

Proposed Changes to the Gulf Atlantic Diocesan
Sexual Misconduct Policy for Prevention and Reporting

Changes to take effect for the 2022-23 fiscal year

Pg	TOPIC	EXPLANATION OF CHANGES	OLD WORDING	NEW WORDING
1	Title change	Changed the title to reflect new focus	Sexual Misconduct Policy for Prevention and Reporting	Safeguarding Our People: Policy for Protection Against Abuse in the Church
4, 6, 7, 12, 42	Focus change	Changed all instances of victim to survivor	Victim	Survivor
6	Focus change	Recommendation not requirement for policy use	This document includes the Sexual Misconduct Policy for Prevention and Reporting (SMPPR) in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese (GAD) . . . and apply its content.	This document serves as recommendations for the churches in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese (GAD) . . . and apply its content regarding the protection of our people.
6	Definitions	Added definitions for survivor and offender		Survivor: anyone who has experienced abuse in any form. Offender: anyone who physically, mentally, sexually, or spiritually abuses others.
6	Definitions	Added clarity on: advocates dating relationships	Dating Relationships: consensual dating between individuals not involved in supervisory relationships are excluded from the definition of Sexual Exploitation. These would include 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).	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.

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6	Definitions	Added clarity on: response team	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 provide pastoral, emotional, and spiritual support to congregations in crisis. Each church should consider a congregational list of advocates and/or a response team.	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.
7	Priority of items	Changed the order of the bulleted items to reflect priority on victims and pastoral care		
8	Addition	Added a section on spiritual abuse		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.

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11, 21	Focus change	Added sensitivity to language	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.	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.
12	Added introduction	Added introduction to 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.
14	Added introduction	Added introduction to 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, <i>Ministry Safe</i> , and anything an individual church might need that is specific to their congregational context as it seeks to protect against abuse.
15	Added intro	Added an introduction to Interaction section		. . . There are two key types of interaction clergy regularly engage in ministry: Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction.

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17, 18	Removal of phrase		It is not the listener's job to investigate or verify. . . . Throughout any investigation: reach out to, and care for, any potential victims; treat the accused with dignity and support; and maintain confidentiality utilizing maximum discretion.	If someone discloses abuse, it is not the reasonability of the recipient of that information to investigate or verify; they should report to authorities who will investigate. . . . 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.
18	Addition	Added a section on spiritual abuse		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 , or bringing the matter to the attention of their supervising clergy or bishop.
23	Clarification	Clarified definition of non-lead teacher		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
26	Priority of items	Removed item from approved list of physical interactions	[removed head pat]	

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27	Addition	Added hotline phone number and email address to report	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);	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);
27	Removal	Removed pre-marital and marriage since this section deals with youth	Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, crisis counseling, pre-marital counseling and marriage counseling.	Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, and crisis counseling.
28	Sensitivity	Changed from victim to survivor	Churches are encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that nationally one out of every four women has been the victim of some form of child sexual abuse, typically by a male offender	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
34	Sensitivity	Clarified and made language more sensitive to victims	All reports of abuse of children or vulnerable adults must be reported immediately. It is not the listener's job to investigate or verify. Report to authorities and let them investigate.	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.
35	Addition	Added email	The Diocese provides a hotline for confidential reporting (904-300-0512).	The Diocese provides a hotline for confidential reporting (904-300-0512 or safeguarding@gulfatlanticdiocese.org).

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42	Sensitivity	Changed from victim to survivor	Abuse is suspected (in cases wherein there be no alleged victim coming forward, or enough concrete evidence or first-hand experience, yet reason for suspicion).	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).
44	Updated	Removed a copyrighted image and created our own to replace it	What do I do now? . . .	[kept same content, just shifted to paraphrase]
46	Sensitivity	Changed victim to survivor	Incidents of child abuse, and the secrecy that often surrounds them, can cause devastating harm to the church as well as to the victims . . . It is essential that each church respond to a report or instance of abuse or misconduct in a manner that promotes healing for the victim , the . . .	Incidents of child abuse, and the secrecy that often surrounds them, can cause devastating harm to the church as well as to the survivors . . . 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 . . .
47	Sensitivity	Added survivor to complainant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with the Family. Before the process for healing begins, the Bishop or his representative should maintain regular contact with the complainant(s) and describe to complainant(s) the procedures to be used for promoting congregational healing. Privacy Concerns. The privacy of the complainant(s) must be balanced against the need for openness with the local church. Insofar as possible, the identity of the complainant(s) and any details which may identify him/her should be kept confidential. . . 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. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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. . . 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.

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48	Addition	Added an explanation of what a trauma debriefing is		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.
50	Sensitivity	Added survivor for sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular prayer for the complainant(s), the respondent(s), and the congregation should continue; Securing a safe place for the complainant(s) and the complainant's family in community life; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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;
51	Sensitivity and consistency	Changed perpetrator to offender	If the perpetrator is observed acting in an inappropriate manner with children or their families, the rector	If the offender is observed acting in an inappropriate manner with children or their families, the rector
9	Flexibility	Added that this policy is a sample, and that churches can create their own as long as it is equivalent at minimum.	This document is provided to the churches and congregations in the GAD to use in addition to an individual addendum to this policy designed specifically for the individual church or congregation (see Appendix E, optional).	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).