



# **Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth**

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**The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta  
2744 Peachtree Road NW, Atlanta, GA 30305**

**[www.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.episcopalatlanta.org)**

**404-601-5320 or 800-537-6743**

The purpose of these policies is to ensure that, to the extent possible, the doctrine and teachings of the Episcopal Church are honored and that the welfare and safety of children and youth are maximized in the Diocese of Atlanta. These are internal policies of the Diocese of Atlanta. It is not a contract and does not create contractual rights for any persons. These policies are administered by the Diocese of Atlanta and the application and administration of these policies are not subject to review of any type as to substance or procedure by any secular authority or other authority outside of the Episcopal Church.

A copy of this document may be downloaded in digital form for printing at [www.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.episcopalatlanta.org) (Go to *Resources*, then *Safe Church, Safeguarding God's Children*).

**Our thanks:**

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***From your Bishop***

***"It has pleased God, our Heavenly Father, to answer our earnest prayers for the gift of children...." BCP pg. 440***

**Children were important to Jesus as he traveled around and taught. And, children and their safety are important to me as Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta.**

**Thousands of children are served every year in our churches, worshipping communities, schools, programs and activities. Our commitment at the Diocese of Atlanta is to keep God's precious ones nurtured in faith and safe from abuse of any kind.**

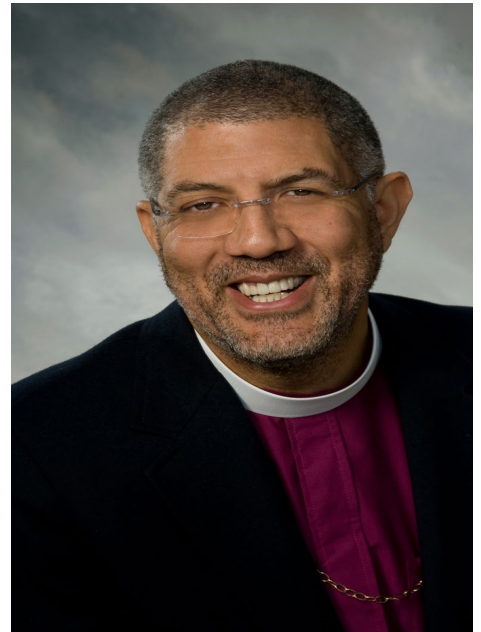
**Therefore, we are serious about educating parents, clergy and youth and children's ministers and all church leaders about the need for complete transparency and prudence in protecting our children and young people.**

**Thank you for doing all that you can to educate yourself and others to help you and your parish or ministry setting keep children and youth safe.**

**With every blessing,**



**The Rt. Rev. Robert C. Wright  
Bishop of Atlanta**



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## I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?”

“Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”

The above two questions, taken from the Baptismal service in the Book of Common Prayer, form the theological and ethical foundation for all Episcopalians. In baptism, God, speaking through the Church, claims us in Christ. We become, in Christ, the community of God’s final purpose: justice and peace, love and grace-filled inclusion for all of God’s children. This new community lives in Eucharistic fellowship with God and Creation, as a sign and instrument of God’s reconciling purpose in the world.

The Church is called to embody and advance God’s mission. Ministry is the vocation of the whole community: laypersons, deacons, priests, and bishops who together represent Christ and the Church in the world.

The obligation to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being is binding for all the baptized. Our ministries should reflect these baptismal promises in how we conduct ourselves and in how we foster a safe and inclusive community.

The authority with which *leaders* — ordained persons and adults who minister with children and youth in leadership roles — are entrusted creates an inherent power imbalance. This power imbalance derives from the leadership role and, in the case of clergy, the symbolic authority of an ordained person. All Christian leadership is intended to provide occasions for guidance and grace, and its abuse is always and unequivocally wrong.

All the people of God are called to minister within the framework of respecting the dignity of all people by word and deed as modeled by the life of Christ. These policies are intended to provide a pattern for the attentive practice of ministry.

This document is a statement for the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta serving middle and North Georgia, setting forth expectations for its leaders in their relationships with children and youth. The purpose of these policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings.

## II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

These policies set forth statements of general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with children and youth. These policies are mandated for all such activities sponsored by every congregation, institution, organization, school, and agency of the diocese. The purpose of these policies is to create safe and welcoming space for all children and youth in our communities and those engaged in ministry with children and youth and to prevent sexual abuse.

These policies present best practices for creating inclusive and safe space within ministries of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta. Church governing bodies and all leaders should understand these policies and all local requirements thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments, and should consult with the Office of the Bishop when unanticipated situations arise. No additions or revisions to these policies may be made without prior approval by the bishop or the bishop's representative.

*No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Whenever applicable, questions of civil, criminal, and/or ecclesiastical discipline and employment offenses should be addressed with the relevant authorities immediately. Please contact the Office of the Bishop for consultation and resources if assistance is needed.*

## III. DEFINITIONS

### **Abuse (Types):**

1. **Physical Abuse** is physical injury or death caused by other than accidental means. Injuries may include severe beatings, burns, bites or other physical problems. Corporal punishment (e.g., spanking) is legal in Georgia but leaving a mark or harming a child is not proper discipline.
2. **Sexual Abuse** perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.
3. **Sexual Abuse perpetrated by another child or youth** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
4. **Emotional Abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.

5. **Neglect** is the failure of a parent or caretaker to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
6. **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children** involves the treatment of a child as a sexual and commercial object such as in prostitution, pornography and other forms of transactional sex.
7. **Child Endangerment** is where a child is allowed to witness or hear the commission of a forcible felony, battery or family violence. Examples are driving under the influence with children in the car or engaging in family violence with children present.

**Adult:** Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school.

**Bullying:** Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbal, psychological, social, physical, or otherwise.

**Child:** Any person under the age of 12 years, or in 5th grade or below.

**Child Protective Services/Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS):**

The state agency charged with protecting children and families. Each county has its own DFCS office which provides services, including a CPS unit which receives and investigates allegations of abuse.

**Mandated Reporter:** A person who is required by Georgia state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, child endangerment and/or exploitation of children or youth to a Georgia DFCS office. The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta considers all personnel, whether paid or volunteer, who work regularly with children or youth to be mandated reporters.

**Minorities of Gender and Sexuality:** A phrase used with reference to individuals whose sexuality and/or gender identity/expression are different from the cisgender and heterosexual majority. Throughout this document, you will instead see substituted the following acronym referring to the same group: LGBTQIA+. This acronym stands for the terms Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual. It is important to understand that people's identities and their relationship to them can be complex, and this language is evolving. For more information, visit [www.hrc.org/resources](http://www.hrc.org/resources).

Relevant terms include:

**Asexual:** Someone who experiences the lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people.

**Bisexual:** A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

**Cisgender:** An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender or sex assigned at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Gay:** A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

**Intersex:** An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations affecting the sexual development of the human body. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, and in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.

**Non-binary:** With reference to gender identity, an umbrella term for people who identify as neither male nor female. These people might identify with two genders (“bigender”), no gender (“agender”), have a gender identity that is not static (“genderfluid”), or identify as having a relationship to gender identity and expression that is non-normative (“genderqueer”). These are evolving terms, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Transgender:** An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Queer:** A term people often use to express their own fluid identities and orientations.

**Questioning:** A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Off-Site:** Any location other than the sponsoring congregation, institution, facility, or campus.



**Organizations:** All institutions for which the diocese or congregations have legal or fiduciary responsibility (examples: diocesan ministries, commissions, conference & retreat centers, retirement communities, religious orders, congregations, schools, etc.).

**Overnight:** Any event that starts on one calendar day and ends on a different calendar day.

**Programs:** Official activities and programs sponsored by The Episcopal Church and its provinces, dioceses, and congregations (examples include: The Episcopal Youth Event, Provincial Youth Events, Happening, pilgrimages, mission experiences, New Beginnings, camp programs, Acolyte Festival, etc.).

**Public Records Check:** A search of documents and data available to the public including criminal and civil court records, credit reports, and driving records from the department of motor vehicles. Typically, such searches are conducted by a third party with expertise in this area.

**Safeguarding God's Children Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all children and youth. This training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant and foster a parish or organizational culture that adheres to our ethical and theological foundation to respect the dignity of all.

**Supervisor:** A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or leaders in a ministry program.

**Title IV:** A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability and ecclesiastical discipline.

**Unrelated:** Where applied to a child or youth and an adult means that the child or youth is not the offspring or ward of the adult.

**Youth:** Anyone who is 12 to 17 or is currently in middle school or high school. This includes anyone who is 18 years old or older and still in high school.

**Weapons:** Refers to actual weapons not toys or stage props.

## IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations are required to screen all persons according to the standards in the *Screening and Training Protocols* (Appendix A). For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

### A. Public Records Checks

- Congregations and other organizations shall use a provider approved by the diocese to conduct public records checks. Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children and youth.
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries;
- A Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records check is needed if transporting children and youth as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the church or for a church-sponsored event;
- A credit check is required with check-signing authority; and
- Public records checks must be updated at least every five years.

### B. Additional Screening Requirements

- Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries. Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:
- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written job description. The application includes verifiable personal information;
- Personal interview;
- Reference verification conducted by congregations and other organizations to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant); and
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

Congregations and other organizations must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the congregation's or organization's office. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of these policies.

## **V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Anyone ministering to children and youth shall have Safeguarding God's Children Training.

### **Safeguarding God's Children Training includes:**

- Prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect;
- The inherent vulnerability of children and youth in relationships with their adult leaders;
- An introduction to non-binary genders;
- The needs of LGBTQIA+ children and youth;
- The ways that children and youth can engage in self-advocacy; and
- The needs of differently-abled children and youth;
- Certification of training shall be renewed every three years.

Congregations and other organizations with responsibility for programs with services or ministries to children and youth shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with these policies.

## **VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS**

Adults in charge of ministry programs or activities shall monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, children, and youth to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

All people who minister to children and youth must have ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins with a supervisor who may be parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the responsibilities of the person engaged in ministry. Each person engaged in ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact their supervisor at all times.

Congregations and organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons, with their contact information, approved to minister to children and youth.

### **A. Two Adults Required**

There shall be at least two adults (at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth. If unanticipated

circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to the supervisor, clergy in charge, or senior warden as soon as possible.

In exceptional circumstances, only one adult may be sufficient in well monitored, visually accessible program space on the church grounds, such as a Sunday School classroom, provided that another adult can maintain visual contact with the adult program leader. This can be accomplished by designating an individual to conduct frequent random checks of classrooms and unlocked spaces throughout the building(s). These exceptional circumstances must be specifically described in a written document and approved by the governing body of the congregation. See also sections on ***Overnight Programs*** (Section VI, I) and ***Transportation*** (Section VI, J).

## **B. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth**

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and an unrelated child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

Examples include:

- Planned or unplanned on-site conversations can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. The program leader or their supervisor shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws and the need to enforce these policies.

## **C. Inclusiveness**

No one shall be denied equal access to any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, differing abilities, or socioeconomic class. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

Transgender (including non-binary) children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their transgender status

confidential. They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.

Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).

Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on ***Guidelines for Programming*** (Section VI, G).

#### **D. Violence and Weapons**

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.
- Report suspected violations immediately. See ***Suspected Violations of these Policies*** (Section VII, B).

#### **E. Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children or Youth**

##### **Adults are encouraged to:**

- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:
  - high fives and fist bumps;
  - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer;
  - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;
  - “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision;
  - brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.

**Adults shall not under any circumstances:**

- Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
- Permit any youth to sit in the lap of an unrelated adult or other youth;
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth; or discuss their own sexual activity, history, or fantasies;
- Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own use or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth.

**F. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming**

Because of unique risks associated with off-site programming that can’t always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

**1. Prior Approvals**

- Prior approval by the governing body and the member of the clergy in charge is required, and that approval shall be reflected in the minutes of the governing body. Diocesan sponsored programs, trips, or events shall receive prior diocesan approval.
- Written parental approval is required prior to viewing any movie, whether off-site or on-site, rated “PG-13” or above.

**2. Registration, Waiver, and Release Forms**

- All children, youth, and adults shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any programs. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year.
- There must be a parent/guardian’s signature on all release and waiver forms for minors. A digital signature is acceptable.

- Permission slips shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by the parent/guardian.
- Prior permission for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.

### **3. First Aid and Medications**

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with children and youth.
- A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to a designated adult, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the designated adult. Exceptions may include inhalers, epipens, and birth control pills.
- Only the designated adult shall administer medications.

### **4. Supervision**

- At any gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the gender identity of the participants.
- Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:
  - 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
  - 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
  - 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
  - 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day
- Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy.

## **G. Inclusive Guidelines for Programming and overnight programs**

In programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as LGBTQIA+ and differently-abled individuals. In situations where these populations are particularly vulnerable, additional consideration, accommodation, and action are necessary to ensure:

- Participant privacy;
- Maximization of social integration of all participants;
- Minimization of stigmatization of any participants;
- Equal opportunity to participate; and
- Safety of all participants.

Additional guidelines for overnight programs:

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires congregations and other organizations to consider numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
- No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
- It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants will remain fully clothed while in common areas at all times.
- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hideabeds, and rollaway beds;
- At least 3 children or 3 youth in each room;
- Adult supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered among the rooms with children or youth, and at least one adult room is by the stairs or elevators;



- Adult leaders assign rooms and room occupants.

## **H. Transportation**

For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed:

- For events that originate and/or terminate at the diocesan, congregational, or organization's facility,
  - all drivers must be at least 21 years of age;
  - provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license;
  - a completed volunteer driver information form;
  - have a satisfactory DMV records check.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.

## **I. Camps and Retreat Centers**

All camps, camping programs, and retreat centers of the diocese shall follow the guidelines for off-site programming established in these policies. In addition, camps should aim to follow American Camp Association standards to the best of the camp's ability.

## **J. Travel**

The following policies will help groups prepare for a variety of potential scenarios relating to both domestic and international travel.

### **1. Adult Leaders and Chaperones**

- Minimum ratios of adults to youth need to be greater due to the possibility of leaving an adult behind with a participant in the event of a medical emergency.
  - 9–14 years — 1:5
  - 15–18 years — 1:7
- Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than three adult chaperones.
- One adult, minimum age 25, should serve as the travel administrator who is responsible for all aspects of the trip, including carrying all necessary documentation, contacts, and forms including:
  - medical releases;
  - community covenant;

- emergency contacts;
- itineraries; and
- cash and/or credit card capacity to address emergencies.
- It is a best practice that, one adult, minimum age 25, should hold a current medical certification to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, administer immediate and necessary first aid, and triage medical situations to determine if care of an individual needs to be taken to a higher level of care. When this is not possible, one person should be designated to supervise the administration of medications as instructed on medical release forms, and a clinic near your destination should be identified ahead of time in order to respond to health emergencies as rapidly as possible.
- Acceptable medical certifications include:
  - Wilderness First Responder
  - Outdoor Emergency Care
  - Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic
  - Nurse — RN/LPN/Nurse Practitioner
  - Physician's Assistant
  - Medical Doctor
- Best practice is to designate an adult to serve as backup to the travel administrator, and as backup for simple first aid and administration of prescriptions. These could be the same person.
- A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at the diocesan, congregational, or organization's office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

## **2. Insurance for Travel**

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most church and organization's policies as an added rider, must be secured at least one month prior to travel.
- It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

### 3. International Considerations

- Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
- Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s).
- A more thorough list of international travel considerations with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in the *Youth in Mission Manual* here: [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling\\_7.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling_7.pdf)

## 4. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS and REPORTING

### A. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth

If a child or youth discloses allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation or endangerment to an adult or if an adult has reason to suspect that abuse of a child or youth has taken place, that person should report the abuse to the appropriate authorities. *All church personnel (paid and volunteer) are considered mandated reporters and are required by these policies and by Georgia law to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to DFCS within 24 hours.* Once allegations of abuse have been received, a report should be made regardless of whether or not the abuse took place on church property or somewhere else.

1. By Georgia law, an oral report shall be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is a reasonable cause.
2. **Reports are taken 24 hours a day by calling 1-855-GA CHILD (1-855-422-4453). If unable to reach DFCS, or if the child is in immediate danger, report to local law enforcement (911) in the county where the child lives.** For details of what the report should include, see Appendix C.
3. A report to the Rector or other Clergy person in charge of a parish may constitute fulfilling the above, providing that the clergy person follows through with the reporting within the 24 hour period and that no changes are made in the report itself (See Appendix C).
4. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth is a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil

liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice.

5. Any report of abuse made to DFCS should also be made to the clergyperson in charge or the director or other governing officer in the case of other organizations. In addition, a copy of the **Confidential Notice of Concern (Appendix C)**, signed or unsigned, should be sent to the Diocese's Intake Officer, the Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner: [aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org) or 404-601-5320 ext. 123.
6. If an allegation of abuse, exploitation, or endangerment is made against a clergy person, the Diocese of Atlanta's Intake Officer, Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner, should be alerted immediately in addition to contacting authorities.

The Diocese of Atlanta and all parishes or Episcopal institutions involved will cooperate with any investigation by state/county authorities to the fullest extent and inform authorities that a concurrent internal investigation will be directed by the Diocese of Atlanta.

## **B. Report Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations**

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to their supervisor and program director, and in parish contexts the member of the clergy in charge and a warden. This report should be made by submitting a **Confidential Notice of Concern**, Appendix C, to the immediate supervisor, program director, clergy in charge, and a warden.

Clergy in charge receiving reports of violations of these policies shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the church. Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a member of the clergy shall immediately report the violation to the bishop's office and/or the Intake Officer. Anyone can make a report to the Intake Officer.

The bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy or by laity shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action, as provided by Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons and/or termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the diocese.

## **C. Local Resources for Response**

Each congregation or organization shall provide a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate these policies. Such resources with contact information shall include:

- The adult leaders in charge of programs and ministries with children and youth;
- Clergy in charge of a congregation \_\_\_\_\_;

- Wardens \_\_\_\_\_;
- Intake Officer the Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner  
[aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org) or 404-601-5320 ext. 123
- Director of Safe Church The Rev. Dr. Deborah Silver: [dsilver@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:dsilver@episcopalatlanta.org)  
or 404-271-2253
- Child Protective Services/DFCS 1-855-GA CHILD (1-855-422-4453).

## VIII. POLICIES ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT

### A. The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta Adoption and Implementation

The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta shall ensure that each parish or diocesan sponsored organization adopts these *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth* by January 1, 2020.

### B. Safe Church Self-Audit

Each congregation and organization is required to conduct a *Safe Church Self-Audit* annually to confirm compliance with safe church policies, and to report such audit to the bishop's office.

#### Procedures to be confirmed by audit will include (but are not limited to):

- Public records checks, application forms, records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;
- Records of compliance with *Screening and Training Protocols* (Appendix A);
- Procedures for responding to concerns and incidents.

### C. Congregation and Organization Adoption

Congregations and organizations must adopt the Diocese of Atlanta's *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*.

Congregations and organizations may adopt site-specific variations from diocesan policies, where permitted by vestries or governing bodies, which shall be described in detail, including the circumstances under which those variations are to be permitted and their rationale. This approval shall be recorded in the minutes of the vestry or governing body.

These *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth* shall be posted in an area where activities take place. This posted copy shall include the names and phone numbers of the adult leaders in charge of programs and ministries with children and youth, and a contact person in the bishop's office; and in parishes, the member of the clergy in charge and the senior warden.

## Appendix A

### Screening and Training Protocols

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations are required to screen all persons according to the standards in the ***Screening and Training Protocols***. For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification. The chart on the next two pages is a standards checklist for each role within the congregation and the Application Requirements and Training Requirements.

Key:

DMV – Division of Motor Vehicles

SGC – Safeguarding God’s Children Training Course

SGP – Safeguarding God’s People Training Course

Y – Yes/required

C- Safeguarding God’s Children

P - Safeguarding God’s People

C/P - Safeguarding God’s Children and Safeguarding God’s People

SOR - Check Sex Offender Registry online; GA - [http://state.sor.gbi.ga.gov/sort\\_public/](http://state.sor.gbi.ga.gov/sort_public/)

National - <https://www.nsopw.gov/>

Online\* Only - Safeguarding Online "Abuse Risk Management" Module is required

Personnel	Background Check (including Sexual Offender Registry <sup>SORs</sup> )	Requirements		Training Requirements					Notes
		Application & Interview w/ references	DMV Check	Policies to receive & sign	SGC Training	SGP Training	Online* Only (initial)	Supervisor Training* In development	
Clergy	Y (Diocese)	Y	Y	C/P	Y	Y		Y	
Church Staff/Employees (i.e. Sexton)	Y	Y		P	Y	Y		Y	
Diocesan Staff/Employees	Y	Y		C/P	Y	Y		Y	
Campus Missioners	Y	Y		P		Y		Y	
Program Supervisors									
Parish Administrator	Y	Y	Y	C/P	Y	Y		Y	
Secretary	Y	Y		C	Y	Y			
Communications Director	Y	Y		C	Y	Y			
Children's Minister	Y	Y			Y	Y		Y	
Youth Minister	Y	Y	Y	C/P	Y	Y		Y	
Child/Youth Choir Director	Y	Y		C	Y	Y			
Choir Director	Y	Y		C/P	Y	Y			
Organist	Y	Y			Y	Y			
Camp Director	Y	Y		C/P	Y	Y		Y	
Lay Volunteers									
Acolyte Mentors/ Director	Y	Y		C/P	Y	Y			
Christian Formation Teachers	Y	Y		C/P	Y	Y			
Nursery Workers	Y	Y		C	Y				
Children's Volunteers (<4 times/year)	SOR			C			Y		
Children's Volunteers (>4 times/year)	Y	Y		C	Y				
Youth Group Leaders	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y			
Youth Volunteers (<4 times/year)	SOR			C					
Youth Volunteers (>4 times/year)	Y	Y	Y	C	Y		Y		
Ushers				C/P			Y		
Vergers	Y	Y	Y	C/P	Y	Y			
Confirmation Mentors/Sponsors	Y	Y	Y	C	Y				
Camp Summer Staff	Y	Y	Y	C/P	Y			Y	
Camp Counselor	Y (18+)	Y	Y	C	Y				
Drivers	SOR		Y						

Personnel	Background Check (including Sexual Offender Registry <sup>SOB</sup> )	Requirements		Training Requirements					Notes	
		Application & Interview w/ references	DMV Check	Policies to receive & sign	SGC Training	SGP Training	Online* Only (initial)	Supervisor Training* In development		
<b>Governance &amp; Elected Officials</b>										
Treasurer	Criminal & Credit	Y		P		Y				
Vestry		Y		C/P		Y				
Wardens	Criminal & Credit	Y		C/P		Y		Y		
Building Hosts/ Family Promise	Recommended			C/P		Y				
<b>Home Visitors</b>										
Eucharistic Visitors	Y	Y		P		Y				
Stephen Ministers/Community of Hope	Y	Y		P		Y				
Home Visitors	Y	Y		P		Y				
Pastoral Care Teams	Y	Y		P		Y				
<b>School/Preschool</b>										
School Board				C/P	Y	Rec'd				
School Director	Y	Y	Y	C/P	Y	Y			Y	
School Staff	Y	Y	Y	C/P	Y					
School Substitute Teachers	Y	Y	Y	C	Rec'd				Y	
School After-School Program Leaders	Y	Y	Y	C	Y					



## Appendix B

# **Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications for Children and Youth**

Social media is a tool of discipleship and evangelism for young people. Though a powerful tool, it is important to keep in mind that digital actions are never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations, putting them at risk. In addition, these powerfully connective tools are subject to the same dynamic of unequal power and potential for abuse that presents a risk in all ministry relationships. Churches face the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in social media use in the midst of rapidly evolving technology. The following recommended practices and guidelines are designed to be a flexible template for developing policies and covenants governing the safe use of social media and digital communication in ministry settings.

### **General Information about Digital Communications**

- All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are not confidential and can be shared or reposted.
- In the virtual world, “friend” or “follower” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through a digital medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality, and expectations for the relationship.

### **Policies for Digital Communications for Congregations and Organizations:**

- In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see.
- All social media accounts representing congregations or organizations must be non-personal accounts. These accounts must use the congregation’s or organization’s name as the username or page title. These accounts are used for promotional and educational purposes only.
- An individual should not use their personal account as the primary promotional or educational account for a congregation or other organization.
- The “tagging” of children and youth in posts made by a congregational or organizational account is prohibited.

- The captioning of photos or videos of minors may be permitted when written permission is provided by a parent/guardian. The caption should not include the minor's full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone's personal profile.
- Congregations and organizations are not responsible for reviewing or monitoring pages or groups that are not sponsored by that congregation or organization.
- Obtain a media release for each person when posting photos or videos to a congregational or organizational account.
- All congregations and organizations must inform participants when they are being recorded. Signs should be posted that indicate a service or activity will be broadcast when worship services or activities are streamed or distributed on the web or via other broadcast media.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

**Best Practices for Digital Interactions with Children and Youth:**

- Prudent judgment should be used in the time of day a child or youth is contacted through text or social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails during school hours or after 9pm.
- Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.
- Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or "Add Me" on Snapchat) from personal accounts to children or youth for interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults.
- Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.
- Send communication to entire groups, on an individual's "wall," or in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos.
- When sending emails to an individual child or youth, send a copy to the parents or guardians as well.
- Any "Community Covenant" should include a line that states all electronic communications/gatherings within the congregational or organizational community are held to the same standards as all face to face gatherings.

## Appendix C

### **Confidential Notice of Concern**

**Individual(s) of Concern:**

**Date of occurrence:**

**Time of occurrence:**

**Type of Concern:**

Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth

Policy violation with a child or youth

Possible risk of abuse

**Abuse must be reported** to the Georgia Division of Family & Children's Services or the local police immediately, or no later than 24 hours after witnessing the action or hearing of the event.

Other concern

**Describe the situation:**

What happened?

Where it happened?

When it happened?

Who was involved?

Who was present?

Who was notified?

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? **If suspected abuse, it needs to be reported to DFCS or police within 24 hours.**

Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation? Attach additional sheets if needed.

Submitted by: (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Location and address of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Report made to DFCS or Police Yes \_\_ No \_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

(Print)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:

- a. A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor of the person;
- b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the person is not the rector;
- c. A telephone call or meeting with a church warden if the person is the rector; or
- d. A telephone call, meeting with the Intake Officer (see below)

Please give this form to the appropriate supervisor or clergy person or contact the diocesan Intake Officer, the Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner, 404-601-5320 or 800-537-6743 ext. 123; or email [aschusterweltner@episcopatlanta.org](mailto:aschusterweltner@episcopatlanta.org).

Appendix D

**Compliance Agreement Form**

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Compliance Statement**

I certify that:

\_\_\_√ I have received and read the Diocese of Atlanta's Policies on the  
Prevention of Abuse for Children and Youth.

\_\_\_√ I understand its contents.

\_\_\_√ I fully understand my responsibility to comply with the Policies  
and Code of Conduct.

\_\_\_√ I understand my responsibility to report any violations or  
potential violations of the Code of Conduct to church authorities.

\_\_\_√ I recognize that any violation of the Code of Conduct may be  
grounds for dismissal from employment or may terminate my  
right to volunteer to work with children or youth.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish & City: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes if needed: