



Safeguarding God's Children

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse

Includes Appendix: FAQs and Sample Forms

epicenter.org/safechurch

epicenter.org/wellness-and-care

2016

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The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Office of the Bishop

Dear People of the Diocese of Texas:

In late 2003 we introduced *Safeguarding God's Children* in the Diocese of Texas. Since then, we have trained tens of thousands of people in the prevention of sexual abuse to children and youth. This training and attention to the policies and procedures laid out in this manual offer safety and protection to:

- our children and youth because we are providing adults who minister to them with practices, information, and awareness of safe ways to work with children and youth and, in turn, to be alert to adults who might seek to abuse those in our care.
- our churches, schools, and diocesan entities by providing them with clear policies, guidelines, and practices that will make them safe places for our children and youth.
- the thousands of adults who minister to our children and youth by training them in appropriate ways to work with and relate to those in their care and how to report boundary violations or suspected abuse.

As we continue our Diocesan commitment to the safety and nurture of our children and youth, I ask you to continue your individual commitment to making our churches, school and entities safe places for our children and youth to grow and mature spiritually, physically and emotionally. Our children and youth will learn ways of respect and the love of Christ when we invest respect and love in our relationships with them.

I pray that your ministry with our children and youth is a blessing to you and a ministry replete with joy and grace.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle
IX Bishop of Texas

About These Policies

This document is a statement of general expectations of behavior in EDOT by clergy, lay employees, volunteers and groups when engaged in ministry with children and youth. These policies are mandated for all ministries and programs of Diocesan congregations, entities, organizations, schools and agencies of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

Local entities may make additions in developing local policy so long as they do not conflict with the requirements of these policies. Any such additions must be submitted in writing for approval by Diocesan legal counsel. Nothing contained herein may be omitted from a local policy without written approval of the Chancellor of the Diocese.

No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Local leadership must understand these policies thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments about local circumstances. The local entity is required to contact the Safe Church Minister for consultation.

Code of Conduct

This **Code of Conduct** has been adopted by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. Persons who cannot agree to adhere to these policies are not allowed to serve in ministry to children and youth. Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code and all SGC policies before signing the acknowledgement.

Safeguarding God's Children - Code of Conduct

Agreement is signified by signing the acknowledgment/sign-out sheet at training.

- I will do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church/school/Diocesan entities' activities and services.
- I will not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- I will comply with: all *Guidelines* as found in the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- Should I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, I will immediately report my observations as outlined in this policy.
- I acknowledge my obligation to protect children and youth and agree to immediately report known or suspected abuse to state and church authorities.
- I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with its policies.

General Definitions

Church Personnel

For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church, school, or Diocesan entity. **These individuals must be certified in Safeguarding God's Children (SGC):**

1. **All clergy** whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, canonically resident in this Diocese, or licensed in this Diocese, who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. **All paid personnel**, full or part time, whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the Diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies, whether or not they work directly with children.
3. **Those who contract their services** to the Diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies and who work with or around children or youth.
4. **Adult Volunteers serving in staff positions** whether full time or part time, regardless of whether they work with children or youth.
5. **Adult volunteers in activities for children and youth**, including any person who enters into or offers himself or herself for a church, school, or Diocesan agency related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service.
6. **All volunteers whose work routinely takes them throughout the facility or grounds** when children or youth are present.
7. **Children or youth who assist in ministries or programs** for children or youth such as camp, vacation Bible school, child care, retreats. *See Appendix*
8. **Any person whose living quarters are on the grounds** of the church, school or other related agency.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Children's or youth choir director
- Sunday School teachers and staff
- Vacation Bible School teachers and staff
- Lay Youth Ministers
- Directors of Religious (Christian) Education
- Church Personnel who work or assist in the nursery
- Teachers, substitute teachers, and staff in parochial schools, full or part time, contract or volunteer
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth

Age Categories

1. A **child** is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years.
2. A **youth** is defined as 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, but still in high school.
3. A **vulnerable adult** is defined as anyone 18 years or older who has special needs of a physical, age-related or mental nature and participates in activities for children and youth.
4. An **adult** for the purposes of this policy is defined as anyone who is 21 years or older.

Types of Abuse

1. **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
2. **Sexual abuse** is any sexual contact, indecency, or activity of a sexual nature with a minor.
3. **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
4. **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.

Safeguarding Certification Requirements

Certification Requirements in Parishes

The Safeguarding Record System (SRS) of the Diocese of Texas must be used to obtain and retain all of the required documentation for Certification. Church Personnel shall be certified in Safeguarding when they have completed each of the screening and training steps below.

1. **Be known** to the clergy and congregation for at least 6 months OR be a parent volunteer OR employee.
2. **Individual interview.**
3. **Standard application in SRS** for either volunteer or paid positions.
4. Nationwide sex offender and criminal history **background.check (in SRS)** in any state where the applicant has resided in the past ten (10) years.
5. **Reference checks (in SRS)** with persons who know the applicant.
6. **Safeguarding God's Children training** along with signature on attendance roster which contains the acknowledgement and code of conduct.

All information gathered about an applicant must be carefully reviewed and evaluated to determine whether the person is appropriate to work with children or youth. The Safe Church Minister shall be consulted if there is any uncertainty. Guidelines for evaluating background check results may be found in the Appendix.

Certification Requirements in Schools

1. **Certification for Faculty and staff:** Heads of Schools may sign a yearly agreement with the Safe Church Office affirming that their screening methods for employees meet or exceed those set by the Diocese and may use the “Training Only” function in SRS for their employees. The school agrees to provide a copy of an employee’s personnel file (including all screening data) to the Diocese of Texas if requested.
2. **Certification for School Volunteers:** Volunteers will use the full 6 step SRS certification process for screening, *unless* the school uses the same screening for volunteers as required for school employees.

Certification Exception

Parents (in parishes and/or schools) who assist no more than six (6) times a year with a program *in which their child is enrolled* are exempt from certification requirements. This includes providing transportation, but does not include overnight activities/events or Vacation Bible School. Exempt adults are not to be the lead adult, but may serve as a helper to a certified leader. **All adults accompanying children or youth on overnight excursions must be certified in Safeguarding God’s Children.**

Certification Deadlines, Recertification, and Transfers of Location

1. Safeguarding certification must be **completed within 30 days of hire or start date**. In the interim, anyone not certified must be supervised at all times by a fully certified adult.
2. Certification must be **renewed through SRS every five years**. A new background check must be run and Safeguarding God’s Children training must be retaken.
3. Lay Church Personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Texas should contact the Safe Church office to update their certification to their new location. Clergy who transfer from another Episcopal Diocese must contact the Safe Church office to arrange for *Safeguarding God’s Children* training.
4. Persons becoming **certified in *Safeguarding God’s Children* for the first time and individuals new to the Diocese of Texas must take in-person training**. Online Safeguarding training, through Praesidium, is accepted for recertification only. It must be requested and arranged through the Safe Church office.

Diocesan training shall be the program *Safeguarding God’s Children*. In-person training shall be administered by a Diocesan-certified trainer using the Safeguarding Record System (SRS). No other training program is accepted and there are no exceptions.

Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth

Stating which behaviors are appropriate and which are inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children and youth. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children and youth.

1. Appropriate forms of affection:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes or fist bumps
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

2. Inappropriate forms of affection: *(many of these are the behaviors that child molesters use to “groom” children or youth for later molestation or can be, themselves, sexual abuse.)*

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than appropriate diapering, toileting infants/toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written or electronic) about physique or body development
- Snapping bras or giving “wedgies” or similar touch of underwear
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth

Guidelines for Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

Supervisory personnel and others should monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth and other children with children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped.

1. Every program for children and youth must meet **established ratios for adults and children**. Compliance with the established ratio is required at all times, including activities that occur off church premises:

- **Diocesan schools** that are accredited or licensed may observe the adult to child ratio as established by the accrediting or licensing agency
- For any **church program or activity**, two (2) unrelated adults (21 or older) at all times. In addition, the following adult to child ratios must be maintained:

1. Infants (ages 0-1)	one adult to three infants (1:3)
2. Toddlers (ages 1-2)	one adult to six toddlers (1:6)
3. Age 2 – 8 th grade	one adult to eight children (1:8)
4. 9 th – 12 th grade	one adult to twelve youth (1:12)

2. Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old will **have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents** or those designated by them.

3. At **least two certified Church Personnel must supervise activities** (the “Two Adult Rule”). Church Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them. Church Personnel over the age of 21 must directly supervise Church Personnel younger than 21 and be physically present during all activities.

4. Transporting Children/Youth: When transporting children in vehicles, two adults must be in each except when multiple vehicles are used. A list of names and contact numbers must be provided to each driver. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Church Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose. *A sample form is found in the Appendix.*

5. Overnight **Events:** All adults accompanying an overnight event must be SGC certified. When both boys and girls are participating in overnight activities, certified male and female chaperones must be present.

6. **No person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member** unless another non-related adult is present. An immediate family member is defined as the spouse, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, partner or co-habitant. This also applies to in-law and step family relationships. Related personnel may minister together as long as one other unrelated adult is present.

7. An up-to-date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth will be maintained in the church, school or entity office or where such records are kept.
8. Each program will **follow age-appropriate procedures** to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths, as specified in these policies.
9. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, **Church Personnel will remain in an area observable** by other adults or work in pairs.
10. **Classrooms** or other areas used by children or youth **should have windows or a window in the door unobstructed by blinds, curtains, drapes or posters**. If there are no windows or a window in the door, the door must remain open. Doors of occupied classrooms must be unlocked at all times during activities. Unused rooms should be locked.

Guidelines for Restrooms and Showers/Baths

1. No adult may shower, bathe, or use restroom facilities in the presence of children or youth.
2. Diapering should be done in diapering stations in close proximity to other care providers. It is not appropriate for diapering to occur behind closed doors or in isolated places.
3. An adult caregiver must accompany all children age 2 through Kindergarten to the restroom. If facilities are removed from the classroom, the caregiver must check the bathroom to see if other adults are present before allowing the child to go in. If there is no stall in the restroom, the caregiver stands outside the door while the child uses the bathroom. If there are stalls, the child goes into the stall alone. The caregiver will assist the child only if necessary, in which case the stall door and the outer door shall remain ajar. The caregiver should not go into the restroom with the child and close the door, or into the stall and close the door.
4. If the restroom is in the classroom with only one toilet, the child should go alone into the restroom. If the restrooms are removed from the classroom, the caregiver must accompany the child age 2 through Kindergarten, following the procedures outlined above.
5. In a classroom with attached restrooms with only one toilet, the first through fifth grade child will go alone. If the restrooms are located away from the room, another child of the same sex will accompany the child to the restroom. Children in this age group should not go to the restroom alone. In no instance should a door be completely closed if adult assistance is needed.
6. Youth in sixth through twelfth grades are encouraged to use the buddy system if restrooms are located some distance away from the activity.
7. When there are special needs or extenuating circumstances, a specific policy may be formulated, approved by the rector or canonical equivalent, and the parent(s) of the child, and implemented with appropriate monitoring and supervision. If assistance is needed in formulating such a policy, please contact the Safe Church Minister.

Guidelines for Church Personnel

These guidelines will help identify and stop those behaviors and interactions which may be used by child molesters to “groom” children, youth and their parents, or which may create conditions where abuse can more easily occur. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families.

1. **All Church Personnel who work with children and youth must be certified in *Safeguarding God’s Children*.** No person will be allowed to volunteer regularly with children or youth until the person has been **known to the clergy/ congregation for at least six months**, *unless* the volunteer is a parent, volunteering with their own child’s program.
2. Church Personnel will **relate to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment**, regardless of sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic status. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.
3. Church Personnel are **prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence** of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs or prescription medications while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children and youth.
4. Church Personnel will **conduct any one-to-one talks** with children and youth in an open, public or other place where private conversations are possible, but occur in full view of others.
5. Church Personnel are **prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved** with a child or youth.
6. Church Personnel are **prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth**.
7. Church Personnel are **prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials** (magazines, cards, videos, computer files, e-mails, films, clothing, etc.) on church, school or entity property or in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of an educational program that is pre-authorized by the rector or canonical equivalent.
8. Church Personnel are **prohibited from using the Internet or other electronic media to view or download sexually oriented materials** on church property or in the presence of children/ youth.
9. Church Personnel are **prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities**, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
10. Church Personnel are **prohibited from sleeping in the same beds**, sleeping bags or tents with other children or youth *unless* the adult is an immediate family member of one of the children or youth in the bed, sleeping bag or tent. *See Appendix* for specific guidelines for overnight events.

11. Church Personnel are **prohibited from using physical punishment** in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the child or to others.

12. Church Personnel are **prohibited from using harsh language**, profanity, degrading punishment, or any mechanical restraint for behavior management.

13. Church Personnel are **prohibited from** participating in or allowing others to conduct any **hazing activities** or behaviors which could be construed as hazing.

14. Church Personnel are **not permitted to develop new activities for children and youth** without approval from the rector or canonical equivalent. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing to the rector or canonical equivalent. The rector or canonical equivalent will assure that any activity includes adequate adult supervision.

Responding to Problems: Reporting Procedures

Reporting Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth

1. To report an emergency, call 911. All Church Personnel are required by this policy and by the State of Texas to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the police or to **Department of Family and Protective Services**. Call the toll free, 24 hour, 7 days a week hotline 1-800-252-5400 OR report through the DFPS secure web site www.txabusehotline.org. You will receive a response within 24 hours. *DFPS does not accept e-mailed reports.* (See **Texas Family Code** at <http://www.epicenter.org/safeguarding-policies>)

2. When you make a report, be specific. Tell exactly what happened and when. Be sure to record all injuries or incidents you have observed, including dates and time of day and keep this information secured. Reports should be made as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours before bruises and marks start to fade. Give the agency person any information you have about the relationship between the child and the suspected abuser. Please provide at least the following information in your report.

- i. Name, age, and address of the child
- ii. Brief description of the child
- iii. Current injuries, medical problems, or behavioral problems
- iv. Parents' names and names of siblings in the home

3. **Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect of children or youth is a crime.** Abuse is mental, emotional, physical, or sexual injury to a child or failure to prevent such injury to a child. Neglect includes (1) failure to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter and/or medical care; and/or (2) leaving a child in a situation where the child is at risk of harm.

4. **Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously.** Your report is confidential and is not subject to public release under the Open Records Act. The law provides immunity from liability for persons who report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the reporter believes what he or she is reporting to be true.

5. In addition to reporting to state authorities, Church Personnel are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the rector or canonical equivalent, who will immediately report it to the Safe Church office, so that immediate and proper steps may be taken.

6. If you have reason to suspect child abuse, but are not positive, make the report. If you have any doubts about whether or not it is abuse, call the hotline. They can advise you on whether the signs you have observed are abuse.

7. The Diocese of Texas will cooperate fully with any investigation by law enforcement authorities.

Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations with Children or Youth

1. When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with *The Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth*, or which may violate any provision of *The Diocesan Policies for Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*, they must immediately report their observations as instructed below.

Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would include;

- seeking private time with children or youth,
- taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults,
- swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth,
- selecting staff or volunteers without required *Safeguarding God's Children* Certification.

2. Any person observing or receiving a report of inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should report this immediately by:

- a. A telephone call or meeting with the head of congregation, head of school or executive director of the Diocesan entity. Notification may also be made to the Diocesan Safe Church Minister or the Canon to the Ordinary.
- b. A telephone call or meeting with the Diocesan Safe Church Minister or the Canon to the Ordinary if the complaint is against the head of congregation, head of school or executive director of the Diocesan entity.
- c. A *Confidential Notice of Concern* may be sent to the Diocesan Safe Church Minister or the Canon to the Ordinary.

All reports of inappropriate behavior/ policy violations with children or youth are taken seriously.

3. The Safe Church office and/or the Canon to the Ordinary receive reports. Make reports to:

The Rev. Canon Kai Ryan
Canon to the Ordinary
1225 Texas Ave.
Houston, TX 77002

1-713-520-6444 or 1-800-318-4452
Secure Fax: 1-713-521-2218

The Rev. Dr. Carol Petty
Safe Church Minister
P. O. Box 2247
Austin, TX 78768

1-512-478-0580 or 1-800-947-0580
Secure Fax: 1-866-241-7050

Confidential Notice of Concern

Who is the complaint about? _____

Date of Notice _____

Congregation/school/ entity:

_____ City _____

Nature of Concern: _____

Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth (please describe the behavior)

Policy violation with a child or youth: ____ Yes ____ No

Reason to believe abuse occurred/is occurring: ____ Yes ____ No

____ Other _____

Describe the situation:

What happened?

Where did it happen?

Who else was present? _____

Has it ever happened before? _____

Was it reported to the authorities? ____ Yes ____ No

If reported, to whom: _____

What action was taken? _____

Follow-up:

Does anyone else need to be notified? _____

Would you like someone to call you to discuss the situation? ____ Yes ____ No

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Once completed, please fax or mail to one of the Bishop's Office contacts below:

The Rev. Canon Kai Ryan
 Canon to the Ordinary
 1225 Texas Avenue.
 Houston, TX 77002
 1-713-520-6444 or 1-800-318-4452
 Confidential fax 1-713-521-2218

The Rev. Dr. Carol Petty
 Safe Church Minister
 P. O. Box 2247
 Austin, Texas 78768
 1-800-947-0580 or 1-512-478-0580
 Secure fax: 1-866-898-8976

Weapons Policy

(also found in Clergy Manual, Section 3.6)

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas does not permit any person, including clergy, staff, students, volunteers, and visitors, to carry a weapon in our churches or schools. This prohibition applies even if the person is licensed to carry a concealed weapon under Texas law.

According to the Diocesan Chancellor, there are three ways to legally give notice that the church is a gun free zone: (1) signs posted at entrances, (2) a printed card or other written communication and (3) oral communications.

If you choose to print your own notice, below are several options: a sign (posted at entrances), postcard- and business card-size versions. Please be aware, posted signs at entrances must use 1" lettering in English and Spanish.

Notification details can be found here: <http://www.epicenter.org/gun-law-and-policy>

Bullying Policy

Bullying is manifested in various ways: abusive language; offensive name calling; acts or threats of physical abuse; vandalism; theft or destruction of property. Bullying violates a person's sense of worth and their immeasurable value to God. Bullying of all forms, including homophobic bullying, inhibit a person's ability to feel safe at an Episcopal school or church.

Therefore, bullying of any form will not be tolerated in entities of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Incidents of bullying that may occur shall be reported immediately to the head of the institution or to the Safe Church Ministry Office. All reports will be taken seriously, will be investigated, and disciplinary action will be taken as deemed to be appropriate.

Social Media/Online Policy

In an ongoing effort to strengthen ministries and to protect those who serve as well as those who are served by these ministries, the following guidelines are recommended to our churches, schools and diocesan entities for social and electronic media usage.

Guidelines for Digital and Online Communications

Any and all communications sent digitally are NOT CONFIDENTIAL and potentially may be shared or reposted to others without an individual's permission or knowledge. It is important that personal and privacy settings are applied, reviewed and upgraded regularly.

Texting should not be used in place of face-to-face or telephone conversations. Texting may be used for: reminders, urgent pastoral care, contact information during emergencies, cancelling or being late for a meeting.

E-mail is used to communicate basic, factual information in a concise manner. E-mail is not a good medium for pastorally sensitive matters, emotionally charged situations or information that might be legally sensitive. Email does not communicate tone of voice or emotion, which is inferred by the recipient and can be misinterpreted. When in doubt, schedule a face-to-face meeting or make a phone call.

Facebook, Instagram & Others: Adults **may not** submit or accept personal "friend" requests from children and/or youth. All social media interactions must be facilitated in Online Groups set up specifically for organized programs.

Reporting: Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected child abuse or exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. Report suspected abuse to the Department of Family and Protective Services: 800.252.5400.

Guidelines for Online Groups

All social media communication should take place on a group page and not in the form of personal messages and/or chats. Social media is not an appropriate replacement for pastoral care. Other than emergencies, communications should take place between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m.

- Name/title the group so that it clearly defines the group and mission
- Include a clear statement that posted material is non-confidential
- Maintain appropriate language, content and behavior
- Remember that online groups are required to follow the same Safeguarding policies as all other EDOT entities
- Adult Administrators:
 - Remove posts or photo tags that may be deemed inappropriate
 - Block or remove anyone who repeatedly writes or uploads inappropriate and/or offensive images or posts

If **posting photos** of a child or children online (or in any publication), obtain a photo release from parents. (This should be done annually for schools and programs). Do not provide personal or identifying information about the children or youth pictured.

The following **Photo Release** wording may be added to school and program registration information:

"I understand that photos or videos of my child and others may be taken during Sunday school and other church/school events. I consent to the use of my child's photo or likeness in promotional materials such as church/school website, Facebook, and other social media outlets. I understand that my child's identifying information will not be provided unless I give permission at a later time."

Appendix: FAQs and Sample Forms

What are the Rules for Transporting Children/Youth to Off Campus Events?

When transporting children in vehicles, two adults must be in each except when multiple vehicles are used. A list of names and contact numbers must be provided to each driver. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Church Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose. *A sample form is found in the Appendix.*

What are the Guidelines for Overnight Events?

Adults participating in any capacity in an overnight event must be SGC certified.

When both boys and girls are participating in overnight activities, certified male and female chaperones must be present. An adult may sleep in the same hotel room with no fewer than three (3) other children, providing adult and all children are of the same sex. The adult must sleep alone in a bed or on a cot or rollaway bed. The adult must never be alone with a child. The adult will use the bathroom facilities alone, dressing/undressing in the bathroom with the door closed and with no children present. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep in one open space such as a parish hall or camp lodge with children and youth. A best practice rule is no situation in which one adult is alone with one child unless they are immediate family members.

What are the Guidelines and Best Practices for “YES” and “Happening”?

1. **Adults (age 21 and older) participating in any capacity in YES and Happening must be certified in “Safeguarding God’s Children” through the Safeguarding Record System.**
2. In our Policy, adults are age 21 and over. Thus, for purposes of our mandatory two adult rule, this means there must be two persons 21 or older present at all times. These adults must complete the Safeguarding Certification requirements. Young adults 18 (graduated high school) through age 20 must also be certified if they work with youth.
3. High School youth who serve at any YES or Happening event should be screened using either the **Application for Volunteer Youth in Ministry** (*Appendix*) or comparable screening methods.
4. All participants are expected to behave appropriately.

How Do We Safeguard Tutors or Instructors Who Use Church or School Space?

If a **school** recommends or contracts with tutors for their students, the tutoring must occur at school and all Safeguarding rules and certification requirements apply.

If a **parent** contracts with a tutor and requests that the tutor meet with the child at school, the parent must sign a letter from the school acknowledging the following:

- The tutor is not functioning as school staff
- The school will choose an appropriate place for the tutoring to take place but will not exercise oversight of the tutor and student.
- The tutor has not been trained and certified in Safeguarding God's Children as have all school staff.
- The tutor must establish a specific time for tutoring that fits the school's schedule and must not change that without notifying the school.
- The parent must notify the school of any changes in the tutoring times and when the tutoring has ended.

If a parent contracts with a teacher at the school to tutor the child in the child's home, the school must inform the parents that, while the teacher has been Safeguarding certified, when they are tutoring in a child's home, they are not functioning as school staff. The school has no oversight and bears no responsibility for their actions.

Sample Letter (for parents and independent tutors using Church or School facilities)

- Dated and signed by all parties
- Original in secure church or school Safeguarding file
- Copies to signatories

(Name of church or school) has given permission to (name of contractor) to use (room, building or area) for the purpose of providing (name activity) for (name[s] of student[s] or program group).

The contract for *(name activity)* is between *(name contractor and parent)* and is independent of the *(program/ministry)* of *(name of church or school)*.

Add lines for signatures of parties named above and date of agreement.

What about Partnering in Ministry with Non-Episcopal Entities?

When an Episcopal Church, school or diocesan entity partners with a non-Episcopal entity for a ministry that involves children or youth, the non-Episcopal entity must clearly show that its policies and screening of adult participants comply with the requirements and guidelines of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

This means that the non-Episcopal entity should provide a letter on their stationery stating that they have completed the following screening procedures for their volunteers or employees:

- Nationwide criminal and sex offender background check
- Applications and reference checks

Adults from non-Episcopal entities must complete *Safeguarding God's Children* training including a review of the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*.

Examples of these ministries or events include but are not are not limited to:

- Vacation Bible School
- Mentoring programs
- Mission trips
- Retreats
- Lock-ins
- Outsourced organizations and staff that provide programs and activities

How Should We Evaluate Background Checks?

"No person who is known to have a civil or criminal conviction or record of child abuse, or who has admitted to child abuse, may be ordained, employed or permitted to volunteer to work with or around children", *Safeguarding God's People: Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation*.

If the check reveals a conviction for a sexual or violent offense, the applicant is not allowed to be with or around children or youth. Notify the head of church or school or diocesan entity who, in turn, must notify the Safe Church Minister.

Conviction for minor offenses is usually not sufficient to deny an individual employment or a volunteer position. If you receive notice of a conviction or are uncertain how to interpret the search results, please consult with the Safe Church Minister for assistance.

Do We Have to Certify Adults Working with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts?

It's complicated....

Boy Scouts

Churches, schools or Diocesan entities that charter Boy Scout troops accept the responsibility of approving “all registered unit adults.” (See section below from *BSA New Unit Application*) The chartering organization also “certifies” that “all registered adults” agree to the specific requisites. The Charter and responsibilities accepted by the chartering organization make it a ministry of the chartering church, school or Diocesan entity. Therefore, “registering unit adults” whom the “executive officer” or the person delegated by the “executive officer” must approve **must be Certified in Safeguarding God’s Children prior to their approval as “unit adults.”**

A CHARTERED ORGANIZATION

The Chartered Organization selects one of its members to register as chartered organization representative who may also serve as chair or as unit committee member if needed. Packs must have a den leader/Webelos den leader/Tiger Cub leader who should be registered as an adult in the pack. The chartered organization also provides meeting facilities for the unit. No one may register in more than one position in the same unit, except the chartered organization representative.

Chartered Organization Certification. **The executive officer of the chartered organization, by signature, certifies that the organization approves the charter application. The executive officer also certifies that the organization has approved all registering unit adults.** The responsibility for approval of unit adults can also be given to the chartered organization representative. The chartered organization certifies that all registered adults: agree to abide by the Scout Oath and the Scout Law, the Declaration of Religious Principle, the policy of nondiscrimination, and the Charter and Bylaws and the Rules and Regulations of the Boy Scouts of America; agree to respect and obey the laws of the United States of America, and to meet age requirements as follows:

- Packs—All leaders must be at least 21 years of age except assistants, who must be at least 18 years of age. Tiger Cub adult partners must be at least 18 years of age.
- Troops—Assistant Scoutmasters may be 18. All other adults in the troop must be at least 21.
- Teams—Varsity Scout Coaches must be at least 21 years old. Assistant Varsity Scout Coaches must be at least 18 years old.
- Crews/Ships—All leaders must be at least 21 years old.

Girl Scouts

Girls Scout troops are not chartered. Churches or schools that allow Girl Scout troops, and their supervising adults, to meet on their property bear no responsibility for approving leaders or certifying them in any way. **These adults do not need Safeguarding Certification.**

How Do We Safeguard Youth Who Want to Help In Children and Youth Ministries?

Teens often assist adults in the children's and youth ministries of our churches and schools as well as in Diocesan ministries for children and youth. While they must always be under the supervision of two Safeguarding Certified adults 21 years of age or older, it is important that they understand the responsibility they have in protecting children and youth – even peers – from sexual abuse.

Teen helpers must know and follow the *Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*. It is also important that we screen youth helpers before they serve in children and youth ministries. Screening and training is valid for 12 months.

The procedures for screening include:

- Be known by the ministry leader for at least 6 months
- Personal interview*
- Completing a volunteer application*
- Reference checks (*Reference checks are particularly important because background checks run on youth age 18 and under will not return arrest or conviction records.*)
 - ✓ Reference checks may be completed via phone call, email or by mailing a reference request form.*
- **For youth 16 and older**, Safeguarding God's Children training which includes a policy review.
- **For youth 15 or younger**, review of the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*, focusing on “**Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**” and reporting procedures.

All of the above documentation shall be kept in a secure location and/or with official student records.

* See Sample Forms attached.

Sample Application for Volunteer Youth in Ministry

Please provide all of the information asked for and return this application to

Today's Date _____

Name _____ Birth date _____

Age group you are volunteering for _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Cell # _____

E-mail _____ Best time to contact you _____

How long have you attended this church/school? _____

What interests you about the ministry in which you are wish to serve? _____

What experience or skills do you bring to this ministry? _____

References: Please list references as requested giving complete contact information

1. A teacher or counselor from your school

How long have you known this person? _____

Name _____ Position _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

2. An adult family member other than a parent or sibling

How long have you known this person? _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

3. An adult member of the church, school or Diocese who has known you in a ministry setting.

How long have you known this person? _____

Name _____ Position _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Sample: Personal Interview

Applicant's name _____

Date _____ *Ministry position sought* _____

Interviewer _____ *Position* _____

1. Why are you interested in helping in this ministry? _____

2. What experience do you have working with this age group? _____

3. What tasks and responsibilities do you expect to have in this ministry? _____

4. What do you think is the most important thing you need to know to carry out this ministry?

5. What challenges do you see arising for you in this ministry? _____

6. Tell me a little about your faith journey. _____

Sample Personal Reference Response Form

(If you mail a form be sure to enclose a stamped envelope addressed to the person at the church or school who is designated to review the responses.)

The applicant listed below has applied for a volunteer ministry position at *(insert name of church or school)* and has given your name as a reference. Please take a few minutes to complete this reference and return it to *(insert name)*. We appreciate your response.

Name of applicant _____

Volunteer ministry position sought _____

Reference questions:

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant? _____

2. What three words would you use to best describe the applicant? _____

On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being lowest and 10 highest rating) please rate the applicant on each of the following characteristics. If you have insufficient knowledge on a particular characteristic, please note that.

Characteristics	Rating	Comments
Ability to work well with others		
Personal motivation and initiative		
Dependability		
Trustworthiness		
Attitude		
Ability to communicate clearly		
Personal follow-through		
Faith commitment		

Sample Registration Form for Children or Youth Programs/ Activities

Participant's Name _____

Goes by (name) _____ Male ____ Female ____

Date Of Birth _____ Age _____ Grade _____

Church Name _____ City _____

Home Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Home Ph.# _____

Email _____

Parent/Guardian Work Phone _____

Parent/Guardian Cell Phone _____

If unavailable in emergency, notify _____

Phone _____

Allergies to medications and reaction _____

Other Allergies _____

Medications sent with participant _____

Note: Prescribed medications must be in original pharmacy container with the correct name, date, instructions and physician's name on label. The event nurse will keep and distribute all medications during the event. Please notify the event coordinator or nurse if this participant has been exposed to any communicable disease within the 3 weeks prior to this event. Participants will NOT be allowed to attend if they arrive at the event ill.

Are there any over the counter medications that the participant should not receive if any minor symptoms develop? (i.e. Tylenol, Advil, etc.) _____

Insurance

Co. _____ Policy# _____

Group# _____ Ins.Phone# _____

Sample Permission Form

My child, _____ has permission to attend and to participate in
 _____ (name of event) sponsored by
 _____ (EDOT Location).

I represent that my child is healthy and capable of participating in said event without causing risk of danger, illness or accident to him/herself, or to others. I agree to hold harmless the leaders of my church, the leaders of other churches involved, the event coordinators, the Bishop of Texas and the Diocese of Texas in the event of any accident or injury.

In the event that my child requires medical attention while attending the event, I understand that an adult sponsor of the event will make every reasonable attempt to contact me. In the event that I cannot be contacted, I consent to any medical attention deemed appropriate. In the event that treatment is called for, which the medical provider refuses to administer without consent, I hereby authorize an adult sponsor to give such consent for me if I cannot be contacted immediately or, because of an emergency, there is no time or opportunity to make contact. In the event that it is necessary for that person to give consent, I agree to hold such person free and harmless of any liability for damages arising from giving such consent.

I declare that my child is covered by medical insurance and/or that I am responsible for any and all expenses incurred by my child whether covered under insurance or not.

(NOTE: THE SPONSORS OF THIS EVENT DO NOT PROVIDE INSURANCE IN CASE OF INJURY OR ILLNESS).

Custodial Parent or Legal Guardian Signature:

Date _____

Relationship to Participant: _____

Sample: Participation Log

Parents Assisting in a Program with their Child

Parents who assist *no more than six times a year* with a program which their child is enrolled, including providing transportation, are exempt from *Safeguarding* certification requirements.

Exception: Parents volunteering during overnight events or VBS must be SGC certified.

All parents must receive and review a copy of the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* before they begin to assist.

Name of Church or School _____ City _____

Name of Parent & Child _____

School Year and Volunteer Dates : _____

1. Date assisting: _____

Name of event or program: _____

Safeguarded supervisor: _____

2. Date assisting: _____

Name of event or program: _____

Safeguarded supervisor: _____

3. Date assisting: _____

Name of event or program: _____

Safeguarded supervisor: _____

4. Date assisting: _____

Name of event or program: _____

Safeguarded supervisor: _____

5. Date assisting: _____

Name of event or program: _____

Safeguarded supervisor: _____

6. Date assisting: _____

Name of event or program: _____

Safeguarded supervisor: _____