



## **Safeguarding God's Children**

# ***Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse***

[epicenter.org/safeguarding](http://epicenter.org/safeguarding)

[epicenter.org/wellness-and-care](http://epicenter.org/wellness-and-care)

**2018**

## **Table of Contents**

### **Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse**

<b>About These Policies/Code of Conduct</b>	4
<b>Personnel Definitions</b>	5
<b>Certification Requirements</b>	6-7
<b>Guidelines for:</b>	
Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth	8
Monitoring and Supervision of Programs	9
Restrooms and Showers/Baths	10
Personnel	11-12
<b>Responding to Problems: Reporting Procedures</b>	12-13
<b>Additional Policies:</b>	
Harassment and Discrimination	14
Weapons	14
Bullying	14
Social Media Guidelines	15-16
Mission Trips	17-18



The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Office of the Bishop

Dear People of the Diocese of Texas:

In 2004 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 Safeguarding 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. 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 diocese authorities.
- I understand that the diocese will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with its policies.

## Personnel Definitions

### Personnel

For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definition of 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.
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 Formation Directors
- Directors of Religious (Christian) Education
- 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. 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 Safeguarding Minister shall be consulted if there is any uncertainty. Guidelines for evaluating background check results may be found in the *Appendix*.

## **Certification Requirements for Schools**

1. **Certification for Faculty and staff:** Heads of Schools may sign a yearly agreement with the Safeguarding 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. Additional [School Safeguarding](#) information is available on the Safeguarding website.
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.
3. **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 Personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Texas should contact the Safeguarding office to update their certification to their new location. Clergy who transfer from another Episcopal Diocese must contact the Safeguarding 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.

**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 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 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
- Inappropriate interaction on Social Media (See *Social Media Guidelines*).



## 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 **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<sup>th</sup> grade                      one adult to eight children   (1:8)
  4. 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 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 Personnel must supervise activities** (the “Two Adult Rule”). Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them. Personnel over the age of 21 must directly supervise 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 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 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, **Personnel will remain in an area observable** by other adults or work in pairs.
10. **Classrooms** or other areas used by children or youth **must have windows or a window in the door unobstructed by blinds, curtains, drapes or posters, so that casual monitoring is convenient.** 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. If the restroom is in the classroom with only one toilet, the child should go alone into the restroom.
4. In a classroom with attached restrooms with only one toilet, the **1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> 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.
5. Youth in **6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades** are encouraged to use the buddy system if restrooms are located some distance away from the activity.
6. 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 Safeguarding Minister.

## Guidelines for 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 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/diocesan entity for at least six months**, *unless* the volunteer is a parent, volunteering with their own child’s program.
2. Personnel will **relate to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment**, regardless of sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, sexual identity, culture or socio-economic status. 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. 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. 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. Personnel are **prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved** with a child or youth.
6. Personnel are **prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth**.
7. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. Personnel are **prohibited from using harsh language**, profanity, degrading punishment, or any mechanical restraint for behavior management.
13. Personnel are **prohibited from** participating in or allowing others to conduct any **hazing activities** or behaviors which could be construed as hazing.
14. 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 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](http://www.txabusehotline.org). You will receive a response within 24 hours. *DFPS does not accept e-mailed reports.* See [Texas Family Code](#).
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, Personnel are required to report any suspected

or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Personnel directly to the rector or canonical equivalent, who will immediately report it to the Safeguarding office, so that immediate and proper steps may be taken. Personnel who are the subject of an investigation may be placed on administrative leave until the investigation is concluded.

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 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,
- youth on youth sexual misconduct,
- 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 or between 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 Safeguarding Minister or the Canon to the Ordinary.
- b. A telephone call or meeting with the Diocesan Safeguarding 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 Safeguarding Minister or the Canon to the Ordinary.

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

3. The Safeguarding 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  
<mailto:kryan@epicenter.org>  
1-713-520-6444 or 1-800-318-4452  
Secure Fax: 1-713-521-2218

The Rev. Canon Carol Petty  
Safeguarding Minister  
510 Rathervue Pl. Austin, TX 78705  
<mailto:cpetty@epicenter.org>  
1-512-478-0580 or 1-800-947-0580  
Secure Fax: 1-866-241-7050

## **Additional Policies**

### **Harassment and Discrimination Policy**

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, sex, (including sexual orientation or sexual identity), national origin, age, religion, or disability toward any person. To report discrimination or harassment based on any of these protected classes, please follow the guidelines for reporting sexual harassment. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and corrective action designed to stop the harassment or discrimination will be taken.

### **Weapons Policy**

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. Law enforcement officers are the *only* exception to this policy. 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. Notification details can be found here: [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 must be reported immediately to the head of the entity or to the Safeguarding Minister. All reports will be taken seriously, will be investigated, and disciplinary action will be taken as deemed to be appropriate.

## Social Media Guidelines

**All digital communications must comply with the same Safeguarding policies as all other EDOT entities.** The following guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries for social networking, communication, online forums and gaming.

**1. Implement consistent privacy settings** that respect personal boundaries with all participants across all platforms.

- a. Remember that privacy settings do not ensure confidentiality.
- b. Each church/school/organization should develop and publish agreed upon privacy settings that staff and volunteers will use, and make that information available to parishioners, teachers, students, parents, and employees.

**2. Be Accountable**

- a. Adults (parents) should be aware of how leaders utilize social media platforms.
- b. Communication should be with groups, in public areas rather than in private messages. This includes image sharing.
- c. **Youth Formation Leaders:** When electronic pastoral communications are of a potentially harmful nature, they should be saved and disclosed to supervising clergy and, as appropriate, to parents. (Examples: bullying; abuse; etc.)
- d. Ministry presence on social media platforms should have more than one administrator.

**3. Social media is rarely appropriate for a sensitive** matter that requires pastoral care and attention. In those instances, a face to face meeting or phone call is preferable, as it allows for an assessment of tone and demeanor that can be helpful in evaluating the situation and determining both the urgency and appropriateness of a response. When received communication raises concerns or questions it must be shared with a ministry leader.

**4. Frequently review your accessible content** and photos. Keep informed about new and emerging social media platforms.

**5. Online Groups** are required to follow the same Safeguarding policies as all other EDOT entities. Youth Leaders, note item 2.c. above. In group communication platforms, leaders should create covenants to govern group communication, addressing:

- a. appropriate & inappropriate language and behavior; profane or derogatory language is forbidden
- b. who may join and/or view group activity
- c. content that can be posted/published on the site or page
- d. how images will be taken and shared
- e. consequences for breaking the covenant: removal from group
- f. mandatory reporting rules

**6. Any inappropriate material posted in online groups should be removed from the page**, but should be saved the administrator and reported to the ministry leader to be addressed or reported as necessary.

**7. When video chatting**, a leader should be mindful of appropriate attire and surroundings, as they are visible to the viewer. One-on-One video chatting should follow the same Safeguarding guidelines as when meeting with people face to face. Video chatting should not occur behind closed doors.

**8. If posting photos of 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:

*"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 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."*

**9. Be aware that all communications sent digitally are not confidential** and potentially may be shared or reposted to other platforms or people without an individual's permission or knowledge.

**10. Use prudent judgment in the timing of your communications.** For example, consider work hours, school hours, meal times, vacations and sleep schedules.

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



## Mission Trip Policies

### Certification Requirements

#### **Those requiring Safeguarding God's People - Exploitation (SGP-E) certification in SRS:**

1. Clergy (are required to have the clergy version SGP-E & H)
2. Mission trip leaders
3. Adult volunteers who will be supervising other adults

#### **Those requiring Safeguarding God's People – Harassment (SGP-H) certification in SRS:**

1. Employees

#### **Those requiring Safeguarding God's Children (SGC) certification in SRS:**

1. Clergy
2. Employees
3. Mission trip leaders/adult volunteers who will be supervising or working with or around children/youth

#### **Youth requiring SGC Screening and Training – not in SRS**

Youth serving as leaders who will be working with or around children.

- Follow the Screening and Training guidelines for Youth. (See *Appendix*.)
- When an 18 year old is a part of the mission group as either an adult or part of the youth group, they shall adhere to all of the guidelines for adults in regard to sleeping arrangements, showers, etc.

### Suggested Guidelines

#### **Pre-trip Preparation:**

- Adult chaperones should be at least five years older than the youth on the trip.
- Trip organizers should provide itineraries to parents or guardians.
- The Mission Trip leader as delegated by the Head should be responsible to make sure all team members are certified as outlined above so that all travelers understand behavior guidelines and consequences for breaking the rules.

#### **Housing:** (Underscoring rules already covered in this policy)

- A single youth should not sleep alone in a room with an adult chaperone (unless the adult is a parent/guardian).
- Youth roommates should be same gender and in the same age range.
- Leaders should follow a “process for nightly check in”.
- See *Appendix* for guidelines for overnight events.

## **Mission Trip Guidelines Cont.**

### **Recreation:**

- Leaders follow a system so that chaperones know where youth are at all times, which includes check-in times and a meeting place.

### **Medical Treatment:**

- Chaperones should log any treatment or dispensing of medicine.
- Chaperones should be able to access a first-aid kit.

### **General:**

- It is crucial that supervision takes place 24 hours/day and that children, youth and vulnerable adults are not left unsupervised so they cannot be isolated and harm done.
- Children and youth should never be left alone or alone with one adult.
- Private conversations should take place in public settings where others can observe but not hear.
- Consider possible impact of mission setting on participants; for example, the first encounter with abject poverty. Provide conversation space to allow for processing any distressing emotions.