

## Diocesan Policies for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Adults

**The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta**  
**2744 Peachtree Road, N. W.**  
**Atlanta, GA 30305**  
[www.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.episcopalatlanta.org)  
(404) 601-5320 / (404) 601-5330 Fax

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## Acknowledgments

The principal authors of these Model Policies are Sally Johnson, Esq., Vice-President of Risk Management and Education for the Church Pension Group, and Jane Hickerson, Ph.D., Vice-President of Training and Development for Praesidium, Inc.

## Disclaimer

These diocesan policies are provided for Episcopal institutions in the Diocese of Atlanta. They may not cover every issue but they are intended to adhere to the laws of the State of Georgia. Commercial use of this document is prohibited. Questions or comments on the policies may be directed to the Rev. Dr. Deborah Silver, director of Safe Church training, by email at [dsilver@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:dsilver@episcopalatlanta.org).

## Distribution and Copying

Copies of these *Diocesan Policies for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Adults* can be obtained from the Atlanta Diocese's website at the following link: <https://www.episcopalatlanta.org/Clergy/safe-church-for-clergy/>.

Commercial use of *Model Policies for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Adults* is strictly prohibited.

# Sexual Exploitation Policy

## **Prohibition Against Sexual Exploitation**

The Diocese of Atlanta does not tolerate sexual exploitation in any form. Sexual exploitation is the development or attempted development of a sexual relationship between a person in any ministerial position, lay or ordained, and an individual with whom he or she has a Pastoral Relationship.

A Pastoral Relationship is a relationship:

Between any clergy person and any person:

- who attends a congregation or other ministry setting in which the clergy person serves;
- who seeks ministry from the clergy person.

OR

Between any clergy person or any duly-appointed lay person, whether employee or volunteer, who is authorized to provide and does provide:

- counseling;
- pastoral care;
- spiritual direction or spiritual guidance;
- ministration of any Sacrament (other than the distribution of the Bread and Wine by a lay person at a public service of Holy Communion);
- life/leadership/peer coaching;
- hearing a person's confession, in the course of the duly-authorized ministry.

OR

The following ministers licensed under Canon III.4: Pastoral Leaders, Worship Leaders, Preachers, Eucharistic Visitors, and Catechists and those they serve in the course of these ministries.

Sexual exploitation includes but is not limited to the following actions:

1. Verbal: such as sexual innuendo, indecent proposals, sharing sexual stories, jokes or fantasies, or making inappropriate comments about someone's appearance.
2. Behaviors: such as inappropriate touching, sending or posting communications with sexual content (correspondence, email, text messages, instant messages, photographs, attachments, phone conversations, voice mail, etc.).
3. Sexualizing a Pastoral Relationship or relationship between a clergy or lay person and anyone to whom he or she provides ministry (e.g., requesting dates, giving unwanted attention, etc.).

## **Reporting Suspected Sexual Exploitation**

If you believe that you or someone else has been subjected to sexual exploitation, actions that violate this policy or inappropriate behavior, you may make your concerns known to the offending person if you are comfortable doing so, or you may report your concerns in accordance with the following:

Reports of suspected or known sexual exploitation may be reported to:

- the rector or clergy person in charge of the congregation,
- the Senior Warden of the congregation, or
- the Canon to the Ordinary. (404) 601-5320, Ext. 123.

Via any of the following:

- Telephone call
- Letter
- Email
- Fax
- In Person Meeting
- Filing a “Notice of Concern”

Church Personnel are required to report any suspected or known policy violations to the rector or clergy person in charge of the congregation. When it is suspected that the rector or priest-in-charge has violated a policy, a report should be made to the Canon to the Ordinary at (404) 601-5320, Ext. 123.

All reports of sexual exploitation, policy violations, or inappropriate behavior under this policy will be taken seriously.

## General Definitions

### **A. Church Personnel**

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies. For example, [parish administrators, wardens, chaplains, directors, etc.].
3. Those who contract their services to the diocese, its congregations, schools, or other agencies.
4. Volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, Vestries, Bishop's Committees, boards of directors and advisory boards.

### **B. Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships**

For purposes of this policy, the following Church Personnel are included in the definition of Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise.
2. All persons who have Pastoral Relationships.
3. The following ministers licensed under Canon III.4: Pastoral Leaders, Worship Leaders, Preachers, Eucharistic Visitors, and Catechists.

### **C. Supervisors and Decision-Makers**

1. All persons who supervise Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships.
2. All members of decision-making bodies who have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs, church activities, or policies involving Pastoral Relationships or who
3. Standing Committees, Diocesan Councils/Executive Boards, Vestries, and Bishop's Committees who appoint or approve Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships as defined in this policy including all Standing Committees, Commissions on Ministry, Vestries, Boards of Directors for Schools, Bishops Committees and the like.

## Safeguards for Preventing Sexual Exploitation of Adults

### **A. Screening and Selection**

Any and all Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships shall be screened and selected using the following tools and procedures:

Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships shall be screened before engaging in Pastoral Relationships.

1. Applicants shall be known to the leadership of the congregation for at least six (6) months to a year.
2. Background Screening
  - a. Such persons must read and sign a disclosure statement acknowledging the release of information to conduct **Background Screening and Reference Checks** (See Appendix A). This also includes acknowledging and signing the **Code of Conduct**. (See Appendix D)
  - b. **Criminal Records Check** in any state where the applicant has resided the past seven (7) years.
  - c. **Sexual Offender Registry Check** in any state where the applicant has resided at minimum during the past seven (7) years.
  - d. **Individual Interview** with the applicant.
  - e. **Reference Checks** from employers.
3. All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not the person is appropriate to engage in Pastoral Relationships.
4. Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships must have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.
5. Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships who transfer within the Diocese of Atlanta and apply for or are asked to or who do undertake a position in which they have Pastoral Relationships are required to undergo the same screening and selection process specified above. This requirement will not be satisfied through a transfer of a copy of their personnel file from any entity.

## **B. Education and Training Requirements**

### **Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships**

Before any person engages in Pastoral Relationships s/he is required to complete training on the prevention of sexual exploitation of adults. If that is not possible, this policy must be reviewed and discussed with her/him before s/he has Pastoral Relationships. The rest of the education and training must be completed within three months of beginning to have Pastoral Relationships.

### **Supervisors and Decision-Makers of Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships**

**\*\*** Within three months of becoming a Supervisor or Decision-Maker, individuals must complete training on the prevention of sexual exploitation of adults.

## **C. Activities for Monitoring and Supervising Pastoral Relationships**

The monitoring and supervision of programs and activities involving Pastoral Relationships is important for safeguarding adults from sexual exploitation. Monitoring and supervision should include, but are not limited to:

1. Maintaining an up-to-date list of approved Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships in the church office or other place where church records are kept.
2. Requiring that all new activities that include Pastoral Relationships have the approval of the rector or canonical equivalent before they start. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing to the rector. The rector will consider whether the plan for a new activity includes adequate monitoring and supervision.
3. Requiring that all Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships be approved to do so by the rector or canonical equivalent in accordance with the Screening and Selection process above.
4. Settings where Pastoral Relationships take place:
  - should, whenever possible, be places where casual monitoring by others is convenient (for example along well-traveled hallways or in areas where other Church Personnel work nearby).
  - in open, visible spaces or in closed spaces that have windows that remain unobstructed by closed blinds, furniture, plants, or other adornments.
  - should convey safety and comfort without the use of couches, loveseats, beds, futons or other furniture that would encourage close seating between the persons in the Pastoral Relationship.



## D. Behavioral Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Adults

When creating safe boundaries for Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships, it is important to establish what types of interactions are appropriate and inappropriate. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with other adults.

These Guidelines are:

- based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by those who have engaged in sexual exploitation of adults.
- intended to assist Church Personnel and Congregants in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions of Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships to help maintain appropriate boundaries at all times.
- intended to be used to make decisions about interactions of Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships with those with whom they have a Pastoral Relationship.
- to be carefully followed by all who are involved in Pastoral Relationships.

Some **appropriate** interactions, as long as they are welcomed by the recipient, are listed below:

- brief hugs,
- pats on the shoulder or back,
- kisses on the cheek,
- handshakes, and
- holding hands during prayer.

Some **inappropriate** interactions in Pastoral Relationships and other ministries with adults include:

- inappropriate or lengthy embraces,
- kisses on the mouth,
- touching sexual areas of the body,
- showing affection while in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms,
- any form of unwanted affection,
- comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to a person's body or appearance that are at all suggestive. Examples would be, "You should wear that outfit more often," or "You look really hot in those jeans,"
- giving gifts or money to favored individuals,
- repeated and/or private meetings with individual adults, especially meetings that occur away from church property and during non-business hours,
- repeated electronic communications, such as email or texts, especially those that contain personal disclosures or solicitations of an intimate relationship,
- seeking excessive private time with a specific adult,
- changing one's manner of dress when in the company of a specific adult, and
- providing a specific adult with personal access such as one's personal email address or cell phone number if that is not the norm.

## **E. Office Décor**

**Spaces where Pastoral Relationships occur should be a relaxing and productive setting ready at all times for use for Pastoral Relationships. The following are recommendations that will help create an environment that is peaceful and private while allowing appropriate supervision.**

### **Furniture**

Comfortable chairs set at a 45 degree angle from each other create a good area for conversation. Couches and loves seats are discouraged but if they are used Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships should not sit on them with parishioners or other visitors. Having furniture that allows reclining can leave persons open to false allegations of inappropriate behavior.

### **Artwork**

Artwork should be tasteful without offending the staff or other visitors.

### **Windows**

Windows in walls or doors should be unobstructed by blinds, furniture, curtains, or posters so that the space is always available to casual monitoring. A sense of privacy can be maintained by arranging the furniture so that Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships are always visible, but the parishioner or visitor does not feel exposed.

### **Entrances**

If the space has a private entrance, and it is used, be sure staff knows when someone is in the space and when it is being used for Pastoral Relationships.

## **F. Pastoral Care and Counseling**

- Even if you are separately credentialed and/or licensed as a mental health professional (psychologist, marriage and family therapist, substance abuse counselor, etc.), you are functioning on behalf of the church and you should make it clear to those you are serving that you are NOT serving in that role.
- Limit the number to 3 or 4 times you meet with someone for pastoral care or counseling. If you believe the person needs more help, refer him or her to a trained or certified professional therapist, outside psychologist, or other credentialed professional as a medical doctor or mental health professional.
- Clergy should keep pastoral conversations confidential; however, if a person communicates intent to harm him or herself, or others, this must be reported as appropriate.

## Appendix A

### DISCLOSURE REGARDING BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

\_\_\_\_\_ (“the Company”) may obtain information about you from a consumer reporting agency for purposes of employment, volunteer positions, work performed under contract, retention, or reassignment (hereafter known as “engagement”). Thus, you may be the subject of a "consumer report" and/or an "investigative consumer report" which may include information about your character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and/or mode of living, and which can involve personal interviews with sources such as your neighbors, friends or associates. These reports may contain information regarding your criminal history, credit history, motor vehicle records ("driving records"), and verification of your education or employment history or other background checks. You have the right, upon written request made within a reasonable time after receipt of this notice, to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report. Please be advised that the nature and scope of the most common form of investigative consumer report obtained with regard to applicants for employment is an investigation into your education and/or employment history conducted by Praesidium, Inc., P.O. Box 202002, Arlington, TX, 76006, 800-743-6354, or another outside organization. You should carefully consider whether to exercise your right to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report.

## Appendix B

### **Specialized Questions for the Interview**

The following are sample questions that may help you screen out someone who is unable to maintain healthy boundaries with adults.

1. Please tell me about the last time a member of your (congregation, youth group, office staff, etc.) demanded too much of your time. How did you handle that?
2. Please give an example of a time in your work or volunteer history when you thought the policies were too rigid. How did you handle that?
3. Please describe a time when you felt a special bond or friendship between yourself and a member of your (congregation, youth group, office staff, etc.).
4. Please give an example of a “boundary violation.” Has that ever happened to you, or has anyone ever said that you violated a boundary of some sort?
5. Has disciplinary action of any sort ever been taken against you by a licensing board, professional association, ecclesiastical body or educational or training institution? Have there been complaints against you that did not result in discipline? Are there complaints pending against you before any of the above-named bodies? If yes, please explain.
6. Have you ever been asked to resign or been terminated by a training program or employer? If yes, please explain.
7. Have you ever had a civil suit brought against you about your professional work or is any such action pending? Have you ever had professional malpractice insurance suspended or revoked for any reason? If yes, please explain.
8. Have you ever been charged (formally or informally) with any ethics violations, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment? Are any such actions or complaints pending against you? If yes, please explain.
9. Are you now or have you ever had sexual contact or attempted sexual contact (sexual intercourse of any kind, intentional touching, or conversation for the purpose of sexual arousal) with any person you were/are seeing in any professional context or in a Pastoral Relationship (i.e. parishioner, client, patient, employee, student)? If yes, please explain.
10. Are you now or have you ever been involved in the production, sale, or distribution of pornographic materials? If yes, please explain.
11. Have you ever had a restraining order, injunction, order for protection or the like issued against you? Have you ever had your parental rights restricted, suspended or terminated or have any of your children ever been in foster care? Have you ever been accused of domestic violence? If so, please explain.

## Appendix C

### **Specialized Questions for References**

1. Please give me an example of how \_\_\_\_\_ maintains good boundaries with adults.
2. Have you ever heard \_\_\_\_\_ tell a joke or say something that made you or others uncomfortable?
3. Would you be comfortable referring a vulnerable friend of yours to for pastoral counseling? Why? Why not?
4. The position for which \_\_\_\_\_ has applied requires that s/he be able to work closely with people whose lives may be in turmoil and who may not have good judgment at that point in time. Can you think of any reason that \_\_\_\_\_ should not be allowed to do this work?

## Appendix D

### **Code of Conduct for Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships**

#### **Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships:**

- understand that the church will not tolerate the sexual exploitation of adults it serves.
- agree to not attempt to or to sexually exploit any person they serve or work with on behalf of the church.
- agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with adults as defined in these *Policies for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Adults*.
- agree to comply with the Diocese of Atlanta's Code of Conduct for Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships.
- agree, whenever appropriate and possible, to have one-to-one meetings with adults during regularly/publicly scheduled hours and by appointment on church property while others are present in the building or in other appropriate professional settings where they can be observed.
- agree to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries and avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
- agree to immediately end any sexual or inappropriate relationship with a person with whom he/she has a Pastoral Relationship or when he/she has questions about the implementation of these policies and immediately seek advice from the bishop, a trusted colleague or mental health professional.
- agree to immediately report any inappropriate behaviors, boundary violations or possible policy violations they observe under these policies.
- acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to prevent sexual exploitation of adults and agree to report known or suspected sexual exploitation of adults to church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.

#### **Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships are prohibited from:**

- dating or becoming romantically involved with those with whom they have a Pastoral Relationship.
- having sexual contact with any person with whom he/she has a Pastoral Relationship.
- possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or using such materials in the conduct of their ministry unless the materials are part of a pre-approved educational program or curriculum and are used only for that purpose.
- using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or from having it on church-owned computers, and from bringing such materials onto church property.
- discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with any person with whom they have a Pastoral Relationships.
- Clergy are subject to Title IV Ecclesiastical Discipline of the *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church (2012)*.
- Clergy sexual misconduct is defined as *sexual abuse or sexual behavior at the request of, acquiesced to or by a Member of Clergy with an employee, volunteer, student or counselee of that Member of Clergy or in the same congregation as the Member of the Clergy, or a person with whom the Member of Clergy has a pastoral relationship.*

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ / Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Agreed Upon: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E**

### **Confidential Notice of Concern**

Individual(s) of Concern:

Date of occurrence:

Time of occurrence:

Type of Concern:

Inappropriate behavior within a Pastoral Relationship

Policy violation with those served in ministry

Possible risk of an inappropriate relationship between adults of unequal power

Other concern:

Describe the situation: What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Who was involved? Who was present? Who was notified? If reported to the State, what was their recommendation about investigating? Attach additional sheets if needed.

Has this situation ever occurred previously? Attach additional sheets if needed.

What action was taken? How was the situation handled? Who was involved? Who was questioned? Were police called? Attach additional sheets if needed.

What is the follow-up plan? Does anyone else need to be notified? Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation? Attach additional sheets if needed.

Submitted by:

Telephone number:

Location and address: