

# **Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children at Church of the Epiphany Anglican**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide instruction and guidance to the clergy, staff, vestry, and volunteers for the protection of the church's children and youth.

## **Responsibility for this Policy**

The Rector has overall responsibility for this policy within the church and for providing all reports requested by the Diocese. At Epiphany, the Associate Rector is responsible for overseeing and administering the Policy and Procedures.

## **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 on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. **Details are found in the Appendix.**

**Virginia:** The statewide toll-free child abuse hotline is **1-800-552-7096**.

## **Screening Procedures**

One effective means of reducing the incidence of child abuse is to screen carefully all clergy and all lay workers, paid and volunteer, working in youth and children's ministries. The Diocese requires the following screening and background checks for all canonically resident and licensed clergy, and for all employees and volunteers who work with children:

- The screening of clergy is the responsibility of the diocesan office. Careful screening of clergy is conducted every 2 years.

## **Screening Staff and volunteers**

The screening of staff and volunteers includes:

Minimum of six months attendance at Church of the Epiphany to volunteer with children.

- Reviewing signed job applications for those working in youth and children's ministries
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks; Staff without direct access to children are checked once when hired, all others are checked every two years
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks
- Conducting face-to-face interviews
- Requiring each applicant to state whether or not the applicant 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.

## **Training Procedures**

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. Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office evidence of completed training every two years. Each church is responsible to track and document the training/retraining of its vestry, staff and volunteers. The following training is required:

### **Reading Requirements**

All members of the clergy, all members of the vestry, and those staff members with direct supervision over youth or children must certify that they have read, understood and accepted Epiphany's Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children.

### **Workshop Attendance Requirements**

Every two years, clergy, vestry, and those (whether staff or volunteers) who have direct contact with youth and children must either:

- Attend a diocesan-approved training workshop on the prevention of child abuse or
- Complete the online Sexual Abuse Prevention Course and follow-up test provided by Ministry Safe.

## **Interacting Procedures**

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

### **Communication**

Verbal interactions between clergy, staff members, or 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 in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, clergy, staff members, and volunteers must avoid talking to children or parents in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, clergy, staff members, and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children. Concerns about children should be directed to parents, legal guardians, the appropriate ministry leader, or the clergy.

Clergy, staff members and volunteers must avoid engaging in any sexually-oriented communications with children, (except as noted in the following section in educational or 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 in the program.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers must report any sexually-oriented communications involving a child to the appropriate ministry leader or clergy.

### **Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug use**

Clergy, staff members, volunteers, and participants in youth and children's ministries should refrain from the use, possession, or being under the influence of tobacco products, or alcohol, while in church facilities, while traveling with or in the presence of children, during church-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children.

The use of illegal drugs is never permitted.

### **Sexually-Oriented Materials**

Staff members and volunteers may employ (subject to limitations imposed by the Rector or Rector'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 of participants. Prior to introducing these materials, notice should normally be provided to parents in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.

### **Social Media**

Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Having personal interactions in this venue allows adults to model appropriate behavior in social media, and it forms valuable connections with students. It is therefore not prohibited. However, all attempts should be made to use media considered safer for adult/student interaction. The Remind app is one that schools use and therefore, a better choice. Clergy, staff members, 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 (for example, many outlets state the minimum age is 13).

### **Photography**

Photos of children will not be used contrary to parental wishes. Any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications should not be published without prior parental permission. Yearly, a consent statement should be signed by the parent/guardian.

### **Physical Interaction**

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children.

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.

In rare 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, and the Associate Rector.

The following standards of interaction with children shall be carefully followed at all times:

**Appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's development and is generally suitable in the church setting.**

Appropriate physical affection includes:

- high-fives
- handshakes
- fist bumps
- thumbs up
- head pat
- side hug
- smiling
- pats on the back

Inappropriate physical affection includes:

- wrestling
- tickling
- sitting in laps (except for nursery-aged children)
- kissing on the lips
- full frontal hugs
- forcing unwanted affection

**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 the Associate Rector or the Senior Warden.

**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.**

Personal conduct must be above reproach.

Additionally: commenting on children's bodies is not allowed.

No one has the right to force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child.

**Children's staff members, volunteers and other church leaders are responsible for protecting children from inappropriate or unwanted touch by anyone, volunteers or participants.**

## **Restroom Use**

Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities

### **Nursery-Aged and Special Needs Children**

Because 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. There is currently a preference for women only nursery workers for the following reason. <sup>2</sup> Churches are encouraged to be sensitive to the fact that nationally one out of every three to four women has been the victim of some form of child sexual abuse, typically by a male offender. It is well documented by researchers that there are certain times in the lives of abuse survivors when they are more prone to triggers (internal or external reminders of the trauma). The birth of a child is often such a trigger. To build trust, churches may determine that diapering, toilet training and restroom monitoring will only be done by screened and trained female staff/volunteers or the child's parent/guardian.

- 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.

#### **Toilet Training**

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or 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 only when needed. A peer buddy system may be used.

Staff members and volunteers should take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom. 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 verbally to assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

### **First Aid and Medication**

If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parent. Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer in cases of emergency (Epi-Pen). The medication must be in the original packaging, including over-the-counter medication. When medically necessary, first aid may be given to a child by church leader or volunteer. Parents must be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.

### **The Release of Children**

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

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact the Associate Rector before releasing the child.

### **Transportation**

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the church copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- It is understood that the adult driving the child must have undergone a 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. Churches 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.
- Normally there shall not 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 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.
- Cell phones, including hands-free devices, may only be utilized by the driver for GPS while driving, unless in emergency situations.
- Children should be transported 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 church unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement.

## **Monitoring Procedures**

Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred. Vestry, clergy, staff, and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising children's and youth activities in all settings at all times.

**Monitoring practices include, but are not limited to the following:**

- ◆ All children and youth activities shall be designed to be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals. No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a church activity.
- ◆ **Clergy, staff members, 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.
- ◆ Watching for policy violations.
- ◆ An open invitation for parents to visit at any time unannounced. If a parent or guardian becomes a regular participant in children's programs, they are considered a volunteer and would need to go through the volunteer process.
- ◆ A careful review of new programs and/or significant changes to a program structure.
- ◆ Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times. Keeping unused rooms locked where possible.
- ◆ Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the church building.

## **On Site (3863 Centerview Dr. Ste 100) Supervisory Plan**

There is a **Registration** process for children in the nursery only. The older classes will keep an attendance record.

### **Personnel:**

Only screened and trained volunteers may work with children and youth. There is a minimum of two volunteers to provide supervision. No one under the age of 16 may be hired or volunteer to supervise nursery age children. If the second person has not yet arrived, doors are conspicuously left open and staff standing where they are visible from the hallways.

### **Adult-Child ratio optimum**

Infants and toddlers: 2 adults for up to 8 children and 1 additional adult for every 4 children.

Preschool: 2 adults for up to 16 children. 1 additional adult for every 8 children.

School age: 2 adults for up to 36 children.

### **Physical Environment**

The nursery and all classrooms shall have interior windows, which will not be obstructed.

Door from the vestibule leading to the children's wing shall be locked at 10:05 on Sunday morning. Egress is still possible through this door. Preferred egress in the case of an emergency is through the side door towards the loading dock and away from the building.

### **Monitoring and supervision**

On Sunday mornings, the Associate Rector or another designee will insure that the classrooms are fully staffed.

### **Bathroom Procedures**

**Diapering:** Only screened and trained nursery volunteers or the child's parent/guardian will diaper the child.

Changing diapers should be done in plain sight of the other nursery worker.

**Restroom use:** Only screened and trained volunteers will accompany the child to the restroom unless the buddy system is being used. Preschool age children are too young to be a buddy and they must not be left unattended in the bathroom. When assisting children, stall door will be left partially open and even outer door propped open so as to provide accountability.

### **Incident Report/Medication**

Volunteers will fill out an incident report and advise the Associate Rector when a child is injured or hurt in any way.

The parent should be the only one administering medicine. First aid is given if necessary. If any aid was given, the parent or guardian must be notified.

Discipline concerns should be shared directly with the parent or guardian as needed.

The Associate Rector should be notified if there are disciplinary concerns.

**Release of Children** are to the parent or guardian unless a specific person is designated in advance. Children are not released to other children under the age of 13.

### **Evacuation Procedures**

The teachers and volunteers shall be trained on best practices to keep children safe in the event of an emergency. Protocols shall be posted and practiced. The congregation should be informed of the procedures and efforts made to include them in the planning and practicing.



## Sample Off-Site Supervisory Plan for Youth

Written permission from a parent/**legal guardian** is required for all off-site activities. A registration form and details of the activity will be held by each church team leader.

### Personnel

- Only screened and trained staff and volunteers may supervise youth for off-site activities.
- At least one adult staff/volunteer of the same sex as attendees must provide supervision for youth on an overnight trip.

### Adult-Child Ratios

2 adults to every 10 youth for an overnight retreat.

### Interactions Between Adults and Children/Youth

- Staff and volunteers will conduct all meetings and interactions with youth in settings in which they can be observed by another person.
- Adults are not allowed to change clothes (i.e., be naked or in underwear) in the presence of youth.
- Showering will be done in private showers. Adults will be appropriately clothed whenever in the presence of children/youth.

### Injury/Incident Reporting

Staff or volunteers will fill out an incident report and advise the Associate Rector when a child is injured or hurt in any way.

### First Aid and Medication

- Any medication must have a parent or guardian-signed authorization stating exactly when and in what doses medications will be administered.
- Medication will be kept in the possession of a staff member/volunteer leader and not in the possession of the child/youth.
- Prescription medication must be in its original container and labeled by a physician or pharmacist. An over-the-counter medication must be in the original container with the name of the medication visible.
- In case of an emergency, a volunteer or staff member may administer medicine if no parent is immediately available. All medications should be listed on the student waiver form.
- If medicine other than regular prescription medication is administered in any form, written documentation must be given to the Acting Nurse for the program.

### Discipline

Discipline concerns will be shared directly with the parent/guardian as needed by the staff/volunteer who observed them. Other staff will be involved in deciding disciplinary actions.

### **Transportation**

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide the church copies of valid driver's license, vehicle registration, DMV record, and proof of insurance.
- Drivers for church sponsored events must be at least 21 years old.
- Drivers and passengers must follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines.
- Middle and high school students may be given rides to and from events by a screened adult volunteer (even if this means an adult is alone in a car with a child) but the child's parent/legal guardian must approve of the ride.
- Children are transported directly to their destination. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks are to be done as a group.
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### **Sleeping Arrangements**

- Only youth of the same sex will sleep in the same room.
- Sleeping accommodations will be chaperoned by at least two staff members or volunteers of the same sex as the children, except when there are not enough staff. Leaders will ensure that they are never alone in the room with a youth. If the situation temporarily occurs, the leader or youth will step out.

### **Release of Youth**

- Children are released to a parent/legal guardian unless a specific person is designated in advance by a parent/legal guardian.

### **Home Group Procedures**

The Diocese and its churches do not have, and therefore do not exercise, control over home groups. The care and protection of children in such settings is always the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child. The Diocese provides some resources that may help empower and equip parents/guardians and the home groups of its churches as they exercise their care and responsibility. In home groups where children are present, even on an occasional basis, leaders are encouraged to read this policy, take diocesan-approved child abuse prevention training, and follow as closely as possible the provisions outlined in this policy, including the development of a supervision plan, which should consider the following:

- Supervision by two screened and trained individuals. Supervision by a single individual is never a good idea.
- Physical environment 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.).
- Restroom procedure. For any child who requires assistance, parents should be responsible for diapering and meeting other restroom needs.
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## **Diocesan Documentation Requirements**

Church of the Epiphany Anglican is responsible for obtaining and keeping documentation, in perpetuity, which includes evidence of the following:

- Employee and volunteer applications for those working in youth and children's ministries.
- National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks renewed every two years.
- Personal and professional reference checks.
- For drivers: copy of valid driver's license, vehicle registration, DMV record, and proof of auto insurance.
- Interviews.
- Certification that the clergy, vestry, and all lay workers, paid and volunteer, working in youth and children's ministries has read, understood, and accepted the Policy and Procedure for the Protection of Children at Church of the Epiphany Anglican.
- Diocesan-approved workshop or online course completion and certificate renewal every two years.
- Written supervisory plans.
- Reports of suspected child abuse kept in a secure location.

## **Responding and Reporting Procedures**

Resources are found in the Policy Manual for the Protection of Children for the Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic.

Church of the Epiphany shall be familiar with, and every person responsible for the care of children in the church shall be made aware of, the applicable child abuse reporting requirements and procedures in Virginia. In addition to complying with any applicable legal requirements, Church of the Epiphany Anglican will follow protocols and procedures outlined by the Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic for internal reporting to appropriate church leaders of any suspected mistreatment of or injury to a child and any suspicious or unusual information about a child.

The following section of the diocesan policy briefly outlines several response and reporting procedures, which will be used as a guideline:

1. Responding to the Child Victim
2. Reporting to Church Authorities
3. Reporting to Legal Authorities in Accordance with Applicable Laws
4. Release of Information
5. Internal Church Communication and Reporting

## Appendix

### Virginia Laws:

As of April 5, 2018, the Virginia child abuse reporting laws are accessible online at the following web addresses:

Virginia Code, Title 63.2, Welfare (Social Services), Chapter 15, Child Abuse and Neglect

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/>

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title63.2/chapter15/article2/>

Relevant definitions may currently be found at the following citations and web addresses (last updated April 5, 2018):

Virginia Code § 63.2-100. Definitions.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter1/section63.2-100/>

Virginia Code § 63.2-1501. Definitions.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/section63.2-1501/>

Specific relevant provisions of the Virginia child abuse reporting laws may include those that can be found at the following web addresses (last updated April 5, 2018):

Virginia Code § 63.2-1508. Valid report or complaint.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/section63.2-1508/>

Virginia Code § 63.2-1509. Requirement that certain injuries to children be reported by physicians, nurses, teachers, etc.; penalty for failure to report.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/section63.2-1509/>

Virginia Code § 63.2-1510. Complaints by others of certain injuries to children.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/section63.2-1510/>

Virginia Code § 63.2-1512. Immunity of person making report, etc., from liability.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/section63.2-1512/>

Virginia Code § 63.2-1513. Knowingly making false reports; penalties.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/section63.2-1513/>

Virginia Code § 8.01-400. Communications between ministers of religion and persons they counsel or advise (Supreme Court Rule 2:503 derived in part from this section).

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title8.01/chapter14/section8.01-400/>

Virginia Code § 19.2-271.3. Communications between ministers of religion and persons they counsel or advise (Supreme Court Rule 2:503 derived in part from this section).

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title19.2/chapter16/section19.2-271.3/>