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Safe Church Policies & Procedures

Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast

Safe Church Diocesan Committee

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Letter from the Bishop

> *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:35)

To clergy, lay leadership, and our whole diocesan family,

Grace and Peace in our Lord Jesus.

The Holy Scriptures speak of the Church as the Body of Christ and His bride. God calls His Church and all Her members to a life of holiness, service, and love of neighbor. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, calls us to be ministers of His gospel for a broken world. We are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to participate in God's redemption of the whole of creation. As a community of faith, the Church stands for truth, justice, mercy, compassion, reconciliation, service, and sacrifice. The Church serves as a field hospital, where the broken may enter and encounter the love, grace, peace, and healing power of Christ's redemption. This is central to our vocation.

To this end, the parishes of The Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast must be safe. Our responsibility to shepherd the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of each person is essential. In our broken world, the vulnerable are often exploited. Statistics demonstrate that approximately one in four girls and one in six boys suffer abuse in their lifetime. This means that it is highly likely that our congregations are made up of men and women who have either experienced abuse or know a survivor/victim of abuse. Unfortunately, this is true for every denomination. In order to be light in a dark world, the Church must be different. The Church must take action in order to equip leaders to safeguard those in its care.

The congregations of the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast join the College of Bishops and leaders across the Anglican Church in North America in affirming the following:

- God's CREATION is a good gift
- Humanity is PART OF creation yet UNIQUE

    - IMAGE OF GOD: Every human being is created in the image of God and has inherent worth and dignity.
- Humanity is uniquely CALLED to stewardship/care in love
    - STEWARD: The Church is called to steward God's creation [including humanity/Church] and His bride, the Church.
    - RESPECT: This understanding of sexuality calls for equal respect for all men, women, and children as persons made in God's image, and for everyone's right to sexual and physical integrity.
- Humanity is embodied and communal and has received the good gift of sex to be enjoyed within covenant
    - SEX IS A GIFT: Sexuality is good, blessed, and purposeful; sexuality is understood to be a gift that is celebrated by sexual union within the bond of love found within the covenant of a man and a woman in marriage.
- Humanity is Broken
    - VULNERABLE: Children, adolescents, the infirmed, and elderly are particularly vulnerable to the tragic consequences of broken covenants and abusive treatment, and special care must be taken to protect their individual rights and personal integrity.
- Church is About the Restoration of Humanity
    - JUSTICE: All types of abuse (verbal, physical, neglect, and sexual misconduct) will be taken seriously by the Diocese and, when required by law, will be reported to the appropriate local, state, and/or federal agency.
    - PROTECTION: The protection of the vulnerable shall be of utmost concern.
    - RESPONSIBILITY: The Church has always recognized that those chosen for ordained ministry bear a particular responsibility to pattern their lives according to Jesus' teaching. Bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders are called to be faithful examples of the Christian life. Any moral offense by clergy or laity entrusted with pastoral and educational ministries is especially hurtful because it betrays the trust committed to each by the Church to nurture and care for every member.

This manual outlines the policies required in our effort to prevent sexual misconduct and harassment by members of the clergy, lay employees, and those working in ministry with youth and children. This manual also prescribes the procedures required in response to an event of sexual misconduct or harassment and articulates the policies that aim to protect potential survivors/victims. It is necessary reading for all parish leaders, including, but not limited to, all affiliated clergy, vestry members, all parish employees, and all lead volunteers/teachers for children/youth. The manual is also recommended to the people of the Diocese for comprehensive understanding of the issues involved with sexual misconduct and harassment and the ramifications of engagement therein.

> *"If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* (John 10:9b-11)

As the Body of Christ, we are called to be children of light, uncovering what is done in the darkness, and to protect and care for the vulnerable in our midst. I am grateful for your ministry and commitment to this policy below.

+Clark WP Lowenfield
Bishop
The Anglican Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast

For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power.
1 Corinthians 4:20

B. Purpose of the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast's Safe Church Policies & Procedures Manual

This manual provides guidance, information, instruction, and common practices to direct and inform the clergy and laity in the parishes in the Anglican Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast (DWGC) as you craft your Safe Church policies and procedures. It also serves as a reference manual to inform your decisions and methods regarding safeguarding the children, youth, adults and families entrusted to you.

The Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast, as a collaborating member with six other dioceses in ACNA West, expands this policy to cover not only sexual misconduct and harassment of children and adults, but other forms of misconduct, including but not limited to:

(a) questionable or improper accounting or auditing practices
(b) suspected unlawful conduct
(c) violations or suspected violations of Church or Diocesan policies or Canons
(d) any observed or suspected verbal, emotional, or spiritual abuse
(e) any suspected sexual misconduct

From this point forward, all misconduct will be collectively referred to as "Concerns."

C. Safe Church Diocesan Committee

The Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Council, will establish a Safe Church Diocesan Committee which will be responsible for disseminating all of the DWGC's Safe Church Policies and Procedures under the authority and oversight of the Diocesan Council and the Bishop in accordance with the canons of the Diocese. From time to time, but not less than annually, the Committee will review and, if necessary, revise the policies and procedures considering practical experiences, medical and other scholarly research, legal developments, and other relevant considerations.

D. Responsibility for Implementation and Compliance

"It is the moral duty of the whole Church (the Province, the dioceses, and local congregations and ministries) to see that the flock of Christ is protected from abuse. As a diocese is the primary level at which the means to provide such protection can be implemented, it shall therefore be the duty of the bishop of each diocese, rather than that of the Province, to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures both for children and for adults are adopted and implemented within the congregations, ministries, and structures of the diocese and to monitor and ensure compliance with such policies and procedures. Such policies shall be adopted no later than June 30, 2025, and shall be made publicly available to the members of the diocese." [1]

[1] Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church in North America, Title 1, Canon 5, Section 8, *Concerning the Safeguarding Policies.*
This section was added by the 2024 Provincial Council and ratified by the Provincial Assembly at its meeting on June 26, 2024, becoming effective on September 24, 2024.

The Rector, rather than the Bishop or the Archbishop, has overall responsibility for the administration of this policy within the parish, mission, or church plant he leads and for providing all reports requested by the Diocese. In the absence of a Rector, the priest-in-charge, lay leader, or the Senior Warden will be responsible. Duties may be delegated, except in those areas specifically delineating action by the Rector.

E. Parish Insurance Considerations

One of the purposes of the Safe Church Policy is to enable Anglican members to have correct and sufficient insurance coverage. A part of that process involves developing a relationship with your insurance agent. When the steps in the Safe Church Policy have identified a Concern and the need to file a claim, the relationship with your insurance agent becomes important. A knowledgeable agent will give advice on the claim process and will act as your advocate during the claim. It is important to report any Concerns to the ANCAWest Diocesan Reporter prior to notifying your insurance agent or your carrier.

In the event a potential claim arises, it is important to know the procedures required by the Safe Church Policy. Before talking to your insurance agent, it is required that you communicate with your Senior Pastor, the Diocesan Reporter (see below) and the Bishop. If in their judgment the issue requires insurance notification, you will be notified to file a claim. Do not contact your insurance agent until the Diocesan Reporter instructs you to do so. After receiving instruction, the claim should be filed within 24 to 72 hours.

For events involving a child, you are required by law to immediately contact your state authorities. The necessary state contact information is listed below.

Louisiana Reporting: Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) 855-452-5437

Texas Reporting: Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) 800-252-5400

The Diocesan Reporter provides three options for the reporting of Concerns.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

II. CHILDREN PROTECTION POLICY

A. Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast's Policy on Child Abuse

The Diocese will not tolerate any form of child abuse involving our clergy, lay employees, volunteers, or other persons. Everyone who serves the Church through educational, pastoral, recreational or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct against children. That commitment extends to sexual behavior.

No one in the employ or volunteer service of the Diocese or its parishes who has a civil or criminal record of child abuse, or who has admitted committing prior sexual abuse of a child, will be permitted to serve with children or youth.

The DWGC accepts with deep gratitude and seriousness the trust given us by God to nurture and care for his people, especially those who are most vulnerable and in need of protection. This is essential when caring for our children and youth.

Current statistics regarding child abuse are alarming. The effects of such abuse can damage children at the core of who they are, and often follow them into adulthood. Abused children are children at risk. They often become adults who suffer from low self-esteem, who are unable to form and keep healthy relationships, and who struggle to maintain healthy boundaries. As the Church, we declare that we will work together to see that the proper love and care are extended to the children entrusted to us.

Jesus teaches explicitly that children are of much value in Kingdom terms, and that to cause one to sin has the gravest of consequences. Caring for our children and youth is a sacred trust.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said,

> *"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."* (Matthew 18:1-6 ESV)

Mark, in his Gospel account, adds the dimension of Jesus taking the children in his arms and blessing them. (Mark 10:16)

As Christian adults, we are called to establish a secure environment where the perfect love of God works to cast out all fear (1John 4:18) and the nurture and love of God are made known to all, and to our children and youth. In this way we can fulfill the biblical mandate to train up our children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).

B. Pastoral Care of all Affected by Instances of Child Abuse

The Church's response to instances of child abuse should be survivor-sensitive, i.e. priority should be given to protecting and caring for the alleged survivor/victim[2] and his/her family. However, we are committed to providing pastoral care to all affected by and involved with instances of abuse. Pastoral care grows out of Christ-centered relationships and proceeds

[2] We use the language "survivor/victim" to acknowledge that individuals may identify with "survivor," "victim," or some other terminology related to their experience. This is a matter of personal preference, and we should honor the language someone uses.

with an awareness of the spiritual and emotional needs of both the individual and the community. It may include providing guidance, support, consolation, and even confrontation to minister to each individual as we believe God desires. However, the Bishop and any clergy involved in providing pastoral care should refrain from placing conversations regarding allegations of abuse and or sexual misconduct within a sacramental framework (e.g., confession) and are well-advised to show concern for privacy of all individuals concerned.

> Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ, Amen (BCP, #66).

C. Child Abuse Defined

Child abuse, in practical terms, refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child daily) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.[3] Each state and the District of Columbia has its own definition of what constitutes child abuse under civil and criminal laws, and each parish in the Diocese should be familiar with the relevant laws and legal definitions in its jurisdiction. In general, the definitions of child abuse and child neglect in all states include the following elements (among others):

- Physical abuse
- Neglect (both physical and mental)
- Sexual abuse/Exploitation

1. **Texas Definitions.** The Texas Family Code defines abuse and neglect to include several acts or omissions. Tex. Fam. Code § 261.001 et seq. The definition is so broad that essentially every action in which a child's physical and mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected is potentially covered. Accidents or reasonable discipline (e.g., spanking) from a parent that do not expose a child to substantial risk of harm are excluded from the definitions of "abuse" and "neglect."

2. **Louisiana Definitions.** "Abuse" and "neglect" under Louisiana law are broad. "Abuse" includes many acts that seriously endanger the physical, mental, or emotional health and safety of the child. LA CHIL. CODE ANN. art. 603(1). "Neglect" means the refusal or unreasonable failure of a parent of caregiver to supply necessities for the child's wellbeing, resulting in the substantial threat or impairment to the child's physical, mental, or emotional health and safety. LA CHIL. CODE ANN. art. 603(16).

D. 5-Step Approach to Child Protection

At a minimum, each DWGC congregation, mission and church plant is expected to have in place the following policy procedures. This applies even if there are no children currently in attendance at parish events. The Diocese and your congregation are committed to creating a positive and healthy culture and environment for all children and students through the 5-step approach: 1) Screening; 2) Training; 3) Interacting; 4) Monitoring; and 5) Responding &

[3] Child abuse may also be a term defined by relevant state laws.

Reporting. (An abbreviated version of the 5-Step Approach can be found in the Appendix, Section G)

1. SCREENING

The Diocese requires screening and background checks for all canonically-resident and licensed clergy, staff, church leadership (Parish Council, Vestry, etc.), contract employees (nursery worker, office worker, etc.) and volunteers, working in youth and children's ministries.

a. Screening Clergy

The screening of clergy, and the maintenance of all clergy screening records, is the responsibility of the Diocese. Careful screening of clergy is conducted initially during the ordination and search processes and includes:

- Initial National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks should be done through Oxford Document Management Company (Oxford) or other diocesan-approved screening providers. The Diocese's standard for clergy background checks is the 15-year background referencing performed by Oxford. Checks should be renewed at least every two years, and these subsequent checks may be done through Ministry Safe or other diocesan-approved providers. It is the responsibility of all clergy to cooperate fully in all aspects of the screening process and to submit in a timely manner all documents needed to complete such checks.
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks (three sources recommended).
- Conducting a thorough social media search.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews.
- Requiring the clergy person to state whether or not the clergy person and/or other members of the household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. A sample copy of this screening statement is found in Appendix Section A.
- Reviewing this policy with the clergy person and requiring clergy to sign and submit the Safe Church Policy and Insurance Acknowledgment Form found in Appendix Section F3.

b. Screening Employees & Interns

The screening of employees and interns, and the maintenance of all screening records of employees and interns, is the responsibility of the parish and includes:

- Reviewing signed job applications for employees and interns.
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks (checks should be renewed at least every two years).
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks (three sources recommended).
- Conducting a thorough social media search.

- Conducting face-to-face interviews; if the volunteer or staff member being interviewed is under 18, employers may want to ask the parent(s) if they have any concern about their child (the potential volunteer/employee) regarding sexual misconduct with children.
- Requiring each applicant to sign the screening statement found in Appendix Section A.

c. Screening Volunteers

The screening of volunteers, and the maintenance of all screening records of volunteers, is the responsibility of the parish and includes:

- Requiring a six-month minimum attendance rule for volunteers in children's and youth ministries, except where the Bishop has granted a variance.
- Reviewing signed volunteer applications for those working in youth and children's ministries.
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks should be renewed at least every two years).
- Conducting personal and reference checks and any professional references that relate to childcare experience.
- Conducting a thorough social media search.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews; if the potential volunteer is a minor, it may be helpful to interview the parents or legal guardians; employers can ask the parent(s) if they have any concern about their child (the potential employee) regarding sexual misconduct with children.
- Requiring each applicant to sign the screening statement found in Appendix Section A.

2. TRAINING

Training is also an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize the warning signs of potential abuse, as well as learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse. They also must become familiar with safe practices specific to their parish designed to reduce the potential for abuse occurring.

a. Acknowledgement of Reading and Understanding the Policies

All members of the clergy, all members of the vestry or equivalent, and those staff members, contractors, and volunteers with direct supervision over youth or children must acknowledge that they have read, understood and accepted the Church's Policies on the Protection of Children and sign the Safe Church Policy Acknowledgment Form found in Appendix Section F3.

b. Policy and Awareness Training Requirements

Upon hiring or first volunteering and thereafter every two years, clergy, vestry or equivalent, and those staff, contactors and volunteers who have contact with youth and children must:

- Complete policy training: Policy training will cover the guidelines set forth in this document as well as any additional policies specific to your parish

- Complete awareness training: Awareness training can be completed in person as part of the policy training, or it can be completed online through a diocesan approved curriculum (provided by programs such as Ministry Safe, Protect My Ministry, Creating a Safe Environment, etc., detailed in Appendix Section B)

Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office evidence of completed policy and awareness training every two years. Each parish is responsible for tracking and documenting the policy and awareness training/retraining of its vestry or equivalent, staff and volunteers. Clergy, Vestry (or designated lay leadership board or council) and staff should complete policy and awareness training within three months of hire or election. Volunteers must complete policy and awareness training prior to serving with youth or children. The Safe Church Policy Acknowledgment Form found in Appendix Section F3 is used to document all training.

3. INTERACTING

All clergy, employees, and volunteers are encouraged to maintain healthy boundaries with children and students and to strive for emotionally healthy relationships. Each congregation's leadership is asked to consistently bring awareness to this issue by normalizing the following principles:

- ***Choose the Light***: whether it is bullying, inappropriate jokes or comments, flirting, etc., bringing the issue into the light is always the path toward healing, accountability, sanctification, and emotional health.

- ***Transparency***: it is a difficult thing to clearly state what you think/feel/see happening, but it is a sign of emotional health. No one can improve or eradicate the inappropriate behavior without understanding the issue.

- ***See something, say something***: The Diocese provides three options for the reporting of Concerns.
    4. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
    5. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
    6. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

These procedures are intended to help children and adults feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

a. Addictive Behaviors

Clergy, staff, church leadership (Parish Council, Vestry, etc.), contract workers (nursery worker, office worker, etc.), volunteers, and participants in youth and children's ministries, while traveling with or in the presence of children, their parent(s), or other legal guardians during parish-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children should not: use tobacco products; possess, use, or be under the influence of any illegal drugs; be under the influence of alcohol; or share / view pornographic materials.

b. Communication

All interactions, verbal and non-verbal, between clergy, staff, church leadership (Parish Council, Vestry, etc.), contract workers (nursery worker, office worker, etc.), and volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents or caregivers in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, clery, staff, church leadership (Parish Council, Vestry, etc.), contract workers (nursery workers, office workers, etc.), and volunteers should avoid talking to children, parent(s), or caregivers in a way that is, or could be construed by any reasonable observer as, harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, clery, staff, church leadership (Parish Council, Vestry, etc.), contract workers (nursery worker, office worker, etc.), and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children. Concerns about children should be directed to parent(s), legal guardian(s), the appropriate ministry leader(s), or the clergy.

Clery, staff, church leadership (Parish Council, Vestry, etc.), contract workers (nursery worker, office worker, etc.), and volunteers should avoid engaging in any sexually oriented communications with children, (except as noted in abuse reporting contexts), and should refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child or youth.

Clery, staff, church leadership (Parish Council, Vestry, etc.), contract workers (nursery worker, office worker, etc.), and volunteers may employ (subject to limitations imposed by the Rector/Senior Pastor or Rector/Senior Pastor's designee) age-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality/sexual abuse prevention/sexual purity. Any prospective material should normally be made available for review for the parents or legal guardians of participants. Prior to introducing these materials, notice should normally be provided to parents or legal guardians in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.

c. First Aid & Medication

If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parent(s) or legal guardians. Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer as authorized by the parent or legal guardians. The medication, including over-the-counter medication, must be in the original packaging. When medically necessary, medication or first aid may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer consistent with the Supervisory Plan. Parent(s) or legal guardians should be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.

d. Home Group Procedures

The Diocese and its parishes do, from time to time, encourage Bible study and small groups in the home. The care and protection of children in such settings is always primarily the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child. The Diocese provides this Safe Church policy to help equip the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the home groups of its parishes as they exercise their care and responsibility. In home groups where children are present, even

on an occasional basis, home group leaders are required to read this policy, take the diocesan-approved policy and awareness training, and follow the provisions outlined in this policy, including the development of a Supervisory Plan to include the following:[4]

- Supervision by two screened and trained individuals (supervision by a single individual is never a good idea).
- Inspection and preparation of physical environment – the location should be inspected and prepared for child safety for the developmental age of those being served, keeping in mind outlet coverings, sharp corners, sharp objects, unsecured furniture, access to outdoors, toxic materials, etc.
- Creation of restroom procedure – for any child who requires assistance, parent(s) or legal guardians should be responsible for diapering and meeting other restroom needs.
- Identification and communication of areas of the home that are off-limits to guests.
- Communication of emergency exit plans, and location of fire extinguishers and medical supplies.

e. Overnight Events

Certain youth ministry activities may require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for youth, staff and volunteers. As part of the Supervisory Plan required for all youth and children's ministry (including lock-ins, mission trips, retreats and other ministry that involves overnight stays), the following procedures must be considered and monitored.

- As always, the two-adult rule should be adhered to; a single student should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present.
- Overnight sleeping arrangements must be detailed in the Supervisory Plan and shared with those responsible for providing the supervision. An individual student should not be housed alone with another student or adult (in overnight cases, a minimum of three is required).
- As long as any students are actively awake, two trip leaders must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
- Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn by all.
- Staff members and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.
- In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by leaders of the same biological sex.

[4] Home group is defined for purposes of this policy as a small group meeting in a home for Bible study, worship, fellowship, etc. A church which holds its primary worship service in a home is, for purposes of this policy, considered to be a church and not a home group.

- Staff and volunteers in youth ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care. Showering considerations and private areas for changing clothes must be thought through with rotation schedules.
- Leaders should check with parents or legal guardians and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. R-rated movies require Rector/Senior Pastor and parental/guardian approval.
- Cell phones should be collected at the beginning of the overnight event and returned prior to leaving for home.
- Identification and communication of areas of the home, parish or camp that are off-limits to guests.
- Communication of emergency exit plans, and location of fire extinguishers and medical supplies.

f. Photography

Photos of children will not be used contrary to the wishes of the parent(s) or legal guardians. Parishes should refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior permission from the parent(s) or legal guardians. This is easily handled by including a consent statement on programming registrations that are signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s). See Appendix Section K for a Sample Permission to Use Images and Release form.

g. Physical Interactions

Those who serve, whether as clergy or lay workers, paid or volunteer, maintain a powerful relationship of authority and trust with the people to whom they minister. Betrayal of that trust through violation of sexual boundaries causes great emotional and spiritual harm. Such misconduct is a denial of our calling as Christians and may be a violation of the law. We must take every step to prevent it, and to respond with swift justice should misconduct occur.

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. It is the diocesan policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In some circumstances physical restraint may be used to prevent self-injury by the child and/or harm to others or to property. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents/guardians, Children's Ministry Pastor, Rector/Senior Pastor, Youth Pastor, and/or clergy.

Appropriate physical interaction between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's development and is generally suitable in the parish setting. The following standards of interaction with children shall be carefully followed at all times.

- Appropriate interactions may include:

  - high-fives
  - handshakes
  - head pats
  - side hugs

- fist bumps
- thumbs up
- smiling
- pats on back

- Inappropriate interactions include:

  - wrestling
  - kissing on the lips
  - forcing unwanted affection
  - sitting in laps (except nursery)
  - tickling
  - full frontal hugs
  - commenting on children's bodies
  - massages

- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to 1) an immediate supervisor, and 2) the designated lay leader(s) and/or clergy.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in youth and children's ministries must always foster trust. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be always respected.

Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

h. Release of Children

Staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care at the close of services or activities only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

If staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact their immediate supervisor before releasing the child.

i. Restroom Use

Nursery Aged and Special Needs Children

Because preschool, nursery, and special needs children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers; children should not be left unattended while being changed.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

Note: Parishes are encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that nationally one out of every four women has been the survivor/victim of some form of child sexual abuse, typically by a male offender. To build trust and to minimize exposure based on statistical research, parishes may determine that diapering, toilet training, and restroom monitoring of infants will only be done by screened and trained female staff/volunteers or the child's parent(s)/guardian(s). However, it generally is appropriate for male staff/volunteers to change the diapers of male non-infant children and special needs children/young adults. Parents or guardians of non-infant children with late development of toilet habits and special needs children should be consulted and provide direction to staff and volunteers in these situations.

Toilet Training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- When children are assisted in bathrooms the stall door will be left partially open.
- Preschool-aged children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- Accidents should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

Elementary Aged Children

- Elementary-age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Children should not be in the restroom together.

- Staff members and volunteers should take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom or sending children to the restroom without an adult. If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

j. Sexual Ethics in the Context of Youth Ministry

We recognize that contemporary cultural trends and attitudes about gender and sexual ethics are complex and rapidly changing. You may find students wrestling with issues around gender fluidity, gender dysphoria, same-sex attraction or other situations which may challenge the existing policies. These situations may require specific knowledge or understanding so we can care for individual students, in a loving and caring community setting. In consultation with the Bishop, the Rector/Senior Pastor is responsible for local adaptation around specific ministry situations and with regards to suitable protection practices that embody the Diocese's guiding values.

k. Social Media Policy

The term "social media" refers to social networking services, blogs, short-message services, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image- and video-sharing sites, and other methods for real-time information sharing among users. Because this is a constantly evolving area, these principles below apply to all new social media platforms whether they are specifically mentioned here.

Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. A student's world is often constructed around social media. Having personal interactions in this venue allows adults to model appropriate behavior in social media, and it forms valuable connections with students.

Be smart. A blog or community post is often visible to the entire world and can be shared by others in ways that you cannot control. Remember that what you write is public and will remain public for a very long time.

Be selective. There are a variety of communication methods available, and not all communications are well-suited to social media platforms. Consider whether your communication is better suited to face-to-face conversation, a phone call, email, or other method.

Be respectful. Your parish is a thoughtful and prayerful community that encourages free expression and values civil debate. If you disagree with others, do so with civility. Respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, and be respectful of the Church and its teachings.

Clery, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (usually 13). For those students younger than 13 years old, get parent or legal guardian permission for any communication and welcome the parents or legal guardian into that environment. All screening procedures should be followed and up to date for all staff and volunteers.

Sending sexually explicit or offensive communications (e.g., text messages, emails, social media messages or posts) is included in the definition of sexual harassment and will not be tolerated regardless of age.

Virtual spaces are to be treated the same as in-person spaces. This means two adults must be online with any youth (known as the two-adult rule), participants must be appropriately clothed, and conversation should not be held in the adult's bedroom. The parents or legal guardians should be aware that the student is in conversation with the leaders.

Use group apps rather than private messages for ongoing communication. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present.

Remember that all social media parish accounts or groups must model appropriate behavior and language. Student pictures should not be shared without parent or legal guardian permission in public groups, and membership into private groups should be monitored by both the parish and the parent(s) or legal guardians closely. Use personal interactions on social media avenues to model appropriate behavior and language, both on and off social media.

I. Spiritual Direction & Pastoral Counseling with Youth

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek discipleship opportunities. This frequently manifests in ongoing 1:1, 1:2, or 1:3 relationships where participants meet regularly for a long-term partnership. This is not the same situation as pastoral counseling, which is intended for a singular focus and therefore is limited in scope. Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, crisis counseling, and relationship counseling. If pastoral counseling requires more than three sessions, refer the youth to a professional.

If long-term spiritual direction with a youth is agreed upon, consider these safeguards:

- Ensure this relationship is brought into the light among the leadership team of the parish by informing multiple people of this partnership; this includes obtaining parental/guardian consent and knowledge of discipleship meetings.
- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction to youth in your parish, consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the parish, as well as accountability.
- Meet in a public place, not in one another's private living quarters.
- It is recommended that it be conducted by same biological sex participants.
- Follow guidelines regarding interaction and physical contact.
- Define the parameters of the relationship at the first meeting, articulating how one might discontinue the relationship without further explanation at any time.
- Communicate to whom the participant should report if they have any concerns (including the names and numbers of senior leadership, the Bishop, and a reporting hotline).
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together.

To protect the emotionally healthy spirituality of all, it is recommended that Youth Directors and Children's Ministry Directors also seek regular spiritual direction to ensure accountability and a strong support system.

m. Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children and youth. The following guidelines should be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children or youth whenever possible:

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the parish copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- Adult volunteer drivers must undergo an insurance approved background check including a DMV record check. Use of child safety seats that meet federal standards is required. Drivers and passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines. Parishes are advised to consult with their insurance provider regarding the minimum age for adult drivers. Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 18 be allowed to drive children/youth as part of an event.
- At no time shall there be one adult and one child traveling in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). Automobiles will contain either one driver and two or more participants or two adults and any number of children (within the seat belt limitations of the vehicle; seatbelts are ALWAYS required). If there is an extenuating circumstance causing only one adult and one child to travel together in an automobile, permission must be obtained by a parent or legal guardian of the child. This permission should be written and signed by the parent/guardian or documented by the volunteer if only verbal consent is obtainable. The child or youth should be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.
- No cell phones, including hands-free devices, may be utilized by the driver while driving parish-owned vehicles, unless in an emergency, with the exception of GPS navigation.
- Transport children directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks should be done as a group. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No one under age 25 may drive vehicles rented by a parish unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement; no drivers under age 25 may drive parish-owned vehicles unless explicitly covered by the parish's auto insurance policy.
- In special circumstances these may be altered for emergencies. In these cases, the children/youth pastor (or her/his supervisor) should be notified immediately.
- If a family situation necessitates a special circumstance, the family may sign a waiver stating the deviance from the diocesan or parish policy; this policy should note the family's acceptance of responsibility.

n. Peer-on-Peer Abuse

It is imperative for parents, caregivers, legal guardians, and supervising adults to recognize peer-on-peer abuse and not dismiss what they see as "kids being kids". Peer–on-peer abuse is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between children. It includes bullying, cyberbullying, sexual violence, harassment, and

sexting. The behavior in question is harmful to both the perpetrator and the survivor/victim. And the prevalence of peer -on-peer abuse is alarming. According to the U.S. Department of Justice National Sex Offender Website, **30-50 percent of youth are sexually abused by other juveniles.**[5]

Preventing Peer-On-Peer Abuse

Following are some helpful suggestions to prevent peer-on-peer abuse from the Redwoods Group (a Crumb and Forster Company) that provides insurance to youth-serving organizations.[6]

- ***Comprehensive, Engaged Supervision:*** Peer-to-peer abuse tends to be opportunistic and happens when there is a lack of supervision. Be sure that youth are always in the presence of staff. That means maintaining ratios and being actively engaged with all youth. Bathrooms, cabins, and locker rooms require enhanced supervision, as these high-risk locations can be seen as a more private area that the instigator believes will make it easier to go undetected.
- ***Be Aware of Blind Spots and Unstructured Time:*** Peer-to-peer abuse also tends to occur in "easy-to-cover" locations and during unstructured times. Be aware of blind spots such as, play structures, seats on the bus, and even items of clothing that can all provide cover for acts of abuse. Because of the potential for distraction, relatively unstructured transition times at the beginning or end of programming or during transportation also present added dangers.
- ***Watch for Red Flag Behaviors:*** Peer-to-peer abuse often escalates from bullying, so having a robust anti-bullying culture is key. Address physical aggression or verbal teasing early, especially when repeatedly targeting a specific individual—and intentionally follow-up with the survivor/victim to make sure they are feeling safe. It's also important to watch for any form of inappropriate sexual behavior or language, which may be a sign of abuse.
- ***Plan for Power Imbalances:*** Abuse often occurs when one youth holds some form of physical or social power over another. Whether it's through planning seating arrangements, how we organize group work, or how we supervise bathroom breaks, we can avoid such imbalances turning into potentially abusive situations. In general, seat youth of similar ages and sizes together, and be sure to break up groups where red flag behaviors have been observed or are suspected.

4. MONITORING

Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. Clergy, vestry (or designated lay leadership board or council), staff, and volunteers must be always diligent in monitoring and supervising children's and youth activities in all settings.

Monitoring procedures should include, but are not limited to:

[5] https://www.nsopw.gov/en/SafetyAndEducation/QuestionsAndAnswers#QuestionsAndAnswers
[6] https://redwoodsgroup.com/resources/preventing-peer-to-peer-child-sexual-abuse/

- Two-Adult Rule: All child and youth activities shall be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals, preferably not related to each other.
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a parish activity.
- Clergy, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children.
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should take place in a public place or where other persons are present.
- All leaders are expected to watch for policy violations and report them.
- An open invitation should be extended to parents, caregivers, or legal guardians to visit at any time unannounced.
- A careful review of new programs and significant changes to program structure.
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times.
- Keeping unused rooms locked whenever possible.
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the parish building.
- Supervisory Plans: An onsite or offsite written Supervisory Plan (see below) shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children.

The purpose of the Supervisory Plan for any given activity is to give direction to staff, both volunteer and paid, to ensure appropriate measures are in place to meet the diocesan standard for supervision. It is recommended that a copy of the Supervisory Plan be provided to and signed by those responsible for supervision and that the plan be posted in a visible location. Please refer to Appendix Section C for a sample Supervisory Plan.

a. Sponsored: On-site Supervisory Plans

Sponsored On-Site Supervisory Plans should include:

- Description of the nature of the activity.
- Details of the registration process and a sample registration form.
- Personnel responsible for running the activity, including name and cell number.
- Recommended ratio of adults to children, based on the Texas standards. A mixed age group equals the supervisor ratio for the youngest child in the group:

  Age Maximum number of children two caregivers may supervise:

0-11 months	**4**
12-17 months	**5**
18-23 months	**9**
2 years	**11**
3 years	**15**
4 years	**18**
5 years	**22**
6-13 years	**26**

- Standards for interacting with, and disciplining, children or youth.
- Description of the physical environment, including which areas are locked or off-limits.

- Bathroom procedures, including showering procedures, if applicable.
- First aid and medication procedures including location of fire extinguishers, first aid kits and defibrillators.
- Procedures for reporting discipline concerns.
- Protocol for the release of children.
  Note: Emergency plans and procedures, including schematics with fire escape routes, shelter-in-place designations and plans for reuniting children with parents or legal guardians would also be helpful.

b. Sponsored: Off-site Supervisory Plans

Sponsored Off-site Supervisory Plans should include all of the requirements for On-site Supervisory Plans and the following:

- Dining arrangements.
- Sleeping arrangements: see Overnight Events.
- Showering procedures: see Overnight Events.
- Offsite transportation plan(s): see Transportation.

c. Non-Sponsored: On-site Events

Due to the nature of the facilities and shared ministry, the situation might arise where the parish facilities are used by non-sponsored groups for activities and events (such as Young Life, or the Boy Scouts, or parties, etc.). These events may choose to offer childcare on their own, utilizing the facilities available. All parishes should consult their insurance policy regarding these types of activities and to be compliant with the restrictions and recommendations in that insurance policy. It is also recommended that all parishes use a Facilities Agreement that clearly articulates the outside organization's responsibility and liability for their program and volunteers/employees for every instance of an outside group using the parish's facilities.[7]

d. Non-Sponsored: Off-site Events

Due to the nature of contact work within youth groups, situations may arise where a youth volunteer/employee organizes a social event off campus. These events usually are not sponsored by the parish and may only be open to certain youth due to the nature of contact work. It is recommended that these events remain in compliance with the diocesan policy and with the individual parish's policy, specifically regarding the 'minimum of two adults' rule. It is consistent with common practices and research, protects the parish, the volunteer/employee, and the children involved.

[7] See Appendix Section L for a Sample Facilities Use Agreement

5. RESPONDING & REPORTING

a. Responding & Reporting Overview

It is essential that each parish respond to a report or instance of abuse in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse, and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the local parish and community. One of your parish's primary missions is sharing the love of God with children. Offer whatever pastoral care and other help is appropriate and available to the survivor/victim and his/her family. (See Appendix Section J).

It is also critical to be prepared in advance if an incident or allegation of child abuse occurs. Each DWGC parish shall have an appropriate Response Plan (even if only a very brief one or check list) to use when responding to any allegation of child abuse. (See Appendix Section I for a sample check list style Response Plan.)

Among other things, every DWGC parish should be familiar with, and every person responsible for the care of children in the parish, should understand its state's child abuse reporting laws and requirements. Laws can change over time, however, and it is the responsibility of the individual parish to make certain that it has identified and understands the child abuse reporting laws that currently apply to it at any specific time. In short, anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, a child has been abused, abandoned, neglected, or exploited in violation of the law should immediately contact the appropriate state abuse hotline or law enforcement authority, as applicable. All reports are confidential and access to these reports is limited by specific criteria described in the appropriate state's statute(s).

State laws generally require that certain categories of persons responsible for the care or treatment of children report to state authorities when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of abuse or neglect. The specific laws, and thus their specific requirements, vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For example, some states (like Texas) require any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health and welfare has been or will be adversely affected by abuse or neglect to report immediately to authorities. Other states (like Louisiana) require only those who have special occupations, such as members of the clergy, nurses, counselors, teachers, physicians, youth activity providers, law enforcement officers, or the like, to report suspected cases of abuse.

As part of any Response Plan, parishes should also have in place appropriate procedures for internal reporting to appropriate parish leaders of any suspected mistreatment of or injury to a child and any suspicious or unusual information about a child. Other important considerations for a Response Plan include notifying and interacting with the survivor/victim's family, providing pastoral care to the survivor/victim's family, interacting with the accused, notifying the parish's insurance company, and deciding whether to conduct an investigation.

The Diocese provides three options for reporting of Concerns.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

These reporting options are published on the DWGC's website and are to be published on each parish's website.

b. Responding to the Child Survivor/Victim

One of several ways in which the clergy, staff, church leadership, contract worker, or volunteer may come to suspect child abuse or neglect is from information that a child himself or herself shares. If a child discloses abuse or neglect, the clergy, staff, church leadership, contract worker, or volunteer receiving such a communication should attempt to:

- Respect the child's privacy by finding an appropriate non-threatening place to talk.
- If reasonably possible, ask a staff member, trained volunteer, or other responsible adult to join in listening to the child's/youth's account.
- Keep calm, listen, and avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- Let the child know that he/she is understood.
- Assure the child that any abuse was not his/her fault.
- If helpful, tell the child that he/she was brave to disclose the abuse.
- Child survivors/victims are often vague in their initial disclosure– avoid questions that could make the child feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint the child's recollection and account. A safe question is always, "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?"

Write down as accurately as possible what the child disclosed. This information can be used in filing the Report of Suspected Abuse Form (see Appendix Sections D and E) and helps capture all the information needed to make a Child Protective Services report.
Be careful afterwards not to discuss the information with, or in front of, other people who do not need to know what happened. Discussion about the information should be limited to appropriate parish and legal authorities, as discussed further below.

c. Reporting Concerns to Legal Authorities

i) Texas Mandatory Reporting Laws

Texas has expansive mandatory reporting laws for physical and mental abuse (including sexual abuse) or neglect of children. Potentially anyone is a mandatory reporter if one has reasonable cause to believe that a child's wellbeing has been negatively affected by abuse by any person.[8] "Abuse" and "neglect" are defined expansively, so potentially any act that adversely affects a child's welfare constitutes abuse or neglect (subject to narrow exceptions). Failure to report to the proper authorities—whether law enforcement or Department of Family and Protective Services—carries criminal penalties.[9]
To Whom Do I Report in Texas?

[8] On September 1, 2021, the Texas Legislature's amendment of that mandatory reporting statute changed the trigger for mandatory reporting from "cause to believe" to "reasonable cause to believe…".

[9] Helpful resources on mandatory reporting in Texas: https://www2.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cvs/suspectchildabuse.pdf; https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-state-laws-export.cfm?state=Texas&group=4

In Texas suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported immediately to any local or state law enforcement agency or to Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Abuse or neglect may be reported through the Texas Abuse Hotline for DFPS is 1-800-252-5400. Alternatively, such abuse or neglect that is not urgent or does not constitute an emergency may be reported online https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx.[10] DFPS is not required to investigate child abuse or neglect that is done by a person who is not a caretaker; state or local law enforcement agencies handle investigations of reports of abuse or neglect. TEX. FAM. CODE § 261.301(c). For instances of abuse or neglect not involving a person responsible for a child's care (e.g., abuse by a volunteer, parish member or clergy), reports should be made to local law enforcement.

ii) **Louisiana Mandatory Reporting Laws**

Louisiana also has mandatory reporting laws for abuse and neglect of children, but they are narrower in scope than Texas' laws. "Mandated reporters" relevant to parishes include clergy, daycare workers, teachers, and social service/mental health professionals.[11] Certain clergy and abuse defendants can, however, claim clergy privilege for confidential communications between the alleged abuser and clergy. "Abuse" and "neglect" are also expansively defined under Louisiana law. As in Texas, failure to report abuse to the authorities when one is a "mandated reporter" can carry criminal penalties.

To Whom Do I Report in Louisiana?

In Louisiana, for mandated reporters, abuse or neglect must be immediately reported to a local or state law enforcement agency where abuse or neglect is believed to be perpetrated by someone other than a parent or caretaker, or person in a relationship with the parent or caretaker. Abuse or neglect of a parent or caretaker (etc.) must be reported to the designated state child protection reporting hotline number (855-452-5437).

Reports of abuse or neglect that require immediate attention should be made using the LA State reporting hotline number. Abuse or neglect that does not require immediate assistance may be reported using the LA State online portal. All oral reports by mandated reporters must be followed by a written report to DCFS within five days of the oral report. This written report may either be submitted online or by mailing the report to the DCFS Centralized Intake Office.[12]

Please note that the above information regarding mandatory reporting laws should not be considered legal advice and such laws may not be described with complete accuracy or

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[10] Situations in which one should use the Texas Abuse Hotline rather than the online portal include: (i) Serious injuries; (ii) any injury to a child 5 years or younger; (iii) Immediate need for medical treatment (including suicidal thoughts); (iv) sexual abuse where the abuser has or will have access to the survivor/victim within the next 24 hours; (v) children age five and under are alone or are likely to be left alone within the next 24 hours; and (vi) anytime you believe your situation requires action in less than 24 hours.

[11] Helpful resources on mandatory reporting in Louisiana: https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-state-laws-export.cfm?state=Louisiana&group=4

[12] http://www.dcfs.louisiana.gov/page/556; https://mr.dcfs.la.gov/c/MR_PortalApp.app.
The address for mailed report forms is:
DCFS Centralized Intake, P.O. Box 3318, Baton Rouge, LA 70821

specificity. Accordingly, the Rector/Senior Pastor or other appropriate parish leaders should consult with the parish's legal counsel for assistance in identifying and complying with the appropriate abuse reporting requirements within the required time frame under applicable state laws.

No allegations, complaints or reports of suspected abuse should be ignored. As discussed above, parishes should be aware of and should comply with any applicable legal obligations to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

Further, even where reports are not legally required, voluntary reports of suspected abuse or neglect are legally permitted in all jurisdictions in the Diocese and should always be considered with the assistance of legal counsel.

Cooperate with the investigating legal authorities. Subject to advice of the parish's legal counsel, the parish should cooperate in the investigation conducted by the governmental agency to which the report has been made, as well as any other law enforcement agencies involved with the investigation.

d. Reporting Concerns to Church Authorities (ACNA West Diocesan Reporter)

As people of God, fully acknowledging God's sovereignty, we recognize that we fail to meet our obligations to God and our obligations to one another based on the primary commandments of our Lord, Jesus Christ – the commandments to "love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" and to "love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 22: 36-40)

We are required to interact and treat one another with the love of God. However, situations arise in which we fail to recognize the image of God in others. We may manipulate power imbalances for our own gain or benefit. We may, out of ignorance or our own brokenness, trespass against another's reasonable expectations for proper treatment. The harm created by our failures can have a shattering effect on others, on our communities, and on ourselves. Because of God's unequivocal commandment, and accepting that the above actions can occur, the Anglican Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast has joined the ACNA West, along with six other dioceses, to leverage best practices and resources. One of these resources is a Misconduct Reporting Office to receive reports of suspected misconduct.

Misconduct can take many forms including but not limited to: (a) questionable or improper accounting or auditing practices, (b) suspected unlawful conduct, (c) violations or suspected violations of Church or Diocesan policies or Canons (d) any observed or suspected verbal, emotional, or spiritual abuse, and (e) any suspected sexual misconduct, collectively referred to as "Concerns."

The Misconduct Reporting Office is intended to encourage and enable individuals to report Concerns for prompt internal inquiry and appropriate action. If an individual suspects or witnesses Concerns by the Rector/Senior Pastor or any clergy, senior warden, lay leader or lay person, the ACNA West Diocesan Reporter (DR) should be immediately notified via one of the following three methods.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941

2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

The Diocesan Reporter will then contact the Bishop or Diocesan Chancellor for any further action.

e. Contact with the Parents

If the accused is not the child's parent or guardian or otherwise a member of the household, the Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee should contact the child's parents or legal guardians, following contact by the Diocesan Reporter, informing them of the Concerns and the steps being taken to address the Concerns. In addition, the Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee are to ensure the family receives immediate and long-term pastoral care and are offered professional counseling from a counselor with whom they are comfortable and who is experienced in trauma-informed care. Also, consider assigning a member of parish leadership as a liaison, who will be intentional about staying in regular contact with the family and walking with them through what will be a very challenging season. If possible, select someone who has a relationship with the family and ensure the liaison understands his /her role and limitations. As an example, the liaison should not provide counseling to the family but could help connect them with an appropriate counselor.[13]

f. Intake Process

If there is an allegation of abuse against a child or adult, or other criminal act, the first step is always to direct the person reporting to call appropriate civil authorities. The Diocesan Reporter will contact the parents and/or family at the same time. In cases where civil authorities are conducting the investigation, the intake office and diocesan investigation team's role is to focus on assisting civil authorities to ascertain facts, as well as, investigating and evaluating systems or policies that allowed alleged behavior to take place. The following applies to situations not involving an alleged criminal act.

Upon receiving an initial report of misconduct via phone, email or reporting form, the Diocesan Reporter will take the following steps:

i. Have a conversation with the claimant to gather information and facts regarding the specific circumstances of the misconduct. The Diocesan Reporter is to focus on the following information:
   a. Date misconduct occurred
   b. Time misconduct occurred
   c. Place misconduct occurred
   d. Context of misconduct, events leading up to or after the misconduct
   e. Type of misconduct, actions, activity
   f. Potential witnesses
   g. Other parties' knowledge of the misconduct

ii. The Diocesan Reporter will assemble the information in an Initial Inquiry Report and assist the claimant in putting their report in the format of a "signed complaint."

iii. If the claimant does not wish to proceed with a "signed complaint," the Diocesan Reporter will submit the Initial Inquiry Report to the Bishop outlining the information

[13] "Responding with Excellence to an Allegation of Sexual Abuse within the Church" by Basyle Tchividjian, Currents in Theology and Mission, Vol.45 No.3

and circumstances reported for the Bishop's discernment of next steps (no further investigation or canonical process is required at this point).

iv. If a signed complaint is executed, the Diocesan Reporter will inform the Bishop and send a copy of the complaint to the Bishop with the Initial Inquiry Report (Signed Complaint may be sent prior to Initial Inquiry Report).

v. Depending upon the information collected and the circumstances, the Diocesan Reporter could seek additional information from the following Diocesan representatives to complete the Initial Inquiry Report (in no particular order):
   a. Interview other witnesses
   b. Speak to respondent
   c. Review Constitution, Canons, and Policies for Diocese
   d. Meet with Diocesan Chancellor
   e. Identify Claimant Advocate
   f. Offer and Coordinate Resources for Claimant

vi. The Initial Inquiry Report will outline the following:
   a. The information and circumstances of the misconduct reported.
   b. Details of any initial interviews.
   c. The specific canon or policy that has been alleged to be violated.
   d. Description of any actions taken to provide resources.
   e. Contact information for all parties involved, including advocates.
   f. Suggested next steps. (internal mediation, canonical investigation, etc.)

vii. Upon receiving the Initial Inquiry Report, the Bishop will decide if further investigation is required.

viii. The Diocesan Reporter can assist Diocesan Representatives with further investigations and guidance regarding process.

g. Next Steps

i) ***Pastoral Care & Healing.*** The parish's response should be survivor-sensitive, i.e., priority should be given to protecting and caring for the alleged survivor/victim and his/her family. However, it is essential that the parish respond in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the congregation and community.

ii) ***Contact with and Suspension of the Accused.*** The Rector/Senior Pastor, or his designee, should advise the accused of the allegations, the process that will be followed, and his/her right to be represented by legal counsel and ensure the accused receives pastoral care. The survivor/victim and the accused should not receive pastoral care from the same clergy or counselors. The accused should be suspended (with pay if a paid employee) while a confidential investigation is being conducted. This can be done quietly and should be done quickly and without exception. The parish leadership will determine whether the accused will continue in ministry. If the accused is a member of the clergy, any employment-related decisions by parish leadership must be made in consultation with the Bishop and in conformity with the Constitution and Canons of the DWGC.

iii) ***Notification of Insurance Providers.*** As soon as the Diocesan Reporter has completed their Initial Inquiry Report and recommends contacting their insurance carrier, the parish should promptly notify its liability insurance company. This is important for at least four reasons: (1) the insurance policy may require immediate notification for coverage to be effective; (2) the policy may pay for counseling or

legal advice; (3) the policy may not provide coverage for lawsuits involving acts of sexual abuse; and (4) the insurance carrier, having dealt with similar cases, may be a source of helpful advice. Unfortunately, most insurance policies do not generally cover sexual misconduct or negligent hiring/supervision in sexual abuse situations. Separate "riders" can be purchased, although some require strict preconditions to coverage like screening, awareness, and prevention training. See Appendix Section F1: Risk Management Guide, for recommendations.

iv) ***Consideration of Retaining Legal Counsel.*** The Rector/Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, Diocesan Chancellor, and insurance representative, will determine if legal counsel should be retained. Obtaining competent legal advice at the very outset of the matter may help protect the parish's interests and be a helpful resource regarding any reporting or other legal requirements. In addition, if the investigation is conducted by legal counsel, the information gathered and conveyed to the attorney may be protected from disclosure as a privileged and confidential attorney/client communication.

v) ***Designation of a Spokesperson.*** Identify a single spokesperson (someone who can communicate clearly and succinctly and with empathy and care) to respond to media inquiries.

vi) ***Communication with the Congregation.*** The Congregation should not first hear about an instance of abuse in your parish from a news report or through the rumor mill. Consequently, it is important to have early and transparent communication of essential and non-confidential facts with the congregation. The communication should be succinct, factual, non-speculative and survivor-sensitive and, among other things, send a clear message that the survivors/victims are being cared for and that the parish is a safe place.

vii) ***Investigation.*** The Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Chancellor, will decide whether or not an investigation will be conducted and by whom. The Bishop shall not participate in the investigation, which should be impartial and bias-free. The person(s) appointed to investigate the matter should not be employed by or a member of the parish at which the alleged misconduct occurred, be connected in any way to the Children's or Youth Ministry at the parish or have any type of relationship with the accused, the survivor/victim or the survivor/victim's family. Any investigation should not interfere with or impede, in any way, any investigation conducted by state or local law enforcement. Typically, there are three options for who should conduct an investigation: trained, skilled and impartial individuals from within the Diocese; an independent group that is not a law firm; or an independent lawyer or law firm.

viii) ***Bring closure to the investigation.*** If the allegation is substantiated, then discipline or dismissal is generally appropriate, in accordance with the Constitutions and Canons of the DWGC and the Province. Counseling may also be appropriate. If charges are unsubstantiated, the decision about whether to restore the accused to full employment or volunteer service may depend on a number of factors. Consult the Bishop and legal counsel for guidance. All personnel actions must be well documented in writing and kept in confidential files. Attorney-client privileged material should never be disclosed without first consulting your attorney.

h. Release of Information

i) ***Considering the release of information.*** Carefully consider any release of information. Identify a single person to respond to all inquiries (media or otherwise), such as a specially trained management person, and instruct all other workers politely to direct all inquiries to that person. Use an approved, prepared statement to answer media inquiries and to convey news to members of the parish. Such a statement should be reviewed by the parish's legal counsel. Don't release any information until the parish has solidly confirmed its factual content. Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved by not releasing names or other identifying information, especially that concerning minors.

ii) ***Maintaining confidentiality.*** Maintain appropriate confidentiality of any allegations and of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the investigation to each person who is interviewed and instruct them not to disclose any information regarding the allegations or your investigation to anyone other than law enforcement or child protective authorities. Maintaining appropriate confidentiality will:

a. protect the privacy and reputations of those actually or allegedly involved in the incident.
b. reduce the risk that defamation may occur.
c. help preserve the attorney-client privilege, where otherwise applicable.

i. Other Important Internal Church Communication & Reporting

Clery, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers will report promptly to the appropriate ministry leader, supervisor, or Rector/Senior Pastor whenever the clergy, staff, church leader, contract worker, or volunteer:

- Is involved in or becomes aware of any sexually oriented communications involving a child connected with the parish; or
- Is involved in or becomes aware of any inappropriate behavior involving a child by a clergy person, a staff member, or a volunteer; or
- Is arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, is charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; commits an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) is diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism; or
- Becomes aware that a member of his/her household has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism; or
- Becomes aware that a person who is attending the parish has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; has been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; has committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) has

been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism.

Such information is important to enable parish leaders to see that appropriate child protection mechanisms are in place in accordance with this policy while handling this information in a responsible and confidential manner. Anyone suspecting abuse or neglect should immediately notify the ACNA West Diocesan Reporter (DR) via one of these three methods.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

III. PROTECTION OF ADULTS FROM SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

A. Diocesan Policy on Protection of Adults from Sexual Misconduct

The Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast (DWGC) will not tolerate any form of abuse or harassment involving clergy, lay employees, volunteers, or other persons. Everyone who serves the Church through pastoral, educational, social, or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct. That commitment extends to sexual and physical behavior. As the Body of Christ, we are called to walk in the light, uncovering that which is done in the darkness, and to protect the vulnerable.

"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." I John 1:5-7

B. Pastoral Care Following an Instance of Abuse

The parish's response to instances of abuse should be survivor-sensitive, i.e., priority should be given to protecting and caring for the alleged survivor/victim and his/her family. However, we are committed to providing pastoral care to all affected by and involved with instances of abuse. Pastoral care grows out of Christ-centered relationships and proceeds with an awareness of the spiritual and emotional needs of both the individual and the community. It may include providing guidance, support, consolation, and even confrontation to minister to each individual as we believe God desires.

The Bishop and any clergy involved should refrain from placing conversations regarding allegations of abuse and or sexual misconduct within a sacramental framework (e.g., confession) and are well-advised to show concern for privacy of all individuals concerned.

C. Protection of Adults from Sexual Misconduct-Four Step Approach[14]

At a minimum, each parish, mission, and church plant is to include the following components in its Sexual Misconduct/Protection of Adults Policy.

1) Awareness
2) Training
3) Interacting
4) Responding & Reporting

An abbreviated version of this policy can be found in the Appendix, Section H.

1. AWARENESS

It is important to understand certain terms to build an environment that protects adults from abuse.

Adult abuse: actions that involve unwanted physical, sexual, psychological, or other actions that are intentionally taken to disadvantage another.

Sexual misconduct: In particular, adult abuse includes a variety of forms of sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct includes a range of unwelcome and unwanted sexual conduct, including grooming; verbal, emotional, and/or physical sexual harassment; sexual assault; and all forms of sexual violence. Sexual misconduct is not restricted to intercourse but includes a wide range of inappropriate behaviors including inappropriate emotional intimacy, as well as the following:

Sexual Malfeasance is defined by the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship. This can include emotional misconduct where inappropriate emotional intimacy is encouraged, coerced, forced, or implied as necessary.

Grooming is a technique used to break down barriers of protection. Abusers will use grooming techniques to gain trust. Recognize the pattern of continual testing of boundaries in such a way that inappropriate behavior seeps into the relationship without consent or even acknowledgement. Grooming usually includes gaining access through trust, targeting a particular type of person as a survivor/victim, slowing eroding boundaries, and methods to keep the survivor/victim quiet.

Sexual harassment (unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, hostile work environment, quid pro quo behavior, sexually motivated physical contact or other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature) in a situation where there is an employment, mentoring, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, regardless of gender, including but not limited to, sexually oriented humor or language, questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment

[14] Screening, as specified in the Child Protection Policy, will also help protect adults from sexual misconduct

qualifications, undesired physical contact, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements. This might include:

- Unwelcome and intentional touching.
- Sexually oriented comments about an individual's body.
- Sending sexually explicit or offensive communications (e.g., text messages, emails, social media messages or posts).
- Voyeurism, including viewing or displaying objects or pictures that are sexual in nature.
- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance.

2. TRAINING

Protection of Adults and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training*
**Note – this training is in addition to the required training for the protection against sexual misconduct with children.*

a. Clergy & Diocesan Staff: All members of the clergy domiciled, licensed, or serving in the Diocese, and all employees of the Diocese, must complete diocesan approved training on issues of sexual harassment, mentoring and colleague relationships, and sexual exploitation in pastoral relationship within 30 days of employment (or volunteering) in the Diocese. This training is currently completed online through the Church Law Center. Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office the evidence of completion and recertification every two years.

b. Clergy, Staff, Church Leadership, Contract Workers & Volunteers: Every year all members of the clergy, all members of the vestry or equivalent, and those staff members, contract workers and volunteers must certify that they have:

i) read, understood, and accepted the Diocese's Policies on the Safe Church Policies & Procedures
ii) completed Diocesan approved training on Sexual Harassment Prevention and on the policy itself.[15]

[15] Although an increasing number of States have mandated sexual harassment prevention training in the workplace, neither Texas nor Louisiana have done so yet. However, the EEOC has identified the following core principles that have generally proven effective in preventing and addressing harassment: 1) Committed and engaged leadership; 2) Consistent and demonstrated accountability; 3) Strong and comprehensive harassment policies; 4) Trusted and accessible complaint procedures; and 5) Regular interactive training tailored to the audience and organization. https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/promising-practices-preventing-harassment . Moreover, beginning September 1, 2021, Texas employers of any size may be sued for sexual harassment in the workplace. Under the previous law, the Texas Labor Code limited liability for sexual harassment claims to employers with at least 15 employees. Texas Labor Code 21.141

Each parish is responsible to track and document the training/retraining of its vestry or equivalent, staff, and volunteers (see Appendix Section F2).

3. INTERACTING

All clergy, employees, and volunteers are encouraged to maintain healthy boundaries and to strive for emotionally healthy relationships. Each parish's leadership is asked to consistently bring awareness to this issue by normalizing the following principles:

- ***Choose the Light:*** whether it is porn addiction, gossip, an affair, bullying, sexual jokes or comments, flirting, etc., bringing the issue into the light is always the path toward healing, accountability, sanctification, and emotional health.
- ***Transparency:*** it is a difficult thing to clearly state what you think/feel/see happening, but it is a sign of emotional health. No one can improve or eradicate the inappropriate behavior without understanding the issue. Avoid triangulation and protection for individuals who are acting inappropriately.
- ***See Something, Say Something:*** If something is a concern to you bring it to the appropriate leadership detailed within this document (for clergy that is the Bishop; for laity, that is the clergy at one's parish; for the Bishop, that is the Diocesan Chancellor); including multiple leaders in the discussion will ensure accountability, transparency, and appropriate resolution. The Diocese provides three options for the reporting of all Concerns.
    1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
    2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
    3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

a. Pastoral Counseling

One of the expectations of all clergy and other pastoral caregivers serving in the DWGC is that they offer pastoral counseling to members of the congregation if/when necessary and appropriate. Pastoral counseling occurs when parish personnel offer advice concerning moral or spiritual matters. This counseling is recommended to be offered for a maximum of six (6) sessions per person. Fees or donations for pastoral counseling are prohibited. If there is a need for ongoing counseling, parish personnel must refer to a professional if the parish personnel are not certified or licensed.

The Bishop and any clergy involved should refrain from placing conversations regarding allegations of abuse and or sexual misconduct within a sacramental framework (e.g., confession) and are well-advised to show concern for privacy of all individuals concerned.

Any person charging fees for counseling outside the scope of parish employment must possess appropriate professional credentials and proof of separate professional liability insurance including coverage for sexual misconduct, in force at all times. Persons offering spiritual direction or professional counseling to members of the congregation or outside the congregation that includes additional compensation shall submit that ministry for approval by the Bishop.

During these pastoral counseling sessions, clergy and pastoral caregivers are expected to maintain an environment that minimizes any existence, or appearance, of potentially inappropriate behavior or exploitation.

Exploitation occurs when parish personnel take advantage of the pastoral counseling relationship for the benefit of the pastoral counselor. Sexual exploitation is sexual contact between parish personnel and the recipient of the pastoral counseling services, regardless of who initiates the contact. A conflict of interest occurs when parish personnel take advantage of pastoral counseling relationships to further their own interest.

Staff members, clergy, and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission, avoiding sexually oriented communication. If available, same gender counseling is recommended to minimize these risks.

If physical contact is warranted for professional, clinical reasons, it should always be respectful and consistent with the intent to provide a safe and comfortable pastoral counseling environment. Pastoral counseling should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times and should not be held at places or times that would cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.

Additionally, all clergy and staff should maintain a physical environment that always minimizes any appearance of potentially inappropriate behavior including traveling or events held at the parish after business hours. It is wise to remain in public view when possible. It is recommended for this reason that the doors to rooms used for pastoral care contain windows. It is generally not recommended that employees share a hotel room when traveling. No pastoral counseling should be conducted in clergy's private living quarters.

b. Spiritual Direction

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek discipleship opportunities. This frequently manifests in 1:1, 1:2, or 1:3 relationships where participants meet regularly for a long-term partnership. This is not the same situation as pastoral counseling, which is intended for a singular focus and therefore is limited in scope. Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, crisis counseling, pre-marital counseling, and marriage counseling. If those crises seem to linger beyond six sessions, refer congregant(s) to a professional, as described above.
If a partnership of spiritual direction is entered into long-term, consider these safeguards:

- Ensure this relationship is brought into the light among the leadership team of the parish by informing multiple people of this partnership.
- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction in your parish, consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the parish, as well as accountability.
- If one clergy person is offering long-term spiritual direction to another clergy person, bring the arrangement into the light by informing the office of the Bishop of the relationship.
- Meet in a public place, not in one another's private living quarters.
- It is recommended that it be conducted by same gender participants.
- Follow guidelines regarding interaction and physical contact.

- Define the parameters of the relationship at the first meeting, articulating how one might discontinue the relationship without further explanation at any time.
- Communicate to whom the participant should report if they have any concerns (including the names and numbers of senior leadership, the bishop, or the DWGC hotline).
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together.
- To protect the emotionally healthy spirituality of all clergy, it is recommended that clergy also seek regular spiritual direction to ensure accountability and a strong support system. Clergy are encouraged to explore the soul care offerings of Call2Disciple. www.call2disciple.com.

4. RESPONDING & REPORTING

a. Responding & Reporting Overview

It is essential that each parish respond to a report or instance of abuse in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse, and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the local parish and community. Offer whatever pastoral care and other help is appropriate and available to the survivor/victim and his/her family. (See Section I).

The parish is expected to have in place an appropriate Response Plan (even if only a very brief one or check list) to use when responding to any allegation of sexual misconduct. (See Appendix Section H for an example of a check list style Response Plan.)

Among other things, every DWGC parish should be familiar with its state's laws and reporting requirements regarding abuse and neglect of the elderly and disabled adults. Laws can change over time, however, and it is the responsibility of the individual parish to make certain that it has identified and understands the elder and disabled person abuse reporting laws that currently apply to it at any specific time. In short, anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that an elderly or disabled adult has been abused, neglected, or exploited should immediately contact the appropriate state abuse hotline which are noted below in section 4 b.

As part of any Response Plan, parishes should also have in place appropriate procedures for internal reporting to appropriate parish leaders of any suspected mistreatment of or injury to an adult and any suspicious or unusual information about an adult. Other important components of a Response Plan include interacting with and providing pastoral care to the survivor/victim and her/his family, interacting with the accused, deciding whether to retain legal counsel, deciding whether to investigate and notifying the parish's insurance company.

The Diocese provides three options for the reporting of all Concerns.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

These options are published on the Diocesan website and are to be published on each parish's website.

b. Reporting Concerns to Legal Authorities

In Texas anyone who has a reasonable cause to believe a person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to Adult Protective Services, which can be reached by calling (800) 252-5400.

In Louisiana anyone who has reasonable cause to believe a person 60 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to Elderly Protective Services, which can be reached calling (833)-577-6532 or (225) 342-0144.

c. Reporting Concerns to Church Authorities (ACNA West Diocesan Reporter)

As people of God, fully acknowledging God's sovereignty, we recognize that we fail to meet our obligations to God and our obligations to one another based on the primary commandments of our Lord, Jesus Christ – the commandments to "love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" and to "love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 22: 36-40)

We are required to interact and treat one another with the love of God. However, situations arise in which we fail to recognize the image of God in others. We may manipulate power imbalances for our own gain or benefit. We may, out of ignorance or our own brokenness, trespass against another's reasonable expectations for proper treatment. The harm created by our failures can have a shattering effect on others, on our communities, and on ourselves. Because of God's unequivocal commandment, and accepting that the above actions can occur, the Anglican Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast has joined the ACNA West, along with six other dioceses, to leverage best practices and resources. One of these resources is a Misconduct Reporting Office to receive reports of suspected misconduct.

Misconduct can take many forms including but not limited to: (a) questionable or improper accounting or auditing practices, (b) suspected unlawful conduct, (c) violations or suspected violations of Church or Diocesan policies or Canons (d) any observed or suspected verbal or emotional abuse, and (e) any suspected sexual misconduct (collectively referred to as "Concerns" from this point forward).

The Misconduct Reporting Office is intended to encourage and enable individuals to report Concerns for prompt internal inquiry and appropriate action. Individuals reporting Concerns should immediately notify the ACNA West Diocesan Reporter (DR) via one of the following three methods.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

The Diocesan Reporter will then contact the Bishop, Diocesan Chancellor, or Province for any further action.

d. Contact With the Survivor/Victim

The Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee, after contact by the Diocesan Reporter, should contact the survivor/victim to ensure she/he, and her/his family, receives immediate and long-term pastoral care and is offered professional counseling from a counselor with whom she/he is comfortable and who is experienced in trauma-informed care. Also, consider assigning a member of parish leadership as a liaison, who will be intentional about staying in regular contact with the survivor/victim and family and walking with them through what will be a very challenging season. If possible, select someone who has a relationship with the family and ensure the liaison understands his /her role and limitations. As an example, the liaison should not provide counseling to the survivor/victim or family but could help connect them with an appropriate counselor.[16]

e. Intake Process

If there is an allegation of abuse against a child or adult, or other criminal act, the first step is always to direct the person reporting to call appropriate civil authorities. The Diocesan Reporter will contact the parents and/or family at the same time. In cases where civil authorities are conducting the investigation, the intake office and diocesan investigation team's role is to focus on assisting civil authorities to ascertain facts, as well as, investigating and evaluating systems or policies that allowed alleged behavior to take place. The following applies to situations not involving an alleged criminal act.

Upon receiving an initial report of misconduct via phone, email or reporting form, the Diocesan Reporter will take the following steps:

1. Have a conversation with the claimant to gather information and facts regarding the specific circumstances of the misconduct. The Diocesan Reporter is to focus on the following information:
    a. Date misconduct occurred
    b. Time misconduct occurred
    c. Place misconduct occurred
    d. Context of misconduct, events leading up to or after the misconduct
    e. Type of misconduct, actions, activity
    f. Potential witnesses
    g. Other parties' knowledge of the misconduct
2. The Diocesan Reporter will assemble the information in an Initial Inquiry Report and assist the claimant in putting their report in the format of a "signed complaint."
3. If the claimant does not wish to proceed with a "signed complaint," the Diocesan Reporter will submit the Initial Inquiry Report to the Bishop outlining the information and circumstances reported for the Bishop's discernment of next steps (no further investigation or canonical process is required at this point).
4. If a signed complaint is executed, the Diocesan Reporter will inform the Bishop and send a copy of the complaint to the Bishop with the Initial Inquiry Report (Signed Complaint may be sent prior to Initial Inquiry Report).

[16] "Responding with Excellence to an Allegation of Sexual Abuse within the Church" by Basyle Tchividjian, Currents in Theology and Mission, Vol.45 No.3

5. Depending upon the information collected and the circumstances, the Diocesan Reporter could seek additional information from the following Diocesan representatives to complete the Initial Inquiry Report (in no particular order):
    a. Interview other witnesses
    b. Speak to respondent
    c. Review Constitution, Canons, and Policies for Diocese
    d. Meet with Diocesan Chancellor
    e. Identify Claimant Advocate
    f. Offer and Coordinate Resources for Claimant
6. The Initial Inquiry Report will outline the following:
    a. The information and circumstances of the misconduct reported.
    b. Details of any initial interviews.
    c. The specific canon or policy that has been alleged to be violated.
    d. Description of any actions taken to provide resources.
    e. Contact information for all parties involved, including advocates.
    f. Suggested next steps. (internal mediation, canonical investigation, etc.)
7. Upon receiving the Initial Inquiry Report, the Bishop will decide if further investigation is required.
8. The Diocesan Reporter can assist Diocesan Representatives with further investigations and guidance regarding process.

f. Next Steps

i) ***Pastoral Care & Healing.*** The parish's response should be survivor-sensitive, i.e., priority should be given to protecting and caring for the alleged survivor/victim and his/her family. However, it is essential that the parish respond in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the parish and community.

ii) ***Contact With and Suspension of the Accused***. The Rector/Senior Pastor, or his designee, should advise the accused of the allegations, the process that will be followed and his/her right to be represented by legal counsel. In addition, the Rector/Senior Pastor should ensure the accused receives pastoral care. Such care should be provided by individuals other than those pastoring or counseling the survivor/victim. The accused should be suspended (with pay if a paid employee) while a confidential investigation is being conducted. This can be done quietly and should be done quickly and without exception. The parish leadership will determine whether the accused will continue in ministry. If the accused is a member of the clergy, such decision by parish leadership must be done in consultation with the Bishop and in conformity to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast.

iii) ***Notification of Insurance Providers***. As soon as the Diocesan Reporter has completed their Initial Inquiry Report and recommends contacting their insurance carrier, the parish should promptly notify its liability insurance company.This is important for at least four reasons:
(1) the insurance policy may require immediate notification for coverage to be effective.
(2) the policy may pay for counseling or legal advice.
(3) the policy may not provide coverage for lawsuits involving acts of sexual abuse.
(4) the insurance carrier, having dealt with similar cases, may be a source of helpful advice.

Unfortunately, most insurance policies do not generally cover sexual misconduct or negligent hiring/supervision in sexual abuse situations. Separate "riders" can be purchased, although some require strict preconditions to coverage like screening, awareness, and prevention training. See Appendix Section F1: Risk Management Guide, for recommendations.

iv) ***Consideration of Retaining Legal Counsel.*** The Rector/Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Bishop and the Chancellor, will determine if legal counsel should be retained. Obtaining competent legal advice at the very outset of the matter may help protect the parish's interests and be a helpful resource regarding any reporting or other legal requirements. In addition, if the investigation is conducted by legal counsel, the information gathered and conveyed to the attorney may be privileged from disclosure as confidential attorney/client communication.

v) ***Designation of a Spokesperson.*** Identify a single spokesperson (someone who can communicate clearly and succinctly and with empathy and care) to respond to media inquiries.

vi) ***Communication with the Congregation.*** The Congregation should not first hear about an instance of abuse in your parish from a news report or through the rumor mill. Consequently, it is important to have early and transparent communication of essential and non-confidential facts with the congregation. The communication should be succinct, factual, non-speculative and survivor-sensitive and, among other things, send a clear message that the survivors/victims are being cared for and that the parish is a safe place.

vii) ***Investigation.*** The Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Chancellor, will decide whether or not an investigation will be conducted and by whom. The Bishop shall not participate in the investigation, which should be impartial and bias-free. The person(s) appointed to investigate the matter should not be employed by or a member of the parish at which the alleged misconduct occurred or have any type of relationship with the accused, the survivor/victim or the survivor/victim's family. Any investigation should not interfere with or impede, in any way, any investigation conducted by state or local law enforcement. Typically, there are three options for who should investigate: trained /skilled individuals from within the Diocese; an independent group that is not a law firm; or an independent lawyer or law firm.

viii) ***Bring Closure to the Investigation.*** If the allegation is substantiated, then discipline or dismissal is generally appropriate. Counseling may also be appropriate. If charges are unsubstantiated, the decision about whether to restore the accused to full employment or volunteer service may depend on a number of circumstantial factors. Consult the Bishop and legal counsel for guidance. Of course, all personnel actions should be well documented in writing and kept in confidential files. Attorney-client privileged material should never be disclosed without first consulting your attorney.

RESOURCES APPENDIX

A. Sample Screening Statement (adjust as necessary)

Have you ever:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, sexual abuse, or had any such conviction expunged?
    - Yes
    - No
- Been charged with child or adult sexual abuse in a civil proceeding?
    - Yes
    - No
- Committed an act of child or adult sexual abuse?
    - Yes
    - No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)?
    - Yes
    - No

Has any other member of your household:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, sexual abuse, or had any such conviction expunged?
    - Yes
    - No
- Been charged with child or adult sexual abuse in a civil proceeding?
    - Yes
    - No
- Committed an act of child or adult sexual abuse?
    - Yes
    - No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)?
    - Yes
    - No

_____ _____

Printed Name Signature

_____

Date

B. Implementing a Train-the-Trainers Model

[This section covers the two main trainings (awareness and policy) and how to conduct a Train-the-Trainers model. Your diocese will need to decide if you will offer the awareness training online through external programs, or in person alongside your policy training. Additionally, you may choose to write your own awareness training. Once you have decided which format and curriculum to use for the awareness training, update this section with that information, being sure to retain the explanation of the process and why it is necessary.]

There are two main components of training: awareness training and policy training.

The most effective model for child abuse awareness and prevention and sexual harassment policies is to hold interactive workshops in-person. Since so many in our culture (one in five) have had an experience of child sexual abuse, in-person workshops are often also a very helpful place for ministry and for healing. The topic itself is a difficult one for many to examine and those in attendance may need help in processing what they have learned or what the training has triggered.

Workshop leaders should be equipped to provide information, support, and referrals and be trained through the Train-the-Trainers model established in our diocese. This model is structured so that each parish sends their trainer(s) to be trained by the diocese, and the trainers then return to their home parish to train clergy, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers. These trainers should demonstrate expertise in teaching while also exercising discernment and pastoral care for those who may be triggered by difficult content.

Once trained, the parish representative trainer will provide instruction for staff, vestry or equivalent, and volunteers in their home parish that mirrors the instruction offered by the diocese, including:

1. **<u>Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Awareness Training*</u>**

   [This awareness training is offered either through a diocesan created and approved curriculum or by using a purchased training curriculum that has been approved by the diocese, listed below. Once your diocese selects its model, update this section with the program of choice and how to access it.

   If the diocese does not create their own Awareness training curriculum, parishes can easily utilize one of the online certification programs, see below.

   Ministry Safe and *Protect My Ministry* offer online learning management programs that keep track of certification. Each congregation should appoint an administrator who will manage online users. Both of these offer discounts for ACNA parishes, see below. Another option for small groups is *Creating a Safe Environment*, an in-person group curriculum (an updated version of *Safeguarding God's Children*).]

2. **Diocesan and Church Policy Training**

   The Safe Church Policies & Procedures found in this document should also covered with clergy, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers, either in-person or virtually. A committee should also be formed to review the policy and procedure manual and adapt it for your congregation. Check with an attorney to make sure that guidelines and reporting procedures conform to your state.

3. **Sexual Harassment Prevention Training**

   This training is offered through an online course supported by The Church Law Center. This online training consists of a fifty-minute video followed by a quiz. Individuals must pass the quiz with a score of 70% or better. The quiz may be taken multiple times until the material is mastered. Parishes will also have the option of utilizing its own curriculum, provided it is approved by the Diocese.

***Options for Awareness Training**

MinistrySafe

MinistrySafe is a safety system designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in your congregation. *MinistrySafe* provides on-line child sexual abuse awareness training, has sample policies and procedures that can be tailored to your particular situation, and provides training in skillful screening and guidelines for monitoring and oversight of the program. This program has been endorsed by the Anglican Church in North America and is its minimum standard.

A parish's Ministry Safe account will cost $100/year for ACNA parishes and $5 for each person who successfully passes the test. To set up a *MinistrySafe* account, go to https://ms.ministrysafe.com/acna/. Be sure to register as an ACNA parish and to sign up for the discount with ACNA2021 code (updated each year). MinistrySafe offers background checks to subscribers.

Protect My Ministry

Protect My Ministry offers child safety training as well as background checks and free screening training videos, helping you fill in the gaps in risk management. *Protect My Ministry* covers protecting children from abuse through its online training and certification, but it also offers extensive resources for screening before the volunteer or employee even begins working with children. One of the unique benefits to *Protect My Ministry* is its social screening, designed to screen a potential worker's social media accounts through a legal process reviewed by the Federal Trade Commission, intended to increase information received beyond background checks. Enrollment fees are waived and the per person cost is reduced if the organization mentions they are an ACNA parish. For more information or to purchase: https://info.protectmyministry.com/acna.

Creating a Safe Environment

Creating a Safe Environment is a research-based, facilitator-led, video-based training program that is intended to be completed in small group training within your parish. From the publishers of Safeguarding God's Children, Praesidium, this *Creating a Safe Environment* curriculum offers case study videos that are watched together and discussed, covering additional topics that go beyond the basics of child protection, such as protecting against peer-to-peer abuse, red-flag behaviors, electronic communications, supervising high-risk areas, and how to handle the conversation when a child discloses abuse. The facilitator guide is a helpful resource for the trainer in each parish to know how to navigate difficult conversation among adults, especially when they may be triggered talking about past abuse. For more information or to purchase: https://praesidium.lpages.co/case/. Praesidium includes background checks in their list of services.

The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention

The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention is an organization that offers accreditation to parishes and schools dedicated to the protection of children. This organization offers resources such as awareness training, but it also offers coaching for parishes in the accreditation process seeking to improve their protection of children. For more information visit: https://www.ecap.net. Background checks are offered through ECAP's affiliates, one of which is Protect My Ministry.

Once your online program is selected, please update this section including registration process and remove the rest.

C. Sample Supervisory Plan[17]

Sunday Morning SAMPLE Supervisory Plan for Toddler Nursery (ages 2- 4)

Registration: All children must be registered by their parent or guardian prior to being welcomed into the nursery. Emergency contact information should be listed on the completed registration form.

Personnel/Ratio: Only screened staff and volunteers may work in the nurseries. No one under the age of **[X]** may be hired to work in the nurseries and no one under the age of **[X]** may volunteer in the nurseries. A minimum of two screened and trained staff/volunteers must always provide supervision with a minimum ratio of one staff/volunteer per five children at any time. Nursery staff and volunteers are not permitted to allow unscreened friends or family members to assist in the nursery.

Supervision: Children in our care require constant loving supervision. Staff and volunteers are expected to engage children in conversation, direct them to age-appropriate activities, and calmly redirect problematic behavior.

Cell Phone Use: Cell phone use is not permitted while working or volunteering in the toddler nursery other than in the case of an emergency.

Discipline Procedure: Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management in the nursery. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management.

Our disciplinary response includes these four steps:

a. Friendly reminder
b. Verbal warning/correction
c. Time out
d. Summoning the parent or legal guardians to return to the nursery

Physical Environment: Windows on nursery doors will not be obstructed. Toys, books, and furniture and apparatus will be cleaned on a [indicate and adjust how frequently, where to find supplies, etc.] basis. Rugs and other moveable items that could pose danger will be secured.

Emergency Procedures: In case of fire, fire extinguishers are located (x). A defibrillator is located (x) and the first aid kit is (x). If a child/youth is injured……If there is a fire…..In case of a tornado or wind event….In case there is an intruder….Safe zones are located (x).

[17] *With certain Supervisory Plans it may be prudent to include a Building Plan that identifies bathrooms, emergency exits etc.*

Bathroom Procedure: Children will be escorted to the bathroom by female staff and volunteers with one person assisting and another in close proximity. Diapering will be conducted by female staff/volunteers in the observable diapering areas only.

Injury/Incident Reporting: Staff or volunteers will fill out an incident report and advise **[Contact]** when a child is injured or hurt in any way. Incidents of conflict with parents should also be reported in the same manner.

Reporting Concerns: Concerns about the nurseries should be reported to **[Contact & Phone number].**

Release of Children: Staff or volunteers will release children only to those adults who have corresponding wristband identification with the child.

I certify that I have read the Supervisory Plan for the following event: _____

I will abide by this plan and report any breach of it to _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature:_____ Date: _____

[Note: This is an example of what a supervisory plan may look like. Plans are required for all children's and youth programming.]

D. How to Report Abuse to Child Protective Services

Although the name of the person reporting the suspected abuse may be requested for follow-up purposes, the person reporting abuse to Child Protective Services is generally NOT required to give his/her name. If the person reporting does provide his/her name and requests anonymity, there are legal mechanisms in place in each state to protect the reporter from having his/her name given to the alleged abuser, unless otherwise ordered by a court.

It is helpful for the person reporting suspected abuse to provide the following:

- The name and address of the child and the parent or person responsible for his/her care.
- The names of other persons, especially children, living in the suspected survivor/victim's home.
- Address of the child's home.
- The child's age, sex, and race.
- The name of the school the child attends.
- The name and address of the alleged abuser, if known.
- A description of the alleged abuse and or neglect, including how long it may have been happening.
- The relationship between the person reporting the abuse and the child.

Please refer to Appendix Section E for a sample form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse to be used when reporting allegations of child abuse to Child Protective Services and other authorities.

Once completed, that form should be kept in a confidential file with the parish.

Child Protective Services Procedure after Initial Report

If the Child Protective Services worker determines that the report of abuse is a valid complaint, then the complaint must be investigated. To constitute a valid complaint, all the following criteria must be met:

- The child must be under the age of 18 at the time the complaint occurred.
- The alleged abuser must be the child's parent or caretaker at the time of the abuse.
- The report must be made in the city or county where
  a. the child lives
  b. the abuse occurred
  c. If neither of these is known, where the abuse is discovered
- The circumstances must meet the state definition of abuse or neglect.

E. Sample Form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse

Confidential: Keep completed form in locked file. [Provide direction here as to where these forms will be stored.]

Your Information	Name:	
	Date of initial report:	
	Title/Position:	
	Supervisor:	
	Address:	
	Phone:	
	Email:	
Information Regarding Suspected Survivor/ Victim(s):	Name:	
	Age:	
	Biological sex:	
	Address:	
	Telephone:	
	Relationship to the parish:	
	Name of any other suspected survivor/victim (attach additional forms):	
	How did you become suspicious of possible abuse?	

Information about the Person Suspected of Child Abuse:	Name:	
	Address:	
	Telephone:	
	Relationship to the parish, if any:	
Confidential Details (Keep locked up)	Describe any physical evidence of suspected abuse:	
	Describe incidence details such as type, date(s), time(s), and location(s) of suspected abuse:	
Witnesses (if any)	1. Name/phone/age:	
	1. Relationship to parish, if any:	
	2. Name/phone/age:	
	2. Relationship to parish, if any:	
Reporting Details	To whom was the initial report made (name/title/phone):	
	What is their relationship to the parish?	
	On what date was the suspected abuse reported to Child Protective Services?	
	Name of CPS worker who received the report:	
	If reported to police, what was the name of officer receiving report and the date?	
	Were the parents/guardians notified? Date and parent/guardian phone number:	
	Was suspected abuse reported to the Diocese, what date, and to whom was it reported?	
	Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation?	
Submission	Date:	Signature:

F. Risk Management & Compliance Resources

F.1 Risk Management Guide

No matter how expertly your diocesan policies and procedures are written, no matter how compliant your parishes and diocesan organizations are, no matter how outstanding your screening, training, interactions, monitoring, reporting, and responses are it is not uncommon for completely unintended things to happen to parishes intentionally following protocols.

It is, therefore, important to select the right insurance including the correct limits, terms, conditions, and deductibles that are customized to your specific needs. We recommend that you purchase the very best insurance your parish can afford. Your Safe Church Task Force recommends the following parish insurance coverages. For questions regarding the following recommendations, please contact Mr. Marc Hutson, HopePointe Anglican Church, The Woodlands, TX, mobile (281) 433-6717, or marchutson@gmail.com.

Commercial General Liability Insurance	
Each Occurrence	$1,000,000
General Aggregate	$2,000,000
Damage to rented premise (each Occurrence)	$ 300,000
Medical Expense (any one person)	$ 5,000
Personal & Advertising Injury	$1,000,000
Products & Completed Operations – Aggregate	$2,000,000

Commercial Property
- Building Coverage: Determined by replacement cost calculation
- Building Content Coverage: Determined by inventory replacement calculation

Religious Institution Coverages	
Abuse or Molestation Liability	
Each Occurrence:	$1,000,000
Aggregate:	$1,000,000
Clergy Professional Legal Liability	
Each Occurrence:	$1,000,000
Aggregate:	$1,000,000
Religious Institutions Directors & Officers Legal Liability	
Each Occurrence:	$1,000,000
Aggregate:	$2,000,000

As an additional resource, see the Texas United Methodist Church Minimum Insurance Requirements.[18]

[18] Microsoft Word - minimum-insurance-requirements-november_2019_revision-final (1).docx (txcumc.org)

F.2 Sample Parish Tracking Compliance Checklist

Parishes, not the Diocese or the Anglican Church in North America, are responsible for obtaining and keeping documentation of the following items in a secured location, in perpetuity, which includes evidence of the following. It is acceptable to save electronic copies of scanned documents in a secure location.

Screening Standards:

- Volunteer applications for those working in youth and children's ministries and all employees.
- National Sexual Offender Registry and criminal background checks renewed at least every two years.
- Personal and professional reference checks.
- Social media searches.
- Interviews and screening statements.
- For drivers: copy of valid driver's license, vehicle registration, DMV record, and proof of auto insurance.

Training Standards:

- Acknowledge that all clergy, vestry or equivalent, and staff working in youth and children's ministries have read, understood, and accepted the Diocesan Policy on the Protection of Children.
- Acknowledge that all clergy, vestry or equivalent, staff and volunteers working with youth and children's ministries have attended a diocesan-approved awareness training and will be recertified every two years.
- Acknowledge that all clergy, vestry or equivalent, staff and volunteers working with youth and children's ministries have attended a diocesan/church policy training (Diocesan Policy on Protection of Children) and will be recertified every two years.
- Acknowledge that all clergy, vestry or equivalent, staff and volunteers have read, understood, and accepted the Diocesan Policy on the Protection of Adults.
- Acknowledge that all clergy have completed the diocesan required training on issues of sexual harassment, mentoring and colleague relationships, and sexual exploitation in pastoral relationship (through The Church Law Center or other provider approved by the Diocese) and will be recertified every two years.
- Acknowledge that all clergy, vestry or equivalent, staff and volunteers have completed the diocesan approved training on Sexual Harassment Prevention and on the adult protection policy itself.

Monitoring Standards:

- Written supervisory plans for all youth and children's programming.

Responding & Reporting Standards:

Individual(s) reporting Concerns should immediately notify the Diocesan Reporter by one of the following three options.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the *Report a Concern Form* here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

F.3 Individual Safe Church Policy Acknowledgement of Receipt and Training for all clergy, vestry or equivalent, employees, lay ministers, and volunteers

- ○ I have received the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast's Safe Church Policy and confirm that I have read and understand its contents. I understand how this is implemented in my local parish and my role in that. I understand that the policy may be modified at any time by my parish. Once notified of any modifications, I am responsible for reading and complying with them.
- ○ I have received training on the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast's Safe Church Policy and Awareness Training either in person or online through a diocesan approved site. I understand my role in my local parish and that I am required to be retrained every two years or sooner with modified guidelines.

I am (check appropriate group):

- ○ Clergy
- ○ Vestry or equivalent
- ○ Employee, non-clergy
- ○ Lay minister
- ○ Volunteer

Signature_____

Print Name_____

Congregation_____

*This form must be signed and returned by all clergy; vestry or equivalent; lay ministers; employees; and volunteers who work with children. It is the Diocese's responsibility to maintain all clergy records. All others are maintained by the parish.

F.4

Safe Church Policy: Protection of Children & Adults
Congregational Acknowledgement of Compliance

On this date, I acknowledge that my church _____, located in _____, has complied during the prior year with the following Safe Church Policy requirements[19]:

- ☐ Employee/volunteer applications completed and filed.
- ☐ Employee/volunteer interview summaries completed and filed.
- ☐ Employee/volunteer summaries of personal and professional reference checks completed and filed.
- ☐ Clergy, staff, vestry (lay leadership), ministry leaders, and long-term contractors passed a National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background check (every two years).
- ☐ Acknowledge that the clergy, staff, vestry (lay leadership), ministry leaders and long-term contractors working in youth, children's or adult ministries, have read, understood, and accepted the Safe Church Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast, Ver 1.2 dated October 23, 2024.
- ☐ Acknowledge successful completion of Diocesan-approved online child safety training (every two years).
- ☐ Acknowledge successful completion of Diocesan-approved online adult harassment training (every two years).
- ☐ For drivers of children or youth: received copy of valid driver's license, vehicle registration, DMV record, and proof of auto insurance.
- ☐ Written supervisory plans posted for all youth/children's activities, sponsored and non-sponsored, on-site and off-site.
- ☐ Reports of suspected child abuse/adult harassment,

[19] Churches are responsible for obtaining and filing this documentation in a secure location.

☐ Do you know your insurance carrier's representative?

☐ Have you developed a professional business relationship with your representative? (for support, guidance, questions, additional training, etc.)

Does your parish's general liability insurance policy have the following endorsements?

☐ 1. Sexual abuse or molestation? Limits? _____

☐ 2. Clergy professional legal liability? Limits? _____

☐ 3. Religious institutions officers & directors' legal liability? Limits? _____

☐ Have you documented your insurance carrier's claims process in case of a sexual misconduct or harassment event?

Rector _____ Senior Warden _____

Return scanned, signed Congregational Acknowledgement of Compliance to the Diocesan Office at canoncraige@dwgc.org.

G. 5-Step Approach to Child Protection (Abbreviated Version)

1. **SCREENING** is an opportunity to prevent a molester from ever having contact with children and youth in our programs. Our careful screening of employees and volunteers in youth and children's ministries includes:

    a. Reviewing signed standard applications for all paid staff and for all volunteers in youth and children's ministries.
    b. Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry/Criminal Background checks and renewing them every two years.
    c. Conducting personal and professional reference checks and a thorough social media search.
    d. Conducting face-to-face interviews.
    e. Requiring a signature stating that clergy, employees, volunteers, and other adult members of their households have not been arrested for or convicted of child abuse or diagnosed with certain psychiatric conditions such as voyeurism or exhibitionism.
    f. Requiring a six-month minimum attendance rule for all volunteers serving in children's and youth ministries.

2. **TRAINING** puts the power to protect in everyone's hands and is an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize the warning signs of potential abuse, commit to the safe practices specific to the DWGC and learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse.

    a. Reading Requirements All members of the clergy, all members of the vestry, leadership council or equivalent and those staff members and volunteers with direct supervision over youth or children must certify that they have read, understood, and accepted your parish's policies on the protection of children and sign an acknowledgement form.

    b. Workshop Attendance Requirements Every two years, clergy, vestry, leadership council or equivalent, staff and all volunteers who have contact with youth and children must complete a diocesan approved awareness training as well as diocesan approved training on the policy itself.

3. **INTERACTING** helps children and adults feel safe in ministry and helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse. Verbal interactions between clergy, staff, church leadership, contract workers, or volunteers and children should be positive, constructive, and encouraging. Staff members and volunteers should avoid talking to children, parents, or caregivers in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Clergy, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet. Online behavior is treated equal

to in-person behavior including two adult rule, appropriate language, tone, attire, topics and obtaining parental consent for connections.

Photos of children will not be used contrary to the wishes of parent(s). The parish will refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior permission from parent(s).

Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch.

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child and never be based on the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. It is the diocesan policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for the behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

Appropriate interactions may include:

- Smiles
- Encouragement
- Handshakes and high fives
- Fist bumps
- Thumbs up
- Side to side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Arm around the shoulder
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Holding or picking up children who are 4 years old and younger

Inappropriate interactions include:

- Spanking, slapping, or any form of physical discipline
- Shaming or belittling a child or youth
- Meeting alone in unobservable or isolated places
- Swearing in the presence of children
- Engaging in sexually oriented communications with or in proximity to children
- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol, or any illegal drugs when in the presence of children
- Wrestling
- Tickling
- Sitting in laps (except for nursery-aged children)
- Kissing on the lips
- Full frontal hugs or "bear hugs"
- Commenting on children's bodies
- Forcing unwanted affection
- Being nude in front of children (such as on overnight trips, changing at pool parties, etc.)
- Contacting or "friending" a child on youth social networking sites without the parent's permission

- Showing favoritism or possessiveness
- Calling, emailing, or texting too often (singling a child out – “grooming” a child)
- Giving gifts to children without the parent’s permission
- Ridiculing the beliefs of a child or youth or those of their parents
- Allowing a child or youth to do things against the wishes of the parents
- Offering children or youth cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
- Allowing children or youth to view pornography or to visit inappropriate internet sites
- Asking a child or youth to keep “secrets” from his or her parents or caregivers
- Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- Taking pictures while children are dressing or showering

4. **MONITORING** allows us to detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse when none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. Clergy, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers must always be diligent in monitoring and supervising children’s and youth activities in all settings.

It is imperative to be vigilant about the possibility of peer-on-peer abuse. 30-50 % of youth are sexually abused by other youth. Peer-on-peer abuse often escalates from bullying and often occurs when one youth holds some form of power imbalance over another such as age, size, intelligence, and gender. Comprehensive and engaged supervision is essential to preventing peer-on-peer abuse.

Our monitoring practices include the following:

- **TWO ADULT RULE**: All children and youth activities shall be designed to be always supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals.
- **SUPERVISORY PLANS**: An onsite or offsite written Supervisory Plan, that includes all items detailed in section [G.3] shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children. Those tasked with supervising youth or children for a specific program must understand their responsibilities as outlined and sign a copy of the specific supervisory plan.
- No child or youth will ever be left unattended during, or following, a parish activity.
- Clery, staff, church leadership, contract workers, and volunteers should not conduct unobservable meetings or interactions with children or youth.
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should occur in a public place or where other persons are present.
- Everyone is tasked with watching for, and responding to, policy violations.
- An open invitation for parents or caregivers to visit at any time unannounced.
- A careful review of new programs and/or significant changes to a program structure.
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others.
- Keeping unused rooms locked.
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas.

The following restroom policy will be in effect during all children's programming:

Children who require diapering:

- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers; children should not be left unattended while being changed.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

Children who are special needs or nursery aged and being potty-trained:

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- When children are assisted in bathrooms the stall door will be left partially open.
- Preschool-aged children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- Accidents should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

Elementary School Children:

- Elementary-age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Children should not be in the restroom together.
- Staff members and volunteers should take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom or sending children to the restroom without an adult. If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

When children are present in the sanctuary, parents or other legal guardians are encouraged to accompany their elementary aged child to the restroom or send them with an older sibling; we ask this knowing that restrooms are often the most likely place for abuse to occur in an institutional setting.

5. RESPONDING & REPORTING

a. Responding to Concerns

If a child discloses abuse, remember to:

- Respect the child's privacy by finding a private, non-threatening place to talk.
- Ask a staff member or trained volunteer to join in listening to the child or youth's account, if possible.
- Keep calm, listen, and avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- Let the child or youth know that he or she is understood.
- Assure the child or youth that the abuse was not his or her fault.
- Tell the child or youth, if helpful, that they were brave to disclose. Avoid questions that could make the child or youth feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint their recollection and account; child survivors/victims are often vague in their initial disclosure.
- Write down as accurately as possible what the child or youth disclosed; this information can be used in filing the Report of Suspected Abuse Form for the diocese and the Child Protective Services report if warranted.
- Respect confidentiality be careful afterwards not to discuss the information with, or in front of, other people who do not need to know what happened.
- Endeavor to ensure the safety of the child.

b. Reporting Concerns to Church Authorities

Individual(s) reporting Concerns should immediately notify the Diocesan Reporter by one of the following three options.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the *Report a Concern Form* here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

c. Contact with the Parents

Following contact by the Diocesan Reporter, if the accused is not the child's parent or guardian or otherwise a member of the household, the Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee should contact the child's parents or legal guardians informing them of the Concerns and the steps being taken to address the Concerns. In addition, the Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee are to ensure the family receives immediate and long-term pastoral care and are offered professional counseling from a counselor with whom they are comfortable and who is experienced in trauma-informed care. Also, consider assigning a member of parish leadership as a liaison, who will be intentional about staying in regular contact with the family and walking with them through what will be a very challenging season. If possible, select someone who has a relationship with the

family and ensure the liaison understands his /her role and limitations. As an example, the liaison should not provide counseling to the family but could help connect them with an appropriate counselor.

d. Reporting Concerns to Legal Authorities

Report Concerns to Legal Authorities, in accordance with applicable laws.

TEXAS CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE	**1-800-252-5400**
LOUISIANA CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE	**1-855-452-5437**

The Children's Pastor or Rector/Senior Pastor will contact the child's parents or legal guardians and ensure they receive immediate and long-term pastoral care and are offered professional counseling from a counselor with whom they are comfortable and who is experienced in trauma-informed care.

The Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee will advise the accused of the allegations, the process to be followed and his/her right to be represented by counsel and determine whether the accused will be suspended. The accused should also be provided pastoral care. Parish leadership will notify insurance providers and determine whether legal counsel will be retained and whether the matter will be investigated.

H. 4-Step Approach to Adult Protection (Abbreviated Version)

1. AWARENESS

Adult abuse typically involves unwanted physical, sexual, psychological, or other actions that are intentionally taken to disadvantage another. Sexual misconduct includes a range of unwelcome and unwanted conduct including grooming; verbal, emotional and/or physical sexual harassment; sexual assault; and all forms of sexual violence.

2. TRAINING

This training is in addition to the required training for protection of children.

a. All members of the clergy serving in a DWGC parish and all employees of any DWGC parish must complete diocesan approved training on issues of sexual harassment, mentoring and colleague relationships, and sexual exploitation in pastoral relationship within 30 days of employment (or volunteering) in a DWGC parish. The training is currently completed online through Keeping Our Sacred Trust (https://www.keepingoursacredtrust.org). Every two years clergy must submit evidence of completion and recertification to the diocesan office.

b. Every two years all members of the clergy, all members of the vestry or equivalent and all staff members, contractors and volunteers must certify, that they have i) read, understood, and accepted the Diocese's policies on the Protection of Adults and ii)

completed diocesan-approved training on the Protection of Adults policy and Sexual Harassment Prevention.

3. INTERACTING

All clergy, employees, and volunteers are encouraged to maintain healthy boundaries and to strive for emotionally healthy relationships. Each congregation's leadership is asked to consistently bring awareness to this issue by normalizing the following principles:

- ***Choose the Light*:** Whether it is porn addiction, gossip, an affair, bullying, sexual jokes or comments, flirting, etc., bringing the issue into the light is always the path toward healing, accountability, sanctification, and emotional health.

- ***Transparency:*** It is a difficult thing to clearly state what you think/feel/see happening, but it is a sign of emotional health. No one can improve or eradicate the inappropriate behavior without understanding the issue. Avoid triangulation and protection for individuals who are acting inappropriately.

- ***See something, say something:*** If something is a concern to you bring it to the appropriate leadership detailed within this document (for clergy that is the Bishop; for laity, that is the clergy at one's parish; for the Bishop, that is the Diocesan Chancellor); including multiple leaders in the discussion will ensure accountability, transparency, and appropriate resolution. The Diocese provides three options for the reporting of all Concerns.
  1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
  2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
  3. Complete the Report a Concern Form here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

a. Pastoral Counseling

During pastoral counseling sessions clergy and pastoral caregivers are expected to maintain an environment that minimizes any existence, or appearance, of potentially inappropriate behavior or exploitation.

The Bishop and any clergy involved in pastoral counseling should refrain from placing conversations regarding allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct withing a sacramental Framework (e.g. confession).

b. Spiritual Direction

If a partnership of spiritual direction is entered into long-term, consider these safeguards:

- Ensure this relationship is brought into the light among the leadership team of the parish by informing multiple people of this partnership.
- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction in your parish, consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the parish, as well as accountability.

- If one clergy person is offering long-term spiritual direction to another clergy person, bring the arrangement into the light by informing the office of the Bishop of the relationship.
- Meet in a public place, not in one another's private living quarters.
- It is recommended that it be conducted by same gender participants.
- Follow guidelines regarding interaction and physical contact.
- Define the parameters of the relationship at the first meeting, articulating how one might discontinue the relationship without further explanation at any time.
- Communicate to whom the participant should report if they have any concerns (including the names and numbers of senior leadership, the Bishop, or the DWGC hotline).
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together.

4. RESPONDING & REPORTING

It is essential that each parish respond to a report or instance of abuse in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse, and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the local parish and community.

a. Reporting Concerns to Legal Authorities

Every DWGC parish should be familiar with its State's laws and reporting requirements regarding abuse and neglect of the elderly and disabled adults.

In Texas anyone who has a reasonable cause to believe a person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to Adult Protective Services, which can be reached by calling (800) 252-5400.

In Louisiana anyone who has reasonable cause to believe a person 60 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to Elderly Protective Services, which can be reached calling (833) 577-6532 or (225) 342-0144.

b. Reporting Concerns to Church Authorities

Individual(s) reporting Concerns should immediately notify the Diocesan Reporter by one of the following three options.

1. Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
2. Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
3. Complete the *Report a Concern Form* here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

c. Contact With the Survivor/Victim

Following contact by the Diocesan Reporter, the Rector/Senior Pastor or his designee should contact the survivor/victim to ensure she/he, and her/his family, receives immediate and long-term pastoral care and is offered professional counseling from a counselor with whom she/he is comfortable and who is experienced in trauma-informed care. Also, consider assigning a

member of parish leadership as a liaison, who will be intentional about staying in regular contact with the survivor/victim and family and walking with them through what will be a very challenging season. If possible, select someone who has a relationship with the family and ensure the liaison understands his /her role and limitations. As an example, the liaison should not provide counseling to the survivor/victim or family but could help connect them with an appropriate counselor.

d. Next Steps

1. **Contact With and Suspension of the Accused**. The Rector/Senior Pastor, or his designee, should advise the accused of the allegations, the process that will be followed and his/her right to be represented by legal counsel. In addition, the Rector/Senior Pastor should ensure the accused receives pastoral care. Such care should be provided by individuals other than those pastoring or counseling the survivor/victim. The accused should be suspended (with pay if a paid employee) while a confidential investigation is being conducted. This can be done quietly and should be done quickly and without exception. The parish leadership will determine whether the accused will continue in ministry. If the accused is a member of the clergy, such decision by parish leadership must be done in consultation with the Bishop and in conformity to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast.

2. **Notification of Insurance Providers**. Unless the parish's legal counsel advises otherwise, the parish should promptly notify its liability insurance company.

3. **Consideration of Retaining Legal Counsel.** The Rector/Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, will determine if legal counsel should be retained. Obtaining competent legal advice at the very outset of the matter may help protect the parish's interests and be a helpful resource regarding any reporting or other legal requirements.

4. **Designation of a Spokesperson.** Identify a single spokesperson to respond to media inquiries, someone who can communicate clearly and succinctly and with empathy and care.

5. **Communication With the Congregation.** The Congregation should not first hear about an instance of abuse in your parish from a news report or through the rumor mill. Consequently, it is important to have early and transparent communication of essential and non-confidential facts with the congregation. The communication should be succinct, factual, non-speculative and survivor-sensitive and, among other things, send a clear message that the survivors/victims are being cared for and that the parish is a safe place.

6. **Investigation.** The Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Chancellor, will decide whether or not an investigation will be conducted and by whom. The Bishop shall not participate in the investigation, which should be impartial and bias-free. The person(s) appointed to investigate the matter should not be employed by or a member of the parish at which the alleged misconduct occurred or have any type of relationship with the accused, the survivor/victim or the survivor/victim's family. Any investigation should not interfere with or impede, in any way, any investigation conducted by state or local law enforcement.

I. Draft Sample Response Plan

1. Appropriate actions and communications are generally fact-specific and depend heavily on the circumstances, including the types of allegations, the role (if any) of the accused, the involvement of law enforcement and whether any of the behavior is admitted.

2. The parish's response should be survivor-sensitive, i.e., priority should be given to protecting and caring for the alleged survivor/victim and his/her family. However, it is essential that the parish respond in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the person accused of abuse and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing in the congregation and community.

3. Document any actions taken regarding the complaint and retain that documentation in confidential files. Electronic documents, images and recordings should be preserved and saved on a secure, password-protected computer or cloud-server and all paper documents should be preserved and locked in a secure location. The Chancellor or parish's legal counsel may have additional specific instructions for how such documentation should be prepared and maintained. No documents, photographs, recordings, emails, or texts that relate in any way to matter at hand should be destroyed or deleted without consulting with the parish's legal counsel or the Chancellor.

4. If a child discloses abuse or neglect, the clergy, staff, church leader, contract worker, or volunteer receiving the information (with another responsible adult if reasonably possible) should calmly and carefully listen to the child's account, ask non-threatening questions if needed and write down what the child discloses as accurately as possible. The information obtained from the child should be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality.

5. Individual(s) reporting Concerns should immediately notify the Diocesan Reporter by one of the following three options.

a) Call the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: 817-988-1941
b) Email the ACNAWest Misconduct Reporting Office: Concerns@acnawest.org
c) Complete the *Report a Concern Form* here and the Diocesan Reporter will contact you.

6. The Diocesan Reporter, in turn, will report the allegations to the Rector/Senior Pastor (who, in turn, should report the matter to the Bishop) and provide all notes taken during any conversations with the survivor/victim.

7. If the reported Concern warrants further action, the Rector/Senior Pastor should immediately contact the child's parents or legal guardians reporting abuse and ensure they receive immediate and long-term pastoral care and are offered professional counseling from a counselor who is experienced with trauma-informed care and acceptable to them. Also, consider assigning a member of parish leadership as a

liaison, who will be intentional about staying in regular contact with the family and walking with them through what will be a very challenging season.

8. Promptly notify your liability insurance company. Do not wait for the investigation to proceed before notifying your insurance company.

9. The Rector/Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, Chancellor, and insurance representative, should decide whether independent legal counsel should be retained.

10. Consult with the Chancellor for advice regarding compliance with reporting laws, and then make/file the necessary reports with the appropriate agencies as soon as possible.

11. Inform the accused of the allegations, the process that will be followed and his/her right to be represented by legal counsel and ensure the accused receives pastoral care. The accused should be suspended (with pay if he/she is a paid employee) while a confidential investigation is being conducted. If the accused is a member of the clergy, any employment-related decisions by parish leadership must be made in consultation with the Bishop and in conformity to the Constitution and Canons of the DWGC.

12. The Bishop, in consultation with the Chancellor and the insurance representative, should decide upon the nature and extent of the investigation, if any, to be conducted and by whom. Neither the Bishop nor the Rector/Senior Pastor should participate in the investigation, which should be impartial and bias-free.

13. Identify a single spokesperson (someone who can communicate clearly and succinctly and with empathy and care) to respond to any media inquiries.

14. Have early and transparent communication of essential and non-confidential facts with the congregation. The communication should be succinct, factual, non-speculative and survivor-sensitive and, among other things, send a clear message that the survivors/victims are being cared for and that the parish is a safe place.

15. Care must be taken not to interfere with any investigation by law enforcement or your insurance company, and to be sensitive to the fair treatment of the accused and the well-being of the congregation. Every effort should be made to ensure that all persons involved are treated with dignity and compassion.

J. Caring for the Community Resources

1. Caring for the Congregation

Incidents of abuse (whether abuse of a child or an adult), and the secrecy that often surrounds them, can cause devastating harm to the parish as well as to the survivors/victims. Therefore, where current or past abuse has been perpetrated by clergy, staff, church leadership, contract worker, or volunteer of the parish, the parish shall provide consultation to encourage the discussion of such incidents and to provide a means to facilitate healing within the parish. Section J.3. includes one suggested model of how this may be done: ***a congregational trauma debriefing model.***

It is essential that each parish responds to a report or instance of abuse or misconduct in a manner that promotes healing for the survivor/victim, the offender, and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing within the congregation generally.

Traumatic events have well-documented effects, both immediate and delayed. When a congregation experiences a trauma, the impact is likely to be expressed through symptoms such as:

- Loss of energy or feeling of paralysis.
- Distrust of leadership (often projected onto future leadership).
- Divisions within the congregation.
- Some group members feeling isolated and withdrawing from the group.
- Anger being displaced onto unrelated issues or blown out of proportion.
- A conspiracy of silence about the traumatic event.
- Despair about the congregation's future.
- Distorting responsibility for the event.
- Seeking a "quick fix" without thoughtful reflection.
- Difficulty making normal and necessary decisions.

All these symptoms could be carried into subsequent years unless the trauma is processed, integrated into the life of the congregation, and healed. A useful model for addressing and integrating a trauma is the "debriefing" model drawn from disciplines that do crisis counseling, such as emergency medicine, law enforcement, military science, crisis chaplaincy, and disaster agencies.

A trauma debriefing allows participants to integrate the reality of the event with their own responses to that event. The Model for Information & Trauma Debriefing Meeting set forth in Section J.3. is an effective means to communicate, process, and accept facts, allow feelings to surface, and then, through God's healing grace, head into the future unhindered by the past.

The Diocesan Office should be contacted as promptly as possible to obtain recommendations for professionals experienced with trauma-informed care and counseling.

2. Guiding Principles for Healing in the Church

The following guidelines outline steps that can be taken to promote healing in the congregation:

1. **Contact with the Family.** Before the process for healing begins, the Bishop or his representative should maintain regular contact with the complainant(s) and describe to the complainant(s) the procedures to be used for promoting congregational healing.

2. **Privacy Concerns.** The privacy of the complainant(s) must be balanced against the need for openness with the local parish. Insofar as possible, the identity of the complainant(s) and any details which may identify him/her should be kept confidential.

3. **Providing Facts.** The procedures shall consider that parish members usually know when "something is going on," and, in the absence of facts, rumor and speculation will grow.

4. **Notifying designated lay leader(s).** The designated lay leader(s)ship should be advised promptly of the issues, since that group's participation is vital in planning and implementing the processes for parish healing.

5. **Trauma Debriefing.** The healing and unity of a congregation are fostered when there is an open meeting, called an "Information & Trauma Debriefing Meeting," at which the Bishop or his representative presents as much factual information as possible.

   Since the local parish will likely include people who have experienced abuse or misconduct themselves, appropriate personnel trained in crisis ministry should be present and available on a small group or one-to-one basis immediately after the formal presentation. Also, local mental health resources (including sliding scale fee agencies) should be publicized so that members of the congregation know how to find these services. (Note that many communities have publicly funded survivor services.)

   The debriefing should follow this process set forth in J.3. The message should be "The Church is a place for truth. We follow Jesus, who described himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life."

6. **Parish Spokesperson.** The vestry or equivalent, in consultation with the clergy, is encouraged to appoint a parish spokesperson. The congregation, including parish members and staff members, is urged to refer all media inquiries to the parish spokesperson.

7. **Interim Priest.** If the circumstances require that an interim priest be engaged, that priest should have special training in trauma debriefing. The interim priest should have regular opportunities to report and consult with the Bishop, his or her designated staff person, and counselors.

8. **Consulting Legal Authorities.** Neither the clergy nor any other parish worker should attempt to impede persons who wish to consult with legal authorities.

9. **Continuing Pastoral Care.** The clergy and/or vestry or equivalent should consult with the Bishop about additional resources for the healing and care of the congregation.

3. A Model for Information & Trauma Debriefing Meeting

The following procedures are recommended for the information and trauma debriefing meeting, but the parish and the Bishop should consult in advance with their respective legal counsel (and, if counsel recommends, insurance provider(s)) before conducting such a meeting or undertaking any such actions.

Steps Prior to Meeting

1. **Select Leaders.** Carefully choose a Congregational Trauma Debriefing team and a leader or co-leaders who have had experience with a debriefing or trauma-related process. It is important that the Rector/Senior Pastor or the Rector/Senior Pastor's representative be a visible participant in the debriefing, but not in the role of leadership.

2. **Schedule and notify.** Schedule the debriefing as soon as possible after the complaint becomes public knowledge. Ensure that all members of the congregation and parish staff are notified of the debriefing by telephone, email, overnight mail, or other fast and reliable method of notification. It is important to get a wide participation, so that all who experience the trauma also share the debriefing experience.

3. **Choose a Meeting Place.** Hold the debriefing in an appropriate place, preferably on the parish's property. Although an opening prayer is appropriate, this should not be a liturgical event.

4. **Address the News Media.** While the debriefing should not be confidential, it is important that no one be placed in jeopardy because of any disclosures made during that meeting. Therefore, it is preferable that the news media is not present for the debriefing but meet after the debriefing with the parish spokesperson and Bishop.

Agenda for the Meeting

1. **Open the Meeting.** The Bishop or his representative should welcome the attendees, as should one of the designated lay leader(s)s. The designated lay leader(s) then should introduce himself/herself, explain the debriefing process, and outline the guidelines for the debriefing. It is important to keep the debriefing to the specified procedures. Leaders should be prepared for a lengthy meeting.

2. **Present the Facts.** Subject to the advice of counsel, the general facts and approximate chronology of the trauma should be presented verbally, supplemented by written notations such as a summary handout, or by writing notes on newsprint during the factual presentation. The goal is to ensure that all those present have a common record of the traumatic event. Note that this is not a time for feelings to be expressed, and the group may need some direction to withhold those feelings until the next phase of the debriefing.

3. **Solicit Reactions.** Once an appropriate record has been presented, the designated lay leader(s) should invite parish members to express their reactions to the facts. (Some parish members may need to be directed to express their own feelings and not those of others.) No feelings, however trivial, intense, or unusual, should be discounted, and no effort should be made to fix, soothe, or smooth them over. The responses simply are to be collected and heard.

4. **Examine Repercussions.** Once reactions have been expressed fully, the leader should ask those present to turn their attention to the repercussions of the event and consider the congregation's future. This step bridges the trauma with the ongoing life of those involved in the trauma. It may be a time to explore some of the issues the congregation will face soon. As with the presentation of facts, the issues raised may be noted both verbally and in writing.

5. **Seek Context and Perspective.** Members of the congregation also should be invited to place the event within a context or perspective. There may be expressions of confusion, helplessness, or curiosity about how other groups have resolved an issue of this type. In this phase, people may have an awareness of paradox and pose some hard questions such as the following. Leaders have discretion whether to respond, or to simply allow others to speak.

    - Why do bad things happen?
    - How can it be that such a talented priest/leader could be involved in misconduct?
    - Why do things like this happen in a parish?
    - Where does the responsibility lie?
    - What about the resources of our faith?

Actions After the Meeting

1. **Plan.** The final step is planning. This could include:

    - Scheduling a follow-up session one or two months into the future.
    - Discussing the ways in which the pastoral and sacramental needs of the congregation will be met.
    - Describing the resources available to people who may need counseling or other specialized attention.

2. **Provide Trained Counselors.** For the immediate needs of those present, it is important that trained and trauma-informed crisis professionals be available in the parish building so that individuals or groups may process their feelings further. These professionals are present simply to listen and support people in integrating the trauma.

3. **Debrief the Debriefing.** After the debriefing, members of the Congregational Trauma Debriefing Team should meet to discuss their own experiences with the debriefing meeting, to do the following:

- Plan the follow-up monitoring of the congregation in the future.
- Determine whether there are issues that will need further clarification.
- Determine whether there are complicating factors, or factors that require special continuing attention.
- Decide what the designated lay leader(s)ship of the congregation requires to address the issue further; and evaluate the debriefing meeting itself (or agree to do so at a later date).

Additional Responses & Follow-Up

If new information comes to light after the first debriefing, further meetings may be held. Additionally, regular follow-up sessions with the congregation should be held during the first year after disclosure of the incident(s).

Additional appropriate parish responses may include:

- Regular prayer for the complainant(s), the respondent(s), and the congregation should continue.
- Preaching about violation of trust and liturgical acts of corporate penance.
- Securing a safe place for the complainant(s) and the complainant's family in community life.
- If incarceration or other punitive action follows legal proceedings, developing a means for the congregation to deal appropriately with the person who may be imprisoned.

Congregational Follow-up: The First Year

Even with the best of care, a congregation that has experienced sexual misconduct will likely need an ongoing program of support and assistance, especially in the first year. This year will be devoted to a healing process, in which the congregation slowly will integrate the reality of its experience into its future. If such integration does not take place, the congregation may suffer from prolonged loss of energy, despair about the future, loss and/or isolation of some members, distrust of lay and/or ordained leadership or of the Bishop, and difficulty making decisions or taking risks.

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Suggested congregational follow-up activities may include:

- **Meeting with the Bishop.** A meeting with the Bishop or the Bishop's representative and the vestry or equivalent to assess the healing process of the congregation.
- **Staff Input.** Obtaining input from parish staff (including an interim priest where present) about their observations regarding the incident and the debriefing process.
- **Study Groups.** Establishing study groups to consider the issue of healing from sexual abuse, perhaps by reading a selected book for discussion.
- **Self-evaluation.** Conducting a congregational self-evaluation, using a questionnaire or survey instrument.
- **Focus Groups.** Creating congregational focus groups to address the issue of where the congregation stands in its process of moving ahead.
- **Committee on Congregational Life.** Forming a Committee on Congregational Life charged with assessing the needs and planning programs for continued healing.
- **Professional Consultant.** Appointing a professional consultant experienced with issues of abuse to work with the vestry or equivalent and affected congregation on the components of the healing process.

Using the Trauma to Help Others.

Some parishes, having worked through a history of child abuse, take up a special vocation in a related area. Such steps signify that the congregation has moved into the redemptive activity of letting its own pain be a gift for others. Among possible actions:

- **Helping Other Parishes.** Offering help to other parishes confronted with the same issues.
- **Sponsoring Programs.** Sponsoring seminars or programs on ethics and sexuality.
- **Parish Building Use.** Offering the parish building for use by community groups to address issues of child abuse.
- **Developing programs**. Developing specific programs for young people about protecting themselves from abuse.

4. Pastoral Response to Known Sexual Offenders

The Church must make every reasonable effort to protect children. Special care must be taken when a parish interacts with a person who is registered as a sexual offender, or self-discloses a history of sexual misconduct towards children, or self-discloses a struggle with sexual attraction toward children.

When such a person is known to be a participant in the parish or its activities, the clergy shall inhibit that person from any contact with children and shall require (except as otherwise directed by the parish's legal counsel) the offender to sign a contract/covenant that details expectations, defines boundaries and off-limits locations (e.g. children's areas, acolyte vesting areas), and establishes appropriate supervision (such as, for example, a bathroom escort) for the offender while on parish premises and/or at parish activities. The contract/covenant must be approved by the clergy and church leadership. The parish shall have in place a plan to deal with any violation of the contract/covenant.

O merciful Creator, your loving hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence, and give us grace to honor you with all that you have entrusted to us; that we, remembering the account we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. ©Book of Common Prayer, 2019, Prayer 22

K. Sample Release & Permission to use Images

I hereby grant permission to [NAME OF PARISH] (“the Parish”) to use any still and/or moving image (including video footage, photographs, and/or audio footage) depicting my child [NAME of CHILD] on the Parish’s website, social media platforms, or other online and/or printed publications without further consideration. I acknowledge the Parish has the right to modify the images at its discretion. I also acknowledge that the Parish may choose not to use my child’s images at this time, but may do so at a later date, up to two years from the date the image was taken. I also understand that once an image is posted on the website or other online platform, the image can be downloaded by any computer user, anywhere in the world. The Parish commits to eliminating any identifying information including name and age from the publication. I hereby waive any right I may have to inspect and/or approve the finished product or the copy wherein my child’s likeness appears, or the use of said images.

I hereby release and discharge the Parish, its officers, agents and/or designated leadership, from all claims, demands, and causes of action that I or my child have or may have by reason of this authorization, or the use of my child’s images described above.

_____

Parent/Guardian Signature

_____

Parent/Guardian Name (please print)

_____

Date

L. Sample Facilities Use Agreement

[Name of Parish] _____Facilities Request Form

[Name of Parish] _____, a non-profit, private, and religious institution, makes its facilities available to the public when possible. This document is intended to serve as an agreement between the organization/individual requesting use of the facilities and the parish to ensure the protection of property and the parish itself.

General Guidelines and Requirements:

1. For purposes of this policy, any reference to facilities includes reference to any property of the parish, including furniture, fixtures, and equipment.
2. Every group or organization is required to abide by all parish guidelines, requirements, and other restrictions regarding usage of the parish facilities.
3. Users of the parish facilities agree to use utmost care in the use of parish facilities and agree to leave the facilities in good, clean condition.
4. All requests for usage of the parish facilities are subject to approval by Rector/Senior Pastor or his designate.
5. The parish reserves the right to schedule other activities and events in other parts of the parish facilities.

Additional Requirements and Restrictions:

1. No group or organization (whether a parish member is affiliated with such organization) shall use any parish facilities in any manner or for any purpose that is in conflict with or contradicts the following Statement of Faith of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA).

   Statement of Faith
   We believe and confess Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no one comes to the Father but by Him. We subscribe without reservation to the Fundamental Declarations in the Constitution of the Anglican Church in North America:

   As the Anglican Church in North America (the Province), being a part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ, we believe and confess Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no one comes to the Father but by Him. Therefore, we identify the following seven elements as characteristic of the Anglican Way, and essential for membership:

   We confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, containing all things necessary for salvation, and to be the final authority and unchangeable standard for Christian faith and life.

   We confess Baptism and the Supper of the Lord to be Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself in the Gospel, and thus to be ministered with unfailing use of His words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.

   We confess the godly historic Episcopate as an inherent part of the apostolic faith and

practice, and therefore as integral to the fullness and unity of the Body of Christ.

We confess as proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture the historic faith of the undivided church as declared in the three Catholic Creeds: the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian.
Concerning the seven Councils of the undivided Church, we affirm the teaching of the first four Councils and the Christological clarifications of the fifth, sixth and seventh Councils, in so far as they are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures.

We receive The Book of Common Prayer as set forth by the Church of England in 1662, together with the Ordinal attached to the same, as a standard for Anglican doctrine and discipline, and, with the Books which preceded it, as the standard for the Anglican tradition of worship.

We receive the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of 1571, taken in their literal and grammatical sense, as expressing the Anglican response to certain doctrinal issues controverted at that time, and as expressing fundamental principles of authentic Anglican belief.

In all these things, the Anglican Church in North America is determined by the help of God to hold and maintain, as the Anglican Way has received them, the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ and to transmit the same, unimpaired, to our posterity.

2. Those using [Enter Name of Parish] facilities agree to release, protect, defend, indemnify, and hold harmless [Enter Name of Parish] and its trustees, officers, employees, members, and other representatives from and against any and all claims, liabilities, losses, damages, actions, costs and expenses (including, without limitation, reasonable attorney's fees and other legal costs) directly or indirectly arising out of their use of any of [Enter Name of Parish] facilities.
3. In the event of damage to the parish facilities, those using any parish facility shall accept the amount of repair and replacement costs as estimated, or otherwise determined, by the parish Vestry or other governing board or their designee and shall pay the parish for such repair and replacement costs upon demand.
4. For children and youth events, the applicable group or organization must provide adequate adult supervision for all usage.
5. The transfer or passing on by any group or organization of permission to use parish facilities to any other persons or organizations is strictly prohibited.
6. Those using parish facilities must confine themselves to the areas provided for in their Facilities Usage Agreement and will not exceed the capacity limits of requested facility areas.
7. Users may not take tables and/or chairs, and/or other items, from other rooms and/or areas of the parish facilities.
8. The use of tobacco products, alcoholic beverages or drugs is strictly prohibited on parish premises.

This policy is applicable to use of the parish facilities by any groups or organizations (including individuals). It is by no means intended to cover every facet of use of parish facilities. This policy supersedes all prior oral or written statements regarding the specific

subject matter hereof. No parish representative has any authority to waive or enter into any agreement or arrangement contrary to the guidelines, requirements, or restrictions and other provisions of this policy or any Facilities Usage Agreement without the express written approval.

[Name of Parish] Facilities Request Form

Group/Organization _____

Event Coordinator _____

Phone # Coordinator _____

Email for Coordinator _____

Facility spaces requested (include all spaces that apply): _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Today's Date _____

Event Name _____

Organizing Group _____

Set-up time _____

Type of Event _____

Event beginning time _____

Participants _____

Describe this event:

Family _____ Adults ____ Youth ____ Children _____

Event Date(s) _____

Expected attendance _____

Ending Time _____

Equipment needs - group is responsible for setting-up, clean-up and re-setting the facility according to directions given.

_____
_____
_____
_____

____(initial) ____(initial) ____(initial)

If the facility is not re-set properly, there will be a fee of $50 charged. Any movement of the piano will result in $50 retuning fee. Organizer has read & received the guidelines for facilities use.

Do keys need to be checked out before? Yes _____ No _____

Signature of person checking out key _____

FOR OFFICE USE

Approved? Yes No Approved by _____

Notes on requested space (for internal use; Any areas already in need of repair prior to rental? Any additional information helpful to know prior to inspection following event?)

Space inspected following event by: _____

Date: _____

Notes:

Usage Fee Charged $___ Deposit Received $ _____Balance $_____