



— *The* **Diocese** *of* —  
**West Missouri**

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**Policy for the Protection of Children,  
Youth, and Vulnerable Adults**

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## **I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS**

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld the Word’s glory, glory as of the only Child from God.”

-John 1:14 (An Inclusive Language Lectionary)

God expressed the fullness of humanity in Jesus of Nazareth, who we worship as the Word made flesh. To be human is to live with God and the whole of creation in the fullness of freedom and the challenge of responsibility. The pattern of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection resonates unreservedly with God’s call to perfect freedom and responsibility.

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

Ministry involves a necessary tension between a Gospel-based integrity and a Gospel-based intimacy as modeled by the life of Christ. A rigid adherence to a system of rules leads to an unproductive legalism. Yet, without the framework of the law, the intimate relationships into which Christ calls us are at risk of distortion and harm. All the people of God are called to minister attentively within this tension. These policies are intended to provide a pattern for attentive practice of ministry.

This document is a statement for The Diocese of West Missouri, setting forth expectations for its leaders in their relationships with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The purpose of these policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings.

## **II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy sets forth statements of general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with vulnerable adults, children, and youth. This policy is mandated for all such activities sponsored by every congregation, institution, organization, school, and agency of the Diocese. The purpose of this policy is to create safe and welcoming spaces for all vulnerable adults, children, and

youth in our communities and those engaged in ministry with vulnerable adults, children, and youth, as well as to prevent neglect, exploitation, or sexual abuse.

This policy presents best practices for creating such safe spaces. Circumstances in many localities may make some of these best practices difficult to implement or even unworkable. As a result, local entities may make adjustments in local practice so long as they meet or exceed the requirements of this policy. This requires that local leadership understand this policy thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments about local circumstances. Any such adjustments must be submitted in writing for the approval of the Bishop or Ecclesiastic Authority.

Church governing bodies and all leaders should understand this policy and all local requirements thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments and should consult with the Office of the Bishop when unanticipated situations arise.

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

NOTE: These definitions reflect our understanding of terms including gender identity and sexuality, which are evolving as these policies are being written.

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

**Adult Protective Services:** A social services program provided by state and local governments serving vulnerable adults and their families who need assistance. Adult Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

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

**Child:** Anyone under the age of 12 years.

**Child Protective Services:** A social services program provided by state and local governments serving children and their families who need assistance. Child Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

**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.

**Gender Non-binary:** An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both (“bigender”), neither (“agender”), a mix between the two (“gender-fluid”), or unsure of their gender (“gender-queer”). This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Intake Officer:** The person(s) designated by each Diocese to receive information regarding an Episcopal offense for which a member of the clergy may be held accountable under Title IV of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, which sets out the disciplinary process for clergy. Anyone may contact an Intake Officer to report their concerns.

**Leader:** A person, adult, or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of others engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, program team, Eucharistic Visitors, and members of pastoral care teams.

**LGBTQ+:** An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to people whose gender identities vary from their gender or sex assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientations differ from the heterosexual majority. (The “+” is an effort to include additional identities.) This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Mandated Reporter:** A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. State laws vary greatly. Generally, state law mandates that either all adults or adults in certain professions report suspected abuse of children and/or youth. It is imperative to know the requirements of applicable state laws. Typically, individuals who are not mandated to report suspicion of abuse may make a report to the appropriate state agency, even though not legally required to do so. (See **Appendix C** for more details specific to Missouri.)

**Ministry Leader:** A person, paid or unpaid, who has responsibility for overseeing or organizing any ministry, committee, commission, or program of the Diocese, congregation or organization.

**Off-site:** Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal church, institutional facility, or campus.

**Organizations:** All institutions for which the Diocese or congregations have legal or fiduciary responsibility (such as diocesan departments, commissions, conference and retreat centers, adult day care centers, retirement communities, religious orders, congregations, schools, et cetera).

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

**Pastoral Relationship:** Any relationship **(1)** between a Member of the Clergy and any person to whom the Member of the Clergy provides or has provided counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance, or any person from whom said Member of the Clergy has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, or **(2)** between a lay minister and any person to whom the lay minister is offering prayer or ministry, or any person from whom the lay minister has received sensitive, personal, or confidential information in the course of offering ministry.

**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, Teens Encounter Christ, 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.

**Related Adults:** includes spouses, parents, siblings, those in a romantic relationship, and roommates.

**Residential Facility:** Any institutional or group home setting where a vulnerable adult resides on a permanent or temporary basis such as a nursing home, rehabilitation center, assisted living facility, treatment center or memory care facility.

**Responsible Person:** The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program.

**Sacramental Use:** Consecrated or unconsecrated wine used in the setting of Eucharist.

**Sexual Misconduct:** A broad term encompassing any behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or capacity for consent, or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different gender.

**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.

**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.

**Training:** Organized activity designed to provide information and/or instructions to strengthen and enhance the recipient's understanding, capacity, and exercise of ministry.

**Universal Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all people that includes a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. This training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant.

**Specialized Training:** A standard of additional training that equips people who participate in or have oversight responsibility for ministries. In addition to Universal Training, a person will have access to training that is specialized and tailored to their role and ministry function.

**Vulnerable Adult:**

- a.** Any adult at, or older, than the age designated as an elder by applicable state law.
- b.** Any adult who is infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness or disability.
- c.** Any adult who is ministered to in their home (by Eucharistic Visitors, Pastoral Care Visitors, or others.)
- d.** Any adult who is wholly or partially dependent upon one or more other persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support; such dependency may be temporary as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child.
- e.** Any adult who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lacks agency in a pastoral relationship as in the wake of death of a family member or job loss.

**Youth:** Anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, and still in high school.

#### **IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING**

The Diocese, 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. There are additional screening requirements, such as a written application, interview, and reference verification for other positions.

**1) 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. The Diocese will provide the public records checks for a nominal fee.

- a)** Nationwide Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records including sex offender registries and social security address trace.
- b)** 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.
- c)** A credit check is required for check-signing authority.

Public records checks must be updated at least every five to ten years at local discretion.

**2) Written application, interview, and reference verification** are required before serving in certain roles and ministries as specified in “Screening and Training Protocols” (**Appendix A**). Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:

- a)** 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;
- b)** personal interview;
- c)** 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).

Potential Leaders or Supervisors must be known and active in the congregation for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth—unless they have passed public records checks and reference checks pursuant to the “Screening and Training Protocols” (**Appendix A**).

The Diocese, congregations, and other Organizations must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the Diocese, congregation’s, or Organization’s office.

## V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Training shall be appropriate to each person’s function according to the “Screening and Training Protocols” (**Appendix A**).

All Leaders shall have Universal Training that fosters a culture of safety and inclusion for all people and covers a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. Universal Training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant. All members of The Episcopal Church shall have access to this training.

In addition to Universal Training, all Supervisors and those with oversight responsibilities for ministry programs and/or other adults who engage in ministry with children and youth shall have Specialty Training that is tailored to their role and ministry function.

Depending on role and responsibility, Training for those working with vulnerable adults should include the following:

- a.** the prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect, including financial exploitation;
- b.** mandated and voluntary reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults;
- c.** vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;

- d.** an introduction to gender non-binary;
- e.** the needs of aging LGBTQ+ individuals who often struggle to find care or residential facilities adequately equipped to meet their needs; and
- f.** the ways that vulnerable adults can engage in self-advocacy.

Depending on role and responsibility, Training for those working with children and youth should include the following:

- a.** the prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect;
- b.** vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;
- c.** an introduction to gender non-binary;
- d.** the needs of LGBTQ+ children and youth;
- e.** the ways that children and youth can engage in self-advocacy; and
- f.** the needs of differently abled children and youth.

Certification of training shall be renewed every 3 years.

The Diocese, congregations, and other Organizations with responsibility for programs with, services for, or ministries to children and youth shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

## **VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMS**

A Responsible Person 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 by the Supervisor, who may be parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry with the person engaged in the ministry. Each person engaged in such ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact the Supervisor at all times.

The Diocese, congregations, and Organizations shall ensure that all people who minister to children and youth receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

The Diocese, congregations, and Organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons approved to minister to children and youth. This list shall include contact information for the individuals listed and be kept in the Organization's office or other place where records are kept.

### **1) Unrelated Adults Required**

There shall be a minimum of two adults unrelated to each other (and 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, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

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).

## **2) Creating Safe Spaces for Children and Youth**

To create a safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances in which children and youth are exposed to inappropriate consumables, materials, unmonitored adult contact, or unsupervised peer contact. For example:

- a) Alcoholic Beverages**—Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of church buildings.
- b) Computers and Electronic Devices**—Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to the Diocese, congregations, and other Organizations. Devices shall have adequate password protection. It is recommended that each user have their own account and password. See **Appendix B**: “Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications”
- c) Persons with Keys and Access to Locked Spaces**—Anyone with keys or electronic access to church buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training according to “Screening and Training Protocols” (**Appendix A**).
- d) Unused Spaces**—Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible to unauthorized persons. Given the vast differences in facilities, each should determine how best to meet this standard.

## **3) One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth**

**a)** When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is to be either present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation. Examples include the following:

- i) 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; and
- ii) planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

**b)** Outside of Sacramental Confession, 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.

**c)** Impulsive, secluded, or secretive activity, online or in person, with children or youth may foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided. See **Appendix B:** “Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications.”

#### **4) Basic Needs**

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event.

Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, need, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program. 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 fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs met immediately.

#### **5) Inclusiveness**

No one shall be denied rights, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class. To the furthest extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

**a)** The Diocese of West Missouri seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

**b)** Transgender, genderqueer, or gender 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, a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child’s 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.

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

**d)** Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided.

#### **6) Violence and Weapons**

**a)** No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.

**b)** Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.

**c)** No one shall 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.

**d)** Report suspected violations immediately. See Segment VIII Responding to Concerns.

## **7) Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children and Youth**

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships that children and youth deserve in all settings. Interactions should meet all requirements outlined above, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth from the church away from sanctioned church activities.

**a)** Adults are encouraged to do the following:

**i)** have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;

**ii)** spend time with and listen to children and youth and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;

**iii)** offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include high fives; fist bumps; hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer; brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms, handshakes; “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision; and brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and

**iv)** model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.

**b)** Adults shall not, under any circumstances, do the following:

**i)** provide children or youth with marijuana, non-sacramental alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;

**ii)** arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;

**iii)** 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;

**iv)** engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults, children, or youth to engage in illegal behavior;

**v)** engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth; or

**vi)** apart from planned, pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in Segment VIII Responding to Concerns.

### **8) Registration, Waivers, and Release Forms**

- a)** All children, youth, and adults shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before the child or youth participates 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.
- b)** There must be a parent/guardian's signature on all waiver and release forms for all children and youth. Digital signatures are acceptable.
- c)** Completed waiver and release forms shall be stored in a secure location on-site or online. Hard-copy forms may be scanned and saved digitally in a secure format.
- d)** Prior permission for a child or youth to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.
- e)** Written parental approval is required prior to viewing any movie, whether off-site or onsite, rated "PG-13" (if all participants are not at least 13) or participating in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.

### **9) First Aid and Medications**

- a)** Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) operation is strongly encouraged for those who work with children and youth.
- b)** A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- c)** 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.
- d)** All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person. Exceptions may include inhalers, epi-pens, and birth-control pills. All prescription medications must be in the original prescription bottle. No non-labeled medications will be accepted. Nonprescription medications will be given according to the directions on the label and not in excess of those directions.
- e)** Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

### **10) Supervision**

At any gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults (see definitions) with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants.

Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:

- a)** 5 years and younger—1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
- b)** 6–8 years—1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
- c)** 9–14 years—1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
- d)** 15–18 years—1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day

Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy.

### **11) Overnight Programs**

In overnight programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as LGBTQ+ and differently-abled individuals. In a situation of unequal power and safety, preferences of these individuals merit additional consideration, accommodation, and action 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. Other guidelines for overnight programs are outlined below.

- a)** The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires the Diocese, 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.
- b)** Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
  - i)** No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
  - ii)** Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping.
  - iii)** It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- c)** Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water.
- d)** Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least 8 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.
- e)** Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays include the following:

- a)** one child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hide-a-beds, and rollaway beds;
- b)** at least 2 children or 2 youth in each room;
- c)** adult supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered among the rooms containing children or youth and at least one adult room is by the stairs or elevators; and
- d)** adult leader assigns rooms and room occupants.

## **12) Special Considerations for Off-site Programming**

Off-site programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development of children and youth. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe spaces, as described above, should be observed off-site. In the event of uncertainty about application of the policy, the Responsible Person should contact their supervisor with the relevant queries. Because of unique risks that can't always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

### **a) Prior approval**

- i)** 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 approval by the Bishop.
- ii)** These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cookouts, pool parties, progressive dinners, et cetera.
- iii)** Permission slips shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by the parent/guardian.

## **13) Transportation**

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

- a)** For events that originate and/or terminate at the Diocesan, congregation, or Organization facility, all drivers *must* be at least 21 years of age (at least 24 is recommended) and provide proof of insurance, a current driver's license, and have a satisfactory DMV records check.
- b)** All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.

**c)** Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

**d)** When using a 15-passenger van, the driver must contact the Youth Missioner for additional training OR have a current CDL.

#### **14) Camps and Retreat Centers**

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

#### **15) Travel**

Traveling out of state with groups of children and youth presents amazing opportunities for participants to experience the church and the world on a larger scale with vastly different perspectives of faith communities and their contexts. It also presents challenges to normal safety protocols and opportunities for creativity if managed well. The following policies will help groups prepare for a variety of potential scenarios, as well as for domestic and international travel.

##### **a) Adult Leaders and Chaperones:**

Minimum ratios of adult 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.

- i) 9–14 years—1:5
- ii) 15–18 years—1:7

Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than three adult chaperones. One adult of a minimum age of 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:

- i) medical releases;
- ii) media releases;
- iii) community covenant;
- iv) emergency contacts;
- v) itineraries; and
- vi) cash and/or credit card capacity to address emergencies.

It is a best practice that one adult at least 25 years of age should hold a current medical certification to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, administer immediate and necessary first aid, and judge 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 (1) person should be designated to supervise the administration of medications as instructed on medical release forms, and a clinic near the destination should be identified ahead of time in order to respond to health emergencies as rapidly as possible.

Acceptable medical certifications include the following:

- i) Wilderness Medical Response
- ii) Outdoor Emergency Care
- iii) Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic
- iv) Nurse—RN/LPN/Nurse Practitioner
- v) Physician's Assistant
- vi) Medical Doctor

Best practice is to designate an adult to serve as back-up to the travel administrator and as back-up 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, congregation, or Organization office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

**b) Insurance for Travel**

- i) Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most church and Organization policies as an added rider should be considered.
  
- ii) 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.
  
- iii) Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

**c) International Considerations**

- i) Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
  
- ii) Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
  
- iii) Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
  
- iv) Arrange to have at least two cellphones with the group that will have active coverage in the destination(s). Make a backup plan for communication with the responsible person at home.
  
- v) 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.

**VII. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF VULNERABLE ADULT PROGRAMS**

All people who minister to vulnerable adults and/or have pastoral relationships with others must have ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by the Supervisor who may be parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry with the person engaged in the ministry. Each person engaged in such ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact the Supervisor at all times.

The Diocese, congregations, and Organizations shall ensure that all people who minister to vulnerable adults receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

The Diocese, congregations, and Organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister to vulnerable adults and/or engage in pastoral relationships with others. This list shall be kept in the Organization's office or other place where records are kept.

It is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults to document their visits, including time, place, and any observations or concerns. Such documentation is reviewed by the Supervisor. Confidentiality among clergy and lay ministers is required and all documentation is kept confidential. This documentation promotes continuity of care and transparency in ministry.

All new activities that include pastoral relationships and/or ministry to vulnerable adults shall have a Responsible Person to monitor and supervise all events to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

**a. Presence of Unrelated Adults Suggested**

While not required, it is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults, or in the homes of others, to do so with another trained adult minister present. Those engaged in ministries should minister in pairs. If it is unrealistic that there be 2 adults unrelated to each other present and if circumstances result in a minister being alone with a vulnerable adult, that minister shall report this to the Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

**b. Creating Safe Spaces for Pastoral Relationships and/or Ministry with Vulnerable Adults**

To create a safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances that could result in exposure of vulnerable adults to undue influence or exploitation. On-site and offsite settings for ministry with vulnerable adults and pastoral relationships and conversations should do the following:

1. be in places where casual monitoring by others is convenient; and
2. convey safety and comfort.

**c. Inclusiveness**

No one shall be denied rights, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, socio-economic class, or age. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

The Episcopal Church seeks to support all persons by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary adults 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, a separate changing schedule, or use of a single-stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the adult's ability to keep their transgender status confidential, if they so desire.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary adults 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 for the use of a single facility).

#### **d. Violence**

1. No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
2. No one is to control or attempt to control another by bullying, intimidation, threats, verbal/emotional abuse, or isolation from others. Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
3. Report suspected violations immediately. See Section VIII Responding to Concerns.

#### **e. Behavioral Standards for Ministry with Vulnerable Adults**

All who work with vulnerable adults are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships. To this end, lay and ordained ministers working with vulnerable adults shall do the following:

1. take care not to unduly influence a person to whom they minister;
2. accept only token gifts from those to whom they minister. Ministers given gifts shall report those gifts in writing to their Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person;
3. decline to accept loans of any kind from those to whom they minister;
4. decline to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of anyone to whom they minister; and

5. inform Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person of anything that causes concern for the safety or wellbeing of those to whom they minister.

All who minister to vulnerable adults are encouraged to do the following:

1. have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
2. spend time with and listen to vulnerable adults, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
3. offer appropriate physical expressions of affection, as long as they are welcomed by the recipient, which may include brief hugs, pats on the shoulder or back, kisses on the cheek, handshakes, holding hands during prayer; and
4. maintain healthy boundaries when sharing personal information.

Adults shall not, under any circumstances, do the following:

1. provide vulnerable adults with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
2. arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse of legal drugs when they are responsible for or ministering to a vulnerable adult;
3. consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs when they are responsible for or ministering to a vulnerable adult;
4. engage in illegal behavior or permit others to engage in illegal behavior; or
5. engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any vulnerable adult.

#### **f. Visits to Private Residences**

The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a private home. Avoid situations that might compromise privacy. Common examples of this include the following:

1. visiting behind closed bedroom doors;
2. sitting on the bed of the person being visited; or
3. visiting a person while they are not fully clothed.

The best practice is to visit in teams of 2 or more. If it is not possible for another adult minister to be present, a member of the vulnerable adult's household should be present. If neither is possible, documentation of the time, duration of visit, general matters discussed, and any pastoral concerns shall be provided to the Supervisor as soon as

possible after the visit.

### **g. Visits to Residential Facilities**

The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are also essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a Residential Facility. Best practices include the following:

1. facility staff should be informed of the visitor's presence;
2. if a visit takes place out of sight of staff, they should be notified in advance and informed when such meeting is concluded;
3. the door to a resident's private room must remain open during visits;
4. visitors should be mindful that LGBTQ+ residents may not be safe to express their sexual identity or orientation, as staff members may not yet have been trained; and
5. in the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the visitor is encouraged to contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

### **h. Off-site Visits, Events, and Programs**

Off-site programs, trips and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional well-being of vulnerable adults. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site. In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the Responsible Person should contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries. Because of the unique risks that can't always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

#### **1. Prior Approvals**

**i.** Prior approval by the governing body and 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.

**ii.** These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, progressive dinners, et cetera. In the event of uncertainty, the Responsible Person should contact the bishop's office with the relevant information.

#### **2. Registration, Waivers, and Release Forms**

Due to the unique risks of off-site visits, events and programs that cannot always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

- i.** All participants shall complete and sign a registration, waiver, and release before participating in any program. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical information.
- ii.** There must be a signature on all release and waiver forms. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency then the signature of that person's guardian, spouse or other trusted family member is required. Applicable state law determines whether digital signatures are acceptable.
- iii.** Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site. Hard-copy forms may be scanned and saved digitally in a secure format.
- iv.** Permission slips shall be provided for each event and shall be signed by the vulnerable adult, guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member.
- v.** Prior permission for an individual to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required.

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

- i.** Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with vulnerable adults.
- ii.** A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- iii.** If a vulnerable adult requires assistance with medications of any type, then 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.
  - 1.** All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to vulnerable adults requiring assistance with medications shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon. All prescription medications must be in the original prescription bottle. No non-labeled medications will be accepted. Nonprescription medications will be given according to the directions on the label and not in excess of those directions.
  - 2.** Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

## **i. Transportation**

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

1. for events that originate and/or terminate at the Diocesan, congregation or Organization's facility, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory DMV records check;
2. a list of those approved to provide transportation to vulnerable adults shall be maintained in the office of the organization;
3. anyone being transported must consent to such transportation beforehand. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency then prior approval by that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required;
4. all drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage; and
5. when using a 15-passenger van the driver must contact the Youth Missioner for additional training OR have a current CDL.

## **j. Insurance for Overseas Pilgrimages and Mission Trips**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

## **k. International Considerations**

1. Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
2. Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
3. Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
4. Arrange to have at least 2 cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a backup plan for communication with your responsible person at home.

## **I. Conference and Retreat Centers**

All conference and retreat centers of the Diocese, congregations and Organizations shall follow the guidelines for off-site Programming established in this policy.

# **VIII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS**

## **1) Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth or Vulnerable Adult**

Any adult who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, youth, or a vulnerable adult has taken place is strongly encouraged (and all mandated reporters are required) to contact the state's Protective Services (**Appendix C**). In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth or a vulnerable adult has taken place within a facility or program of the Diocese, congregation, or other Organization, should immediately inform one of more or the following:

- a)** the bishop or the bishop's office in the case of a Diocese;
- b)** the clergy-in-charge or the senior warden in the case of a congregation;
- c)** the director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or
- d)** the Intake Officer in case a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.

## **2) Suspected Violations of this Policy**

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person, the clergy-in-charge, and senior warden. Clergy-in-charge receiving reports of violations of this policy 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. If the Responsible Person is a lay person, they are responsible to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all.

Anyone who knows of 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 at diocesan events, 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.

## **3) Local Resources for Response**

Each Diocese, congregation, or Organization shall provide a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate this policy. Such resources with contact information shall include the following:

- a) Responsible Person(s) for programs and ministries with children and youth;
- b) clergy in charge of a congregation;
- c) wardens;
- d) Bishop;
- e) Intake Officer(s);
- f) Department of Social Services-Children's Division; and
- g) Department of Health and Senior Services

See **Appendix C and D** for a list of local resources.

#### **4) Retaliation**

The Diocese, congregation, or organization will not take any action in retaliation against any personnel who, in good faith and with a genuine belief that this policy has been violated, brings or voices a complaint pursuant to this policy or otherwise opposes inappropriate behavior. In addition, the church will not tolerate any retaliatory acts by other individuals. If you believe you have been subjected to retaliation in violation of this policy, you should report your complaint immediately.

## **IX. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT**

### **1) Diocesan Adoption, Implementation, and Audit**

The bishop or ecclesiastical authority shall inform congregations and other organizations within the Diocese of the contents of the Diocesan policy, the requirement that each congregation or Organization adopt a policy in accordance with the diocesan policy, and the vendor approved by the Diocese to conduct Public Records Checks.

The Diocese will conduct a Safe Church Self-Audit every three years to confirm compliance with The Episcopal Church model Safe Church, Safe Community policy.

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

- a.** existence of diocesan policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements of this model policy;
- b.** provision of accessible and appropriate training for all those who work with children and youth or vulnerable adults in accordance with "Screening and Training Protocols" (**Appendix A**). Such training shall include, at a minimum, topics identified in the model policy;
- c.** verification that each congregation and/or Organization within the Diocese has adopted a policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the diocesan policy; and

d. verification that each congregation and/or Organization has a process to ensure members access training and conduct public record checks.

## **2) Congregation and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit**

Congregations and organizations must adopt a Safe Church Policy that is consistent with, and/or exceeds, the requirements in the diocesan policy. Where permitted by their governing body, congregations and organizations may adopt site-specific variations from this policy in consultation with the Bishop's office.

The Safe Church Policy shall be available to the parish, and shall be given to all adults, guardians, and all paid and unpaid persons who minister to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. These policies shall include the names and phone numbers of the member of the clergy in charge, the senior warden, and a contact person in the bishop's office.

Each congregation and organization are required to conduct a Safe Church Self-Audit Annually (see **Appendix H**) to confirm compliance with safe church policies and report said audit to the Bishop's office. Procedures to be confirmed by audit will include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. public records checks, application forms, and records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;
2. records of compliance with "Screening and Training Protocols" (**Appendix A**);
3. procedures for responding to concerns and incidents; and
4. evidence of compliance with "safe space" requirements.

## APPENDIX A: SCREENING AND TRAINING PROTOCOLS

Screening and Training Chart	Ministry Function	Public Record	App/Int er/Ref	Universa l Training	Speci alty Traini ng	Supervisor Training
Staff & Clergy (not covered below)						
	Church & Diocesan Employees	X	X	X		
	Clergy	X	X	X	X	X
	Contractors (1099)	Depends				
Program Supervisors						
	Choir/Music Director/Leader (children/youth)	X	X	X		X
	Youth Minister/Leader	X	X	X	X	X
	Church School/Nursery Director	X	X	X	X	X
Program Participants (non-supervisory)						
	Acolyte Mentor	X		X	X	
	Confirmation Mentor	X		X		
	Church School Teacher	X		X	X	
	Small Group Leaders			X	X	
	Nursery Worker	X	X	X	X	
	Youth Volunteer (Under 18)		X	X		
	Parish Nurse	X	X	X		
	Pastoral Care Team Members			X		
	Altar Guild	Recommend		X		
*Off-site	Camp Counselor	X	X	X	X	X
*Overnight	Youth Group Leaders	X	X	X	X	X
Drivers	Drivers	DMV		X		
Governance						
	Church Elected (i.e. Vestry)			X	X	
	Treasurer	Criminal & Credit		X	X	
	Wardens	Criminal & Credit		X	X	X
Lay Licensed (per Commission on Ministry)						
	Eucharistic Minister			X		
	Eucharistic Visitor	X		X	X	
	Catechist			X	X	
	Preacher			X		
	Worship Leader			X		
	Pastoral Leader	X		X	X	
	Evangelist					

Public Record X indicates Multi-State Criminal File plus Social Security trace (unless more noted)

Clergy nominees and incoming clergy to the Diocese require additional background verification.

\*Off-site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal church, institution, facility, or campus.

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

### **Public Record Check**

The Diocese contracts with Verified First to screen employees and volunteers. Contact Human Resources at [hr-finasst@diowestmo.org](mailto:hr-finasst@diowestmo.org). Costs as of 3/1/2024 are:

- Multi-State Criminal File plus Social Security trace: \$11.50
- Department of Motor Vehicle Record: \$10.15
- Credit check: \$6.35

### **Application/Interview/Reference Check (App/Inter/Ref)**

The hiring organization is asked to complete this step and keep it on file. There is an application template that can be found [here](#) and sample reference questions in **Appendix E**.

**Universal, Specialty and Supervisor Training** (online courses provided through Praesidium academy are at no cost to the organization) Contact Human Resources for enrollment at [hr-finasst@diowestmo.org](mailto:hr-finasst@diowestmo.org) by sending proper name, personal email address, and role. Live training (in lieu of online) may be provided on request and scheduled periodically.

### **Universal Training**

- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Universal Training: **Introduction and Theological Background**
- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Universal Training: **Organizational Rules and Policies**
- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Universal Training: **Healthy Boundaries**
- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Universal Training: **Inclusion**

### **Specialty Training**

- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Specialty Training: **Pastoral Relationships**
- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Specialty Training: **Abuse and Neglect**
- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Specialty Training: **Power and Relationships**
- Safe Church, Safe Communities-Specialty Training: **Bullying**

### **Supervisor Training**

- Safeguarding God's People: **Preventing Sexual Harassment for Managers & Supervisors**

## **APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDED PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Social media shapes the lives of young people and has the potential to empower ministry. Behavior in the digital sphere is 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 present 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 to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent. That is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and Safe Church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality, and expectations for relationship.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth or vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. Check your local applicable laws.

### **Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Churches and Organizations**

1. Social media accounts should be transparent. The best practice is to have the Diocese, congregation, or organization create and “own” the social media accounts representing the Diocese, congregation, or organization respectively and have multiple administrators and/or supervisors with access. If personal accounts are used, a system of monitoring should be established. Diocesan/congregational/organizational accounts are not to be used as private accounts.
2. The Diocese, congregation, or organization is not to identify or “tag” individuals on social media. The “tagging” of children and youth is prohibited. When written permission is provided by a parent/guardian, the captioning of photos or videos of minors may be permitted. The caption should not include the minor’s full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone’s personal profile. Individuals can “self-tag” if they choose.
3. A Diocese, congregation, or organization does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by that Diocese, congregation, or organization, except as described in part 1 above.

4. Email can be a good method of communication, and it also has the opportunity to be misunderstood. Having a clear understanding and procedure for responding to digital communication that raises concern is prudent for all. Best practices can include not responding immediately and sharing the communication with a supervisor before responding. Phone and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications or pastoral emergencies.

5. When using photos and videos for ministry purposes, obtain a media release for each person and only post images that respect the dignity of every person depicted.

6. Dioceses, congregations, or organizations must inform participants when they are being video recorded because church buildings are not considered public space. 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.

## **Recommended Practices and Guidelines**

**1.** Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a person is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 8:00 pm, unless it's an emergency.

**2.** Privacy settings and personal boundaries should be implemented.

**a.** Create and use profiles on social networking sites that meet professional and institutional standards.

**b.** Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or “Add Me” on Snapchat, etc.) to vulnerable adults, children, or youth for personal interactions. For example: youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be “friends,” and adults should discern the nature of contact appropriate for healthy ministry.

**c.** Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all vulnerable adults, children, and youth across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.

**d.** Establish a regular ongoing and consistent system of review that focuses on settings, accessible content, photos, and videos to ensure compliance with professional and institutional standards.

**e.** Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.

**f.** When possible, 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.

**g.** When sending emails to a child or youth that contain personal or private information regarding that child or youth, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well. Examples of these types of emails include payment-due information, specific medical requests or questions, etc. Mass emails sent to an entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.

**h.** Disclose ongoing digital pastoral communications (i.e.: emails, Facebook messages, texting, etc.) with vulnerable adults, children, and youth to a parent and/or a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.

**3.** Create covenants to govern digital groups, which include the following:

**a.** appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior;

**b.** who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group, and when/if the group will be disbanded;

**c.** description of content that can be posted or published on the site or page;

**d.** a prohibition of “tagging” photos and videos of children and youth, and discourage “tagging” photos of vulnerable adults. However, the captioning of photos and videos are permissible with written permission from a parent or guardian;

**e.** notification that mandatory reporting laws will be followed; and

**f.** consequences for breaking the covenant.

**4.** Delete inappropriate material posted in digital groups, address the behavior, and report it, if necessary, in accordance with legal and institutional requirements.

**5.** In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed.

**6.** Comply with the following best practices regarding “groups” on Social Networking sites:

**a.** Have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators for groups that are designed for youth;

**b.** Use closed groups, but not “hidden” or “secret” groups, for youth and vulnerable adults;

**c.** Have only youth administrators invite other youth to join the online group, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite them to join or a parent/guardian has been notified;

- d. Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant;
- e. Open social networking groups for youth to parents of current members;
- f. Remove from social networking groups adult leaders of youth groups and youth who are no longer members due to departure, removal from position, or ineligibility because they “aged out” of a program; and
- g. Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

## **APPENDIX C: REPORTING SUSPECTED EXPLOITATION, ABUSE, OR NEGLECT**

If you suspect a child or youth is being exploited, abused, or neglected, please call the **Children’s Division Abuse & Neglect Hotline at 1-800-392-3738**. Every call is taken seriously, and every effort will be made to protect your identity. Telephone lines are staffed 24 hours a day/ 365 days a year. In the event of an emergency, contact your local law enforcement or call 911.

If you suspect a vulnerable adult is being exploited, abused, or neglected please call **Missouri’s Adult Neglect & Abuse Hotline at 1-800-392-0210**. Every call is taken seriously, and every effort will be made to protect your identity. Telephone lines are staffed 365 days a year from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. In the event of an emergency, contact your local law enforcement or call 911.

### **What to Report?**

Include the name and address of the person suspected of being abused, neglected, exploited or financially abused. Please include your name and contact information. (Mandated reporters are required by Missouri Law to identify themselves.) Give information about the nature of the concern.

Please be as specific as possible about the abuse, neglect, exploitation, or fiduciary abuse allegation, including whether you think the person is in immediate danger. Include what you have seen, how long you believe the abuse has been occurring, when you last saw the person and who the alleged perpetrator is.

Report any information you think might be helpful in the investigation and protection of the adult. This includes addresses, telephone numbers and directions to the home(s) of relatives, caretakers, the alleged perpetrator(s) and potential risk factors for the person or social worker such as violence, guns, dogs, etc.

### **Mandated Reporters**

Under Missouri Law mandated reporters with a duty to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation include (but are not limited to): Healthcare workers, mental health professionals, first responders, law enforcement personnel, social workers, child-care workers, teachers, school officials, ministers, Eucharistic Visitors, and anyone with responsibility for the care of children or vulnerable adults.

For more information see:

- Missouri Department of Social Services: Children’s Division  
<https://dss.mo.gov/cd/>
- Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services  
<https://health.mo.gov/safety/abuse/>

## **APPENDIX D: CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **The Diocese of West Missouri**

420 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street

Kansas City, Missouri 64105

Phone: 816-471-6161

Email: [info@diowestmo.org](mailto:info@diowestmo.org)

Website: [www.diowestmo.org](http://www.diowestmo.org)

**Intake officer:** The Rev. Deacon Barbara Wegener

Phone: 816-471-6161 ext. 101

Email: [intake.officer@diowestmo.org](mailto:intake.officer@diowestmo.org)

**Bishop Provisional:** The Rt. Rev. Diane M. Jardine Bruce

Phone: 816-471-6161 ext. 103

Email: [bishop.bruce@diowestmo.org](mailto:bishop.bruce@diowestmo.org)

**Youth Missioner:** The Rev. David Wilcox

Phone: 816-471-6161 ext. 112

Email: [wemoyouth@diowestmo.org](mailto:wemoyouth@diowestmo.org)

**Human Resource Administrator:** Elaine Gilligan (oversees background checks and access to Praesidium)

Phone: 816-471-6161 ext. 105

Email: [hr-finasst@diowestmo.org](mailto:hr-finasst@diowestmo.org)

## APPENDIX E: SAMPLE PERSONAL REFERENCE CHECK

You may elect to request letters of reference, but more commonly a quick phone call to each of the references will suffice. You could also e-mail the person these questions and ask them to respond via e-mail. Here is a guide for what to ask when you contact personal reference.

Hello! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling on behalf of {insert name of your church or institution here}.

{Name of Applicant} has applied/volunteered to {insert ministry here} for us and listed your name as a personal reference. Do you have time to answer a few personal questions about {applicant}?

1. How long have you known the applicant?
2. In what capacity have you known the applicant?
3. Are you aware of any problems or concerns that could limit his/her/their ability to fulfill such a commitment, or to perform duties associated with such a position? (These concerns could include physical, emotional, social, or other issues.) If yes, please explain:

Where applicant seeks a position working with youth and/or children:

4. Do you believe the applicant is fully willing and able to make a commitment to work on a regular basis with children or youth? Why or why not?
5. Are you aware of any problems or concerns that should or might limit or preclude this individual from working with children or youth? If yes, please explain fully:
6. Would you recommend the applicant for placement in a setting such as ours (church setting working with children or youth), or do you feel he/she/they may be more suited for another type of volunteer agency? Please explain:
7. Do you have any additional comments which may help in assessing the applicant's fitness for the position?

Keep written, dated notes about the person's responses. Make sure to thank the reference for the input and their time.

## APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE CHILDREN & YOUTH PERMISSION & RELEASE OF LIABILITY FORM

(note: replace CHURCH with the name of your own church or institution)

**1) Term:** This agreement is valid beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025.

### 2) Child/Youth Information

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Student mobile phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Student e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3). Emergency Contact Information

In the event the parents/guardians need to be contacted, we can be reached at:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail

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

If parents/guardians cannot be contacted at the phone numbers I have provided, I would like CHURCH to contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### 4) Health Information

Date of last tetanus booster:

Medication allergies:

Current Medications (please list):

Medical conditions and other allergies:

Special dietary needs or food allergies:

Other comments concerning your student's health and ability to participate?

Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person on Policy: \_\_\_\_\_

## **5) Parent or Guardian Statements & Signature**

### **Release of Liability**

As the undersigned adult I affirm that I am the parent and/or legal guardian of the above referenced minor (Child). I hereby grant permission for Child to participate in activities organized and/or sponsored, in whole or in part, by CHURCH Episcopal Church. In consideration of Child being permitted to participate in activities, I hereby release and hold harmless CHURCH, its officers, Vestry, Deacons, directors, employees, agents, representatives and volunteers from any and all liability for any resulting damage or injury that Child may incur.

### **Agreement to be held responsible for Child's behavior and actions**

I understand that all CHURCH activities are alcohol free, smoke free, and drug free and are governed by generally accepted rules of conduct and behavior.

1. I hereby agree to be held liable for Child's actions and release CHURCH from any liability for Child's actions, in the event that such actions or behavior causes damage or injury to property or person.
2. I acknowledge that CHURCH reserves the right to restrict Child's involvement in any activity in whole or in part.
3. I further acknowledge that CHURCH reserves the right to send Child home from any activity in which Child has violated rules of conduct including, but not limited to: drugs, alcohol, weapons, and/or the blatant disrespect for authority.

### **Child's participation**

I agree that I will not allow my child to attend a CHURCH children/youth event if he/she/they becomes exposed to any contagious disease or if, for any reason, I do not consider him/her/them in good physical condition at the time of the day's events.

### **Consent for Medical Treatment**

In the event of an accident or injury to my Child, authorization is hereby given to an appropriate adult representative or chaperone of CHURCH to do or arrange for any acts which may be necessary or proper to provide for the health care of the minor child, including, but not limited to, the power; (i) to provide for such health care at any hospital or other institution, or the employing of any physician, dentist, nurse, or other person whose services may be needed for such health care, and (ii) to consent to and authorize any health care, including administration of anesthesia, X-ray examination, performance of operations, and other procedures by physicians, dentists, and other medical personnel except the withholding or withdrawal of life sustaining procedures.

- 1) I agree to be responsible for costs incurred as a result of medical treatment or hospitalization for Child.

### **Photo/Publicity Release**

I grant The Diocese of West Missouri permission to record on film, videotape or audiotape my child's (or mine if I am 18) participation in this event. I further agree that any or all of the material may be use, in any form, as part of future production(s) made by the Diocese of West Missouri Program, and further that such use shall be without payment of fees, royalties, special credit, or other compensation.

**Community Covenant**

I acknowledge that my child and I have read and agree to comply with the standards of conduct and terms outlined in the WEMO Youth Community Covenant.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

*NOTE: Some parishes may find that requesting a new permission form for every event works best, while some find that maintaining one form for the entire year works best. Per the policy above, a separate permission form is required for EACH OFF-SITE activity.*

## APPENDIX G: YOUTH COMMUNITY COVENANT

*The following community covenant is a set of behavioral standards that we ask all parents and youth to agree to before participating in youth events sponsored by The Diocese of West Missouri, its congregations, and organizations. These standards are essential in ensuring we can facilitate safe, healthy and meaningful experiences for the young people of our communities and should be part of any permission form, waiver or release. The observation of these standards is not optional and violation of them needs to be taken seriously.*

The WEMO Youth Community Covenant is based on Romans 12:10, with an emphasis on respect. We take it very seriously as it is our standard for behavior and our guide to handling any situations that might arise.

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”-Romans 12:10

Participating in Youth Ministry events and activities is a privilege. Participants and adult volunteers and staff are encouraged to enter fully and cooperatively into community life. Standards 1-7 are ideals toward which we strive. Standards 8-12 are non-negotiable and will be enforced on a zero-tolerance basis; if these standards are violated, the violator will be sent home at the expense of the parent/guardian.

1. Respect the other participants and their property
2. Respect whoever is speaking.
3. Respect adult leaders.
4. Respect the event staff.
5. Respect the people encountered at the event.
6. Respect myself.
7. Agree to remain with the group during activities
8. I agree not to commit acts of theft or violence.
9. I agree not to be involved in bullying
10. I agree not to use or possess any tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, or illegal substances.
11. I agree not to bring or use fireworks, firearms, or any other kind of weapons.
12. I accept that sexual behavior is not tolerated, this includes public displays of affection (i.e. holding hands, excessive hugging, kissing, sitting on laps, etc.)

# APPENDIX H: SAFE CHURCH SELF AUDIT

## Congregations / Organizations Annual Review

Name of Congregation/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Congregation/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

City: State: Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### Policy Implementation

We have implemented this policy to the best of our knowledge. Any adjustments to our practice have been submitted in writing to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority for approval (attach copies of any adjustments requested in the previous calendar year).

### Screening of Ministry Leaders

There is a well-understood process, in accordance with the Screening and Training Protocols in our Policy, which includes:

- o A written application;
- o A personal interview;
- o Verification of personal references; and
- o Public records check updated every 5-10 years at local discretion.

Individual records of these procedures are located \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have access to them.

### Posting of Policy

A copy of the Safe Church Policy is available to all members of the parish.

Location where the Policies are posted: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the person filling out this form: \_\_\_\_\_

Calendar year for which this review was performed: \_\_\_\_\_

### Training of Ministry Leaders

All ministry leaders, paid or volunteer, have completed the appropriate Safe Church training, according to the Screening and Training Protocols in our Policy; AND

Certification of training is renewed every 3 years.

Records of completion of this training are located: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Safe Program Space**

- There are always two or more unrelated adults present in ministry settings and events designed for children and youth.
- All program spaces whose primary use is for children and youth is visually accessible.
- Alcoholic beverages are not stored in publicly accessible areas of church buildings.
- Publicly accessible computers with internet access are password protected and children and youth use church computers only with supervision.
- Keys to church spaces are limited to people who have met all requirements for screening and training.
- No one is denied the right, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class.
- To the furthest extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry are accessible.

## **Responding to concerns and incidents**

- There is a well-understood procedure for responding to concerns and/or incidents of the suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children and youth, which includes:
  - Contact information for the local Child Protective Service;
  - Contact information for the appropriate person to report to in the Diocese, Congregation and/or organization;
  - Steps to take when you have concerns; and
  - Who to contact.

Copies of these procedures are located: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Program Documentation**

- There is documented approval from the governing body, and individual parental approval, for:
  - All programs for children and youth that are hosted off-site;
  - Sexually explicit conversation or program content; and
  - Screening of media rated PG-13 or above.
- The following documents are on file for all programs involving children and youth:
  - Registration forms;
  - Medical release and waiver forms;

- Media and image release forms; and
- Field trip and transportation permission forms for off-site programming

Records of these procedures are located \_\_\_\_\_