

POLICY MANUAL FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Created by the [Episcopal Free Fellowship of America](#)

A Note to All Our Staff and Volunteers

Thank you for your willingness to love and support vulnerable persons in our community. Our hope is that the following policies and procedures will support you in that endeavor, and protect the safety of our fellowship by providing clear perimeters of conduct in which abuse and harassment are neither permitted nor tolerated.

Central to the life and ministry of Jesus was the way he saw those who society and its religious and political leaders overlooked. Examples of this in the Gospel accounts abound: from the Samaritan woman at the well, to the unnamed woman suffering from hemorrhaging, to countless lepers, blind and deaf and lame persons, “sinners” of all sorts, and little children. Truly, Jesus was the incarnate El Roi—the God who sees.

What’s more, Jesus called his followers to do likewise—to see all people, particularly the most vulnerable among us, and do what’s in our power to protect and support their wellbeing and their dignity as persons made in the image of God.

The call to sacrificial love on behalf of the other, especially those who are vulnerable, is a mandate for all disciples of Christ. Thank you for taking this mandate seriously in your places of leadership and service in the [Episcopal Free Fellowship of America](#).

This policy is a model and, as such, it presents best practices for creating such safe spaces. Circumstances in many localities may make some of these best practices difficult to implement or even unworkable. As a result, local entities may make additions or revisions in developing local policy so long as they meet or exceed the requirements of these policies. This requires that local leadership understand this policy thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments about local circumstances. Any such additions or revisions must be submitted in writing for the approval of the bishop. No provisions may be omitted from a local policy.

I. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Rector or Senior Clergy in Residence:

Has overall responsibility for the administration of this policy within the church they lead and for providing all reports requested by the Diocese. In the absence of a Rector, the Priest-in-Charge, Lay Leader, or Senior Warden is responsible. Duties may be delegated, except in those areas specifically requiring action by the Rector.

Ministry Supervisor:

Is responsible to partner with the congregation coordinator to enforce the EFFA Policy Manual for the Protection of Children.

The Volunteer/Employee:

Is responsible for complying with and acting upon the policies for the protection of children and youth. In all matters concerning children and youth, the volunteer is responsible to the congregation coordinator or rector, if not the same person. If ever you are in doubt about who is in charge of overseeing child protection in your volunteer environment, ask your supervisor.

II. A NO-TOLERANCE APPROACH

Everyone who serves the church through educational, pastoral, recreational or other activities is expected to maintain the highest standards of Christ-like conduct in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct. That commitment extends to sexual and physical behavior. The Episcopal Free Fellowship of America will not tolerate any form of abuse involving clergy, lay employees, volunteers, or other persons.

III. DEFINITIONS

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

Adult: Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school (see footnote to youth on page 4).

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

Child: Anyone under the age of 12 years (see footnote to youth on page 4).

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

Cisgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender or sex assigned at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expand and mature.

Gender Non-Binary: An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both ("bigender"), neither ("agender"), a mix between the two ("genderfluid"), or they can be unsure of their gender ("genderqueer"). This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expand and mature.

Leader: A person, adult or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of other adults engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, and program team members.

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

Mandated Reporter: A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. State laws vary greatly. Generally, state law mandates that either all adults or adults in certain professions report suspected abuse of children and/or youth.

It is imperative to know the requirements of applicable state laws. Typically, individuals who are not mandated to report suspicion of abuse may make a report to the appropriate state agency, even though not legally required to do so.

Off-Site: Any location other than the sponsoring church, institution, facility, or campus.

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

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

Public Records Check: A search of documents and data available to the public including criminal and civil court records, credit reports, and driving records from the department of motor vehicles. Typically, such searches are conducted by a third party with expertise in this area.

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

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

Supervisor: A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or Leaders in a ministry program.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expand and mature.

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

- **Universal Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all people that includes a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries.
- **Specialized Training:** A standard of additional training that equips people who participate in or have oversight responsibility for ministries. In addition to Universal Training, a person will have access to training that is specialized and tailored to their role and ministry function.

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

IV. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

A. Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse, in practical terms, refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though they 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. Each state has its own definition of what constitutes "child abuse" under civil and criminal laws, and each church or parachurch ministry in the EFFA 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 in our fellowship include the following elements (among others):

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

A person commits endangering the life or health of a child when they knowingly: (1) cause or permit the life or health of a child under the age of 18 to be endangered; or (2) cause or permit a child to be placed in circumstances that endanger the child's life or health. It is not a violation of this Section for a person to relinquish a child in accordance with the **Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act, 720 ILCS 5/12C-5**.

Our policies primarily focus on creating a safe space from child abuse, but we also wanted to take a moment before outlining our policies to provide additional context around psychological and spiritual abuse, to which the EFFA holds a no tolerance approach.

B. Definition of Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse, within the context of a church community, refers to any pattern of intentional or reckless behavior—by clergy or lay leaders—that causes emotional or mental harm, manipulation, or degradation to another person. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Intimidation, coercion, or control through fear, guilt, or shame.
- Persistent criticism, belittling, or public humiliation.
- Gaslighting, or intentionally causing someone to doubt their otherwise accurate perception.
- Isolation from community support or trusted relationships.
- Exploitation of spiritual authority to manipulate beliefs, behavior, or decisions.
- Undermining a person's sense of identity, dignity, or self-worth.

Psychological abuse is particularly serious when it occurs in pastoral relationships or ministry contexts, where there is an inherent power differential and trust is foundational. It is a

betrayal of spiritual responsibility and may lead to profound and lasting emotional, psychological, relational, and spiritual harm.

This policy affirms that psychological abuse is incompatible with the love, truth, and justice of Christ, and any credible allegation will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and addressed with appropriate pastoral, disciplinary, and legal responses.

C. Definition of Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse, within the context of a church community, refers to the misuse of spiritual authority, theological concepts, or religious practices by clergy or lay leaders to control, manipulate, exploit, or harm others. This form of abuse distorts the character of God and the message of the Gospel, often cloaking coercive behavior in religious language or institutional loyalty.

It includes, but is not limited to:

- Using Scripture, doctrine, or spiritual language to shame, silence, or intimidate.
- Demanding unquestioning obedience under the guise of divine will or pastoral authority.
- Threatening divine punishment or spiritual consequences to manipulate behavior or enforce compliance.
- Withholding sacraments, ministry opportunities, or community belonging as a form of control or punishment.
- Exploiting trust in God or church leadership for personal gain, influence, or protection from accountability.
- Dismissing legitimate concerns, doubts, or disclosures of harm as rebellion, lack of faith, or spiritual weakness.

Spiritual abuse is particularly insidious because it entangles faith and fear, causing victims to experience confusion, isolation, and often a deep crisis of trust in God and the Church. It is a violation of the sacred responsibility of spiritual leadership, and when credible allegations arise, they must be investigated with discernment, compassion, and a commitment to truth and justice.

This policy affirms that spiritual abuse is a grave misuse of pastoral calling and a distortion of the Gospel of grace. Allegations will be treated with the utmost seriousness and addressed through transparent, just, and restorative processes.

V. SCREENING & TRAINING

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations are required to screen all persons according to the standards in the **Screening and Training Protocols** ([Appendix A](#)). For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

A. Public Records Checks

- Congregations and other organizations shall use a provider approved by the EFFT to conduct public records checks. Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children and youth.
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries.
- A Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records check is needed if transporting children and youth as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the church or for a church-sponsored event.
- A state child abuse registry check is required for employees or volunteers who will be interacting with children and youth.
- A credit check is required with check signing authority.
- Public records checks must be updated at least every three years.

B. Additional Screening Requirements

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

- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written “job description.” The application includes verifiable personal information.
- Personal interview.
- Reference verification conducted by congregations and other organizations to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant).
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

Potential candidates must be known and active in the congregation for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth.

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the diocese, congregation’s, or organization’s office. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy, including any local procedures or variations.

Congregations or staffing like yours use screening tools like background checks and reference checks to have the greatest assurance that the employees and volunteers they are assembling and monitoring are properly suited and adequately trained for the outlined responsibilities.

These screening procedures apply to everyone who serves at your church or volunteers with children, even for special events and day camps. Your church is expected to know and comply with applicable state laws and insurance terms/conditions. Thank you for your cooperation.

VI. INTERACTING & BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships that children and youth deserve in all settings. Interactions should meet all requirements outlined below.

The following standards and best practices are organized by categories you may encounter in your work with children ([Communication](#), [Physical Interaction](#), [Restroom Use](#), [The Release of Children](#), [Drugs and Alcohol](#), [Photography](#), [Social Media](#), [Email](#), and [Virtual Environments](#)). These are provided to help children and adults feel safe in ministry and help prevent and detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

Generally, adults are encouraged to:

- Engage in ongoing spiritual practices, including but not limited to: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study.
- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ.
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for their behavior.

A. Communication

- Strive to keep verbal interactions with children, parents, and other staff encouraging and constructive. Always be mindful of your mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children.
- Make sure that no reasonable observer could construe any of your conversations or language as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Always refrain from swearing in the presence of children.
- Avoid impulsive, secluded, or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth. Such behavior may foster a high-risk situation.
- Don't engage in sexually-oriented communications with children, except, as discussed in the [section below](#) in pre-approved educational programming or abuse-reporting contexts.

1. One-on-One Conversations with Children or Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation. In cases where an adult meets with a child or youth outside of a church setting, that adult should get written parental permission before initiating the meeting.

Examples include:

- Planned or unplanned on-site conversations can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
 - Before bringing a child or youth to a church function, the adult should secure written permission from the child/youth's parent or guardian.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws

2. Sexually-Oriented Materials & Conversations

- You may use (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.
- You must make any prospective material available to the parents of participants for review, and give parents sufficient notice to opt out, should they have concerns or objections.
- Adults should never engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth.
- Apart from planned approved educational programs, adults should never discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, sexual activities or fantasies.
- Should a child or youth ask questions regarding sexuality, orientation, or gender identity, the Responsible Person should inform the child/youth's parent or guardian that the conversation took place, but is not obligated to share confidential details unless they are concerned about the child/youth's health or safety, or as required by law. In sharing, preserve the dignity and safety of the child or youth in your care.
- Report any sexually-oriented communications involving a child to the congregation coordinator or clergy.

B. Physical Interaction

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships that children and youth deserve in all settings. Appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's development, and is generally suitable in the church setting.

Interactions should meet all requirements outlined in this policy, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth from the church away from sanctioned church activities.

- Adults should offer only appropriate physical expressions of care.
- Make sure that any physical contact is for the benefit of the child, and never based on your own emotional needs.
- Do not use physical discipline in any form for behavioral management of children. Prohibited behaviors include spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children.
 - Discipline children using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In some circumstances, you may use physical restraint to prevent self-injury by the child and/or harm to others or to property.
 - If disciplinary action or physical restraint is used during time together, volunteers must inform the child's parent or guardian at pickup.
- Immediately report uncontrollable or unusual behavior to parents, the children's ministry director, and/or clergy.
- Inappropriate touching and displays of affection are forbidden. Report any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer to the appropriate authority.
 - Please review your state law sheet to determine if you are required by law to report suspected abuse directly to the State.
 - If you are not a mandatory reporter, reports of suspected abuse must be made to 1) the congregation coordinator and 2) the senior warden and/or clergy.
- Only give physical contact and appropriate affection in observable places. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Avoid even the appearance of wrongdoing in the area of physical contact. Your personal behavior must foster trust at all times. Make your personal conduct above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child or youth's preference not to be touched must be respected at all times. This includes respecting a child's discomfort with "appropriate physical affection".
- You are responsible for protecting children under your supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

1. Appropriate physical affection includes:

- High fives and fist bumps,
- Handshakes,
- Hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer,
- Thumbs up,
- Smiling,

- Pats on the head or back,
- Brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms,
- Brief side hugs and arms around shoulders*, or
- “Laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision*

*Adults must ask the child or youth if they feel comfortable with a hug or laying on of hands.
Physical affection must not be given without the child or youth’s consent.

2. Inappropriate physical affection includes:

- Wrestling,
- Tickling,
- Sitting on laps (except for nursery aged children),
- Kissing,
- Unwelcome full frontal hugs,
- Commenting on children’s bodies, or
- Forcing unwanted affection. This may include behaviors listed as “appropriate affection”.

C. Restroom Use

1. Nursery-Aged and Special Needs Children

Because nursery and special needs children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, please observe the following policies:

a. Diapering

- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child’s parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- Change diapers in plain sight of other nursery workers; do not leave children unattended while they are being changed.
- As soon as you change the soiled diaper, re-clothe and re-diaper the child immediately.

b. Toilet Training and Personal Hygiene

- Do not force any child 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.
- Leave the stall door partially open when you are assisting a child in the bathroom.
- Do not leave preschool-aged children unattended in bathrooms.
- Assist children with straightening their clothing before they return to the room with other children.
- Handle “accidents” by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

2. Elementary-Aged Children

You may accompany elementary-age children to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed.

- However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. You may also use a same-aged-peer buddy system.
- Take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom.
 - If you have to go into the restroom to check on an individual child, seek out another worker to accompany you.
 - If another worker is not available, go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance.
 - If the child requires assistance, leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

D. The Release of Children

You are responsible for releasing children in your 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 possible, get written instructions from the parents giving the name of any individual authorized to pick up the child. If the parent has not done so, offer to write down the instructions and have the parent sign their approval.
- If you are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, contact your immediate supervisor before releasing the child.

E. Drugs and Alcohol

Adults working with children and youth must not:

- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior, including but not limited to:
 - Providing children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography.
 - Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco products, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at a children's or youth event or when responsible for children or youth at an event.
 - Where in alignment with your congregation's policies, it is permitted to bring alcohol and/or drink responsibly at events where you are not supervising children and youth (ie. a church-wide potluck where parents are responsible for their children).

- Discuss, apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, their own use or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth without being disclosed to parent / guardian.

F. Photography

- Do not use photos of children and youth without written parental permission.
 - To request permission to use photos of children, ask their parents or guardians to fill out a written consent form and keep it on file at the church. We recommend that churches obtain signed parental consent release forms annually, respecting the parents who are non-consenting. An example of a form for written consent can be found here on our website.
- Only post images that respect the dignity of every person depicted.
- Dioceses, congregations, or organizations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space.

G. Social Media

Social media is an ever-present reality in this day and age. With parental consent, healthy relationships that live partly online are acceptable for youth ministry staff and volunteers to connect with children and youth.

As a powerful tool, however, social media holds the potential to enable and conceal abuse that has the possibility to occur in all ministry relationships. There is no private behavior in digital spaces. Once posted, content may be pulled out of context and out of the control of the individuals and organizations where it was created, putting them at risk. As with in-person spaces, staff and volunteers must observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The following recommended practices and guidelines are designed to be a flexible template for developing policies and covenants governing the safe use of social media and digital communication in ministry settings.

1. Best practices for engaging with children and youth on social media:

Use personal interactions on social media avenues to model appropriate behavior both on and off social media.

- Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all children and youth, across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.
- Report any concerns about social media to your congregation coordinator.
- Don't connect with children on social media when they are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet. (For example, Facebook's minimum age is currently 13.)
- Ask parents for permission before connecting with their children on social media.

- Disclose ongoing digital pastoral communications (ie: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc) with children and youth to a parent and/or a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.
- Use wise judgment in the content you choose to post and who you make your posts visible to.
 - Parents of children or youth with concerns about content on a staff member or volunteer's profile should make their concern known **via the standard reporting protocol.**
- Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or “Add Me” on Snapchat) to children or youth for personal interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults.
 - Youth may ask to be “friends,” and adults should discern the nature of contact appropriate for healthy ministry.
- Wise judgement should be used in the time of day a child or youth is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 10:00 pm, unless it’s an emergency.
- When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual’s “wall,” or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos.

2. Best practices for managing digital groups:

Create covenants to govern digital groups, which include:

- An outline of appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior.
 - Who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group, and when/if the group will be disbanded.
 - Description of content that can be posted or published on the site or page.
 - A prohibition of “tagging” photos and videos of children and youth. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with written permission from a parent or guardian.
 - Notification that mandatory reporting laws will be followed.
 - Consequences for breaking the covenant.
- Delete inappropriate material posted in digital groups, address the behavior, and report it, if necessary, in accordance with legal and institutional requirements.
- Comply with the following best practices regarding “groups” on social networking sites:
 - Have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators for groups that are designed for youth.

- Use closed groups, but not “hidden” or “secret” groups, for youth.
- Have only youth administrators invite other youth to join the online group, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite them to join.
- Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant.
- Open social networking groups for youth to parents of current members.
- Remove adult leaders of youth groups and youth who are no longer members, due to departure, removal from position, or are ineligible because they “aged-out” of a program from social networking sites, list serves, etc.

3. Best practices for church-sponsored social media engagements and accounts:

- Establish a policy that outlines professional and institutional standards for profiles and interactions on social networking sites and platforms. Profiles created and used should meet professional and institutional standards.
- Establish a policy of transparency regarding social media accounts. The best practice is to have the diocese, congregation, or organization create and “own” the social media accounts representing the diocese, congregation, or organization respectively and have multiple administrators and/or supervisors with access. If personal accounts are used, a system of monitoring should be established.
- Establish a regular ongoing and consistent system of review that focuses on settings, accessible content, photos, and videos to ensure compliance with professional and institutional standards.
- Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.
- Establish a policy regarding the identification or “tagging” of individuals in online photos or videos. For example, on Facebook, “tagging” someone in a photo or video creates a hyperlink to that person’s profile page that can be clicked by anyone.
 - The best practice is for the diocese, congregation, or organization not to identify or “tag” individuals.
 - The “tagging” of children and youth should be prohibited. When written permission is provided by a parent/guardian, the captioning of photos or videos of minors may be permitted. The caption should not include the minor’s full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone’s personal profile.
 - A policy of whether or not an individual can “self-tag” in a diocese, congregation, or organization’s online photo or video should also be established.
- A diocese, congregation, or organization does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by that diocese, congregation, or organization, except as described above. The preceding statement should be included in the diocese, congregation, or organization’s Social Media Policy.

H. Email

Email can be a good method of communication, and it also has the opportunity to be misunderstood. Having a clear understanding and procedure for responding to digital communication that raises concern is prudent for all. Best practices can include:

- Not responding immediately.
- Sharing the communication with a supervisor before responding.
- Phone and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications or pastoral emergencies.

When sending emails to a child or youth that contain personal or private information regarding that child or youth, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well.

- Examples of these types of emails include: payment due information, specific medical requests or questions, etc.
- Mass emails sent to an entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.

I. Virtual Environments

We understand that engaging children and students may include not only in-person but also virtual gatherings. The following are guidelines for virtual events:

- In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, use wise judgement regarding your attire and surroundings.
- All participants, adults, children, and students, should be fully clothed, including portions of the body that may be “off camera.”
- Adults should not be in their bedrooms, on their beds, or have a bed in the background of their camera.
- Adults must not have sexually suggestive, inappropriate, graphic, or other harmful material or images on their screens or in their backgrounds. Children and students should be requested to follow the same standards.
- An adult monitoring the virtual space for hackers or inappropriate use is required to host a virtual event.
- Virtual gatherings require a registration, and links should not be included on any social media or in broad email lists.
 - Should a “Zoom bomb” take place, parents will be contacted.
- If a child or a student is sharing inappropriate, graphic, or other harmful material, they will be removed from the virtual environment and parents will be contacted.

Virtual environments are not suitable or safe for one-on-one gatherings and should follow the same standards as meeting in a physical room or transportation in a vehicle.

VII. MONITORING

A Responsible Person shall monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, children, and youth to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

- All people who minister to children and youth must have ongoing supervision.
 - Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by the Supervisor who may be parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry with the person engaged in the ministry.
 - Each person engaged in such a ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact the Supervisor at all times.
- Dioceses, congregations, and organizations shall ensure that all people who minister to children and youth receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.
- Dioceses, congregations, and organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister to children and youth. This list shall be kept in the organization's office or other place where records are kept.

A. Unrelated Adults

- There shall be at least two unrelated adults (at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth.
 - If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to the Supervisor, clergy in charge, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.
- Only one adult may be sufficient in well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the church grounds, such as a Sunday School classroom, provided that another adult can maintain visual contact with the adult program leader. This can be accomplished by designating an individual to conduct frequent random checks of classrooms and unlocked spaces throughout the building(s).
 - Exceptional circumstances must be specifically described in a written document and approved by the governing body of the congregation.

B. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth

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

For example:

- **Alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings.

- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to dioceses, congregations, and other organizations. Devices shall have adequate password protection and child safety software.
- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** Anyone with keys or electronic access to church buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training.
- **Unused spaces.** Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible. Given the vast differences in facilities, each diocese, congregation, and other organization should determine how best to meet this standard.

C. Basic Needs

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

D. Inclusiveness

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

The EFFA seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

- All children and youth--most especially those identifying as transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary--who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements.
 - Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom.
 - Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their transgender status confidential.
 - They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.
- Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).
- Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at separate times from the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on [Overnight Programs](#).

E. Violence and Weapons

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

- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.
- Report suspected violations immediately.

F. Transportation

- From time to time, you may be in a position to provide transportation for children and/or youth. Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the church copies of your valid and current driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
 - Use child safety seats that meet federal standards. You and your passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines.
 - Do not actively use cell phones, including hands-free devices, while driving on church business or church-related activities—unless in an emergency in which phone contact is critical to the safety of a passenger.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.
- Never travel alone with a child in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). Ensure you always have two or more adult participants. You may then transport as many children as the seat belt limitations of the vehicle allow; seatbelts are ALWAYS required.
 - If an extenuating circumstance causes you to travel alone with one child in an automobile, obtain permission from a parent or legal guardian of the child. This permission should be written and signed by the parent/guardian; if only verbal consent is obtainable, make sure you document it. Transport the child in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.
- Transport children directly to their destination. Avoid unauthorized stops to a non-public place. Make group stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks. Avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child or youth in transport.
- Avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.

1. Travel

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

a. Adult Leaders and Chaperones

- Minimum ratios of adult to youth need to be greater due to the possibility of leaving an adult behind with a participant in the event of a medical emergency.
 - 9–14 years — 1:5
 - 15–18 years — 1:7
- Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than two adult chaperones.

b. Documentation and Administration

- One adult, minimum age 25, should serve as the travel administrator who is responsible for all aspects of the trip, including carrying all necessary documentation, contacts, and forms including:
 - Medical releases,
 - Community covenant,
 - Emergency contacts,
 - Itineraries, and
 - Cash and/or credit card capacity to address emergencies.
- A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

2. Overnight Programs

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

- Participant privacy,
- Maximization of social integration of all participants,
- Minimization of stigmatization of any participants,
- Equal opportunity to participate, and
- Safety of all participants.

Other guidelines for overnight programs:

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires dioceses, congregations, and other organizations to consider numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
- No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.

- Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping.
- It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water.
- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep.
 - In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hideabeds, and rollaway beds.
- At least 2 children or 2 youth in each room.
- Adult supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered among the rooms with children or youth, and at least one adult room is by the stairs or elevators.
- Adult leader assigns rooms and room occupants.

APPENDIX A

Financially compensated staff

The following requirements must be met prior to an individual being permitted to function in any position of supervision over, or responsibility for, a vulnerable population:

- Complete MinistrySafe training specific to the vulnerable population served (as available).
- Complete and pass a thorough background check which must include the following:
 - Criminal History (See Appendix B for disqualifying criminal activity)
 - Professional License and Education (if applicable)
- Submit three letters of recommendation, at least one of which must be from someone who can attest to the individual's capacity to responsibly serve a vulnerable population. Letters must include contact information for follow-up.
- For the first three months of service, activities with the vulnerable population should be closely monitored by clergy and/or other staff. This should include periods of unannounced observation and, when feasible, partnering them with other, well-established staff or volunteers to work alongside them.

The following requirements must be met on an ongoing basis in order to maintain eligibility to serve a vulnerable population:

- Updated criminal history background check every **three** years
- Refresher training as assigned by the Archbishop or his/her designee
- Maintain regular supervision from the parish clergy or their designee

Long-term volunteer: An individual who works with children and youth for a period exceeding one month.

The following requirements must be met prior to an individual being permitted to function in any position of supervision of, or responsibility for, a vulnerable population:

- Be a parishioner in regular attendance for no less than **six months**. If a volunteer attends a local fellowship elsewhere, confirmation of consistent engagement within that fellowship should be obtained from its clergy or designee.
- Complete MinistrySafe training specific to the vulnerable population service (as available).
- Complete and pass a thorough background check which must include the following:
 - Criminal History (See [Appendix B](#) for disqualifying criminal activity)
 - Professional License and Education (if applicable)
- Submit three letters of recommendation and / or phone interviews, at least one of which must be from someone who can attest to the individual's capacity to responsibly serve a vulnerable population. Letters must include contact information for follow-up.
- For the first three months of service, activities with the vulnerable population should be closely monitored by clergy and/or other staff.
 - This should include periods of unannounced observation and, when feasible, partnering them with other, well-established staff or volunteers to work alongside them.

The following requirements must be met on an ongoing basis in order to maintain eligibility to serve a vulnerable population:

- Updated criminal history background check every three years
- Refresher training as assigned by the Archbishop or their designee
- Maintain regular supervision from the parish clergy or their designee

Short-term volunteer: an individual who works with children and youth for a period not exceeding one month.

The following requirements must be met prior to an individual being permitted to function in any position of supervision of, or responsibility for, a vulnerable population:

- Submit two letters of recommendation, at least one of which must be from someone who can attest to the individual's capacity to responsibly serve a vulnerable population. Letters must include contact information for follow-up.
- All responsibility for a vulnerable population must be supervised by parish clergy, Tier 1, or Tier 2 individuals.

Exception: Short-term volunteers who are engaged in employment necessitating routine criminal background checks and continuing education to caring for vulnerable populations. This may include, but not be limited to, public school teachers, medical providers, and social workers.

APPENDIX B: DISQUALIFYING CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

Financially compensated staff

The following must disqualify an applicant from becoming a financially compensated staff member:

- A credible allegation, charge, or conviction of any form of child abuse, including attempted child abuse. This includes criminal or civil infractions, including domestic battery when the victim is under 18 years old.
 - The term "child abuse" encompasses any form of abuse including physical, psychological, or sexual, as well as neglect. Charges or convictions for this category might be listed as "child abuse," "domestic battery," "criminal sexual assault" (where the victim is under the age of 18,) or "child neglect."
- Criminal conviction of domestic battery or attempted domestic battery.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of aggravated domestic battery.
- Credible allegation, charge, conviction of criminal sexual assault, or attempted sexual assault, where the victim is an adult.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of child pornography.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of murder, homicide, or manslaughter, or attempted murder, homicide, or manslaughter.
- Charge or conviction of manufacturing or possession with intent to distribute any illicit drug or substance in the applicable jurisdiction.

Any charge not specified here is left to the discretion of the rector, vestry, and/or EFFA leadership.

Long-term volunteer: an individual who works with children and/or youth for a period exceeding one month.

The following must disqualify an applicant from becoming a long-term volunteer:

- A credible allegation, charge, or conviction of any form of child abuse, including attempted child abuse. This includes criminal or civil infractions, including domestic battery when the victim is under 18 years old.
 - The term “child abuse” encompasses any form of abuse including physical, psychological, and sexual, as well as neglect. Charges or convictions for this category might be listed as “child abuse,” “domestic battery,” “criminal sexual assault” (where the victim is under the age of 18,) or “child neglect.”
- Criminal conviction of domestic battery or attempted domestic battery.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of aggravated domestic battery.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of criminal sexual assault, or attempted sexual assault, where the victim is an adult.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of child pornography.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of murder, homicide, or manslaughter, or attempted murder, homicide, or manslaughter.
- Charge or conviction of manufacturing or possession with intent to distribute any illicit drug or substance in the applicable jurisdiction.
- Conviction of misdemeanor or felony charge of driving while intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances.
 - A conviction of this crime must only prevent a long-term volunteer from driving children and youth, but must not prevent them from volunteering in other capacities. However, if the individual has three or more DUI convictions, then they must be prevented from volunteering in all capacities.

Any charge not specified here is left to the discretion of the rector, vestry, and/or EFFA leadership.

Short-term volunteer: an individual who works with children and/or youth for a period not exceeding one month.

The following must disqualify an applicant from becoming a short-term volunteer:

- A credible allegation, charge, or conviction of any form of child abuse, including attempted child abuse. This includes criminal or civil infractions, including domestic battery when the victim is under 18 years old.
 - The term “child abuse” encompasses any form of abuse including physical, psychological, or sexual, as well as neglect. Charges or convictions for this category might be listed as “child abuse,” “domestic battery,” criminal sexual assault (where the victim is under the age of 18,) or “child neglect.”
- Criminal conviction of domestic battery, or attempted domestic battery.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of aggravated domestic battery.

- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of criminal sexual assault or attempted sexual assault, where the victim is an adult.
- Credible allegation, charge, or conviction of child pornography.
- Charge or conviction of manufacturing or possession with intent to distribute any illicit drug or substance in the applicable jurisdiction.
- Credible allegation, charge or conviction of murder, homicide, or manslaughter, or attempted murder, homicide, or manslaughter.
- Conviction of misdemeanor or felony charge of driving while intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances.
 - A conviction of this crime must only prevent a short-term volunteer from driving children and youth, but does not necessarily prevent them from volunteering in other capacities.

Any charge not specified here is left to the discretion of the rector, vestry, and/or EFFA leadership.