing model.

It is essential that each church respond to a report or instance of abuse or misconduct in a manner that promotes healing first for the survivor, as well as for the offender and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing within the congregation generally.

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

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

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

A trauma debriefing allows participants to integrate the reality of the event with their own responses to that event. The Church Information, Trauma, and Healing Debriefing Model set forth in Section I.3 is an effective means to communicate, process, and accept facts, allow feelings to surface, and then, through God's healing grace, head into the future unhindered by the past.

## 2. Guiding Principles for Healing in the Church

The following guidelines outline steps that can be taken to promote healing in the congregation:

1. **Contact with the Family.** Before the process for healing begins, the Bishop or his representative should maintain regular contact with the survivors/complainant(s) and describe to survivors/complainant(s) the procedures to be used for promoting congregational healing.
2. **Privacy Concerns.** The privacy of the survivors/complainant(s) must be balanced against the need for openness with the local church. Insofar as possible, the identity of the survivors/complainant(s) and any details which may identify him/her should be kept confidential.
3. **Providing Facts.** The procedures shall consider that church members usually know when "something is going on," and, in the absence of facts, rumor and speculation will grow.
4. **Notifying Lay Leadership.** The lay leadership should be advised promptly of the issues, since that group's participation is vital in planning and implementing the processes for church healing.
5. **Trauma Debriefing.** The healing and unity of a congregation are fostered when there is an open meeting, called a "Church Information, Trauma, and Healing Debriefing," at which the Bishop or his representative presents as much factual information as possible and provides an opportunity for church members to process and be connected to resources to aid in the healing of the congregation.

Since the local church will likely include people who have experienced abuse or misconduct themselves, appropriate personnel trained in crisis ministry should be present and available on a small group or one-to-one basis immediately after the formal presentation. Also, local mental health resources (including sliding scale fee agencies) should be publicized so that members of the congregation know how to find these services. (Note that many communities have publicly-funded survivor services.)

The debriefing should follow this process set forth in Section 3. The message should be "The Church is a place for truth. We follow Jesus, who described himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life."

6. **Church Spokesperson.** The vestry, in consultation with the clergy, is encouraged to appoint a church spokesperson. The congregation, including church members and staff members, is urged to refer all media inquiries to the church spokesperson.
7. **Interim Priest.** If the circumstances require that an interim priest be engaged, that priest should have special training in trauma debriefing. The interim priest should have regular opportunities to report and consult with the Bishop, his or her designated staff person, and counselors.
8. **Consulting Legal Authorities.** Neither the clergy nor any other church worker should attempt to impede persons who wish to consult with legal authorities.
9. **Continuing Pastoral Care.** The clergy and/or vestry should consult with the Bishop about additional resources for the healing and care of the congregation.

### 3. A Model for a Trauma Debriefing Meeting

Debriefing is a technique devised to help those affected by a specific trauma. Those affected may be suffering from physical or psychological symptoms and debriefing enables those exposed to process the event and its impact on themselves and the community. Debriefing should be done as soon as possible and the community should consult an expert to assist.

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

#### Steps Prior to Meeting

1. **Select Leaders.** Carefully choose a Congregational Trauma Debriefing team and a leader or co-leaders who have had experience with a debriefing or trauma-related process. It is important that the rector or the rector's representative be a visible participant in the debriefing, but not in the role of leadership.
2. **Schedule and Notify.** Schedule the debriefing as soon as possible after the complaint becomes public knowledge. Ensure that all members of the congregation and church staff are notified of the debriefing by telephone, email, overnight mail, or other fast and reliable method of notification. It is important to get a wide participation, so that all who experience the trauma also share the debriefing experience.
3. **Choose Meeting Place.** Hold the debriefing in an appropriate place, preferably on the church's property. Although an opening prayer is appropriate, this should not be a liturgical event.
4. **Address the News Media.** While the debriefing should not be confidential, it is important that no one be placed in jeopardy because of any disclosures made during that meeting. Therefore, it is preferable that the news media not be present for the debriefing, but meet after the debriefing with the church spokesperson and Bishop.

#### Agenda for the Meeting

1. **Open the Meeting.** The Bishop or his representative should welcome the attendees, as should one of the lay leaders. The lay leader then should introduce himself/herself, explain the debriefing process, and outline the guidelines for the debriefing. It is important to keep the debriefing to the specified procedures. Leaders should be prepared for a lengthy meeting.
2. **Present the Facts.** Subject to the advice of counsel, the general facts and approximate chronology of the trauma should be presented verbally, supplemented by written notations such as a summary handout, or by writing notes on newsprint during the factual presentation. The goal is to ensure that all those present have a common record of the traumatic event. Note that this is not a time for feelings to be expressed, and the group may need some direction to withhold those feelings until the next phase of the debriefing.
3. **Solicit Reactions.** Once an appropriate record has been presented, the lay leader should invite church members to express their reactions to the facts. (Some church members may need to be directed to express their own feelings and not those of others.) No feelings, however trivial, intense, or unusual, should be discounted, and no effort should be made to fix, soothe, or smooth them over. The responses simply are to be collected and heard.



4. **Examine Repercussions.** Once reactions have been expressed fully, the leader should ask those present to turn their attention to the repercussions of the event, and consider the congregation's future. This step bridges the trauma with the ongoing life of those involved in the trauma. It may be a time to explore some of the issues the congregation will face in the near future. As with the presentation of facts, the issues raised may be noted both verbally and in writing.
5. **Seek Context and Perspective.** Members of the congregation also should be invited to place the event within a context or perspective. There may be expressions of confusion, helplessness, or curiosity about how other groups have resolved an issue of this type. In this phase, people may have an awareness of paradox and pose some hard questions such as the following:
  - Why do bad things happen?
  - How can it be that such a talented priest/leader could be involved in misconduct?
  - Why do things like this happen in a church?
  - Where does the responsibility lie?
  - What about the resources of our faith?

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

### **Actions After the Meeting**

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

### **Additional Responses & Follow-Up**

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

Additional appropriate church responses may include:

- Regular prayer for those directly involved and for the congregation should continue while guarding privacy;
- Preaching on the subject of violation of trust and liturgical acts of corporate penance;
- Seeking to provide a safe environment for the survivor(s)/complainant(s) and their families in community life;
- In the event that incarceration or other punitive action follows legal proceedings, developing a means for the congregation to deal appropriately with the person who may be imprisoned.

### **Congregational Follow-up: The First Year**

Even with the best of care, a congregation that has experienced sexual misconduct will likely need an ongoing program of support and assistance, especially in the first year. This year will be devoted to a healing process, in which the congregation slowly will integrate the reality of its experience into its future. If such integration does not take place, the congregation may suffer from prolonged loss of energy, despair about the future, loss and/or isolation of some members, distrust of lay and/or ordained leadership or of the Bishop, and difficulty making decisions or taking risks.

Suggested congregational follow-up activities may include:

- **Meeting with the Bishop.** A meeting with the Bishop or the Bishop's representative and the vestry in order to assess the healing process of the congregation.
- **Staff Input.** Obtaining input from church staff (including an interim priest where present) about their observations regarding the incident and the debriefing process.
- **Study Groups.** Establishing study groups to consider the issue of healing from sexual abuse, perhaps by reading a selected book for discussion.
- **Self-evaluation.** Conducting a congregational self-evaluation, through the use of a questionnaire or survey instrument.
- **Focus Groups.** Creating congregational focus groups to address the issue of where the congregation stands in its process of moving ahead.
- **Committee on Congregational Life.** Forming a Committee on Congregational Life charged with assessing the needs and planning programs for continued healing.
- **Professional Consultant.** Appointing a professional consultant experienced with issues of child abuse to work with the vestry and affected congregation on the components of the healing process.

### **Using the Trauma to Help Others**

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

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

## 4. Pastoral Response to Known Sexual Offenders

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

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

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

*O merciful Creator, your loving hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature:*

*Make us always thankful for your loving providence, and give us grace to honor you with all that you have entrusted to us; that we, remembering the account we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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