



Safeguarding God's Children

Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse

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The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Office of the Bishop

Dear People of the Diocese of Texas:

In 2004 we introduced *Safeguarding God's Children* in the Diocese of Texas. Since then, we have trained tens of thousands of people in the prevention of sexual abuse of children and youth. This training and attention to the policies and procedures laid out in this manual offer safety and protection to:

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

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

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

Faithfully,

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

About These Policies

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

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

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

Section I. Definitions

A. Age Categories

1. A **child** is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years.
2. A **youth** is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older but still in high school.
3. A **young adult** is defined as anyone who is at least 18 years old and not yet 21 years old, is no longer enrolled in high school, and is not a vulnerable adult.
4. A **vulnerable adult** for the purposes of this policy is defined as anyone who is 18 years or older who has special needs of a physical, age-related or mental nature and participates in activities for children and youth.
5. An **adult** for the purposes of this policy is defined as anyone who is 21 years or older and is not a vulnerable adult.

B. Personnel

For the purposes of these policies, the following are included in the definition of personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the congregation, school, or diocesan organization. **These individuals must be certified in Safeguarding God's Children (SGC) as set out in [Section IV](#):**

1. **All clergy** whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, canonically resident in this diocese, or licensed in this diocese, who are engaged in ministry or service.
2. **All employees**, full or part time, whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools, or organizations, whether or not they work directly with children.
3. **Vendors** (those who are not employees but contract their services to the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, its congregations, schools or other organizations) who work with or around children or youth.
4. **Adult volunteers serving in staff positions** whether full time or part time, regardless of whether they work with children or youth.
5. **Adult volunteers in activities for children and youth**, including any person who offers to serve in activities for children and youth or who actually assists with such activities.
6. **All volunteers whose work routinely takes them throughout the facility or grounds** when children or youth are present.
7. **Children or youth who assist in ministries or programs** for children or youth such as camp, Vacation Bible School/Camp, child care, mission trips, or retreats. (See [Section VI. Help Sheets](#))
8. **Any person whose living quarters are on the grounds** of the church, school, or other diocesan organization.

Examples of personnel include, but are not limited to:

- Children's or youth choir directors
- Sunday school teachers and staff
- Vacation Bible School/Camp teachers and staff
- Lay youth formation directors and directors of Christian education
- Nursery workers
- All adults who supervise children in any capacity
- Teachers, substitute teachers, and staff in parochial or other Episcopal schools, full or part time, contract or volunteer

- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth
- Security guards or regular maintenance persons who work with or around children.

C. Types of Abuse

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

Section II. Creating Safe and Healthy Environments

A. Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth

Stating which behaviors are appropriate and which are inappropriate allows personnel to show positive affection in ministry while identifying individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children and youth. The following guidelines are to be followed carefully by all personnel working around or with children and youth.

1. **Appropriate affection that respects physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries** (these are examples and not exclusive):
 - Brief hugs
 - Pats on the shoulder or back
 - Handshakes or fist bumps
 - "High-fives" and hand slapping
 - Verbal praise
 - Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
 - Arms around shoulders
 - Holding hands while walking with small children
 - Sitting beside small children
 - Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
 - Holding hands during prayer
 - Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

2. **Inappropriate behaviors that cross physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries** (these are examples and not exclusive; many of these are the behaviors that are used to “groom” children or youth for later sexual abuse or can be, themselves, sexual abuse):

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

B. Personnel Behavioral Expectations

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

1. **All personnel must be certified in Safeguarding God’s Children unless they qualify for an exception under Section IV.C.** No uncertified person will be allowed to volunteer regularly with children or youth until the person has been **known to the congregation, school, or diocesan organization for at least six months**, *unless* the volunteer is a parent, volunteering with his or her own child’s program.
2. Personnel will **treat children and youth with respect, consideration, and equal treatment**, regardless of sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, sexual or gender identity, or socio-economic status. Personnel will

portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will not show favoritism.

3. Personnel are **prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence** of alcohol or illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs or prescription medications while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children and youth.
4. Personnel will **conduct any one-to-one talks** with children and youth in an open or public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
5. Personnel are **prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth**.
6. Personnel are **prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved** with a child or youth
7. Personnel are **prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials** (magazines, cards, videos, computer files, e-mails, films, clothing, etc.) on church, school or diocesan property or in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of an educational program that is pre-authorized by the head of congregation, school, or organization.
8. Personnel are **prohibited from using the internet or other electronic media to view or download sexually oriented materials** on church, school, or diocesan property or in the presence of children or youth.
9. Personnel are **prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities**, including dreams and fantasies, and from discussing with children or youth their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos, or materials on or from the Internet.
10. Personnel are **prohibited from sleeping in the same bed** or sleeping bag with children or youth *unless* the adult is an immediate family member. (See [*Section VI. Overnight Event Help Sheet*](#))
11. Personnel are **prohibited from using physical punishment** in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the child or to others.
12. Personnel are **prohibited from using harsh language**, profanity, degrading punishment, or any mechanical restraint for behavior management.
13. Personnel are **prohibited from** participating in or allowing others to conduct any **hazing activities** or behaviors which could be construed as hazing.
14. Personnel may not **develop new activities for children and youth** without

approval from the head of congregation, school, or organization. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing so that the head of congregation, school, or organization can assure that any activity includes adequate adult supervision.

C. Sexual Activity Between Children/Youth

Sexual activity of any kind between children or youth is not appropriate in connection with activities sponsored by a congregation, school, or organization, regardless of where they take place. Personnel must report immediately any incident of such sexual activity as policy violations. (See [Section V.A.](#))

D. Harassment and Discrimination

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, sex, (including sexual orientation or sexual identity), national origin, age, religion, or disability toward any person. Personnel must report immediately incidents of discrimination or harassment under the provisions of [Section V.](#)

E. Bullying

Bullying is manifested in various ways: abusive language, offensive name calling, acts or threats of physical abuse, vandalism, theft, or destruction of property. Bullying violates a person's sense of worth and his or her immeasurable value to God. Bullying of all forms, including homophobic bullying, inhibit a person's ability to feel safe in our congregations, schools, or other organizations. Therefore, bullying of any form will not be tolerated in entities of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Personnel must report incidents of bullying under the provisions of [Section V.](#)

F. Weapons

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas does not permit any person, including clergy, staff, students, volunteers, and visitors, to carry a weapon in our churches, congregations, schools, or organizations. This prohibition applies even if the person is licensed to carry a concealed weapon under Texas law. Law enforcement officer are the only exception to this policy. There are three ways to give legal notice that the property is a gun free zone: (1) signs posted at entrances, (2) a printed card or other written communication and (3) oral communications. Notification details can be found here: [Gun Law and Policy](#). Personnel must report violations of this policy under the provisions of [Section V.](#)

G. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

Personnel must monitor and supervise programs for children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors by adults, youth, and other children can be detected and stopped. The following rules apply whether or not the programs take place on property belonging to the congregation, school, or diocesan organization.

1. **Two Adult Rule:** Except as expressly provided elsewhere in these policies, at **least two certified adult personnel must supervise activities.** Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them. Adult personnel must directly supervise personnel younger than 21 and be physically present during all activities.
2. **Ratios:** In addition, the following **adult to child/youth ratios** must always be observed:
 - a. **Schools** that are accredited or licensed may observe the adult to child ratio as established by the accrediting or licensing agency.
 - b. For any other **program or activity**, the following adult to child ratios must be maintained:

Infants (ages 0-1)	one adult to three infants (1:3)
Toddlers (ages 1-2)	one adult to six toddlers (1:6)
Pre-K - 8 th grade	one adult to eight children (1:8)
9 th - 12 th grade	one adult to twelve youth (1:12)
3. **Release:** Programs for infants and children under six years old must **have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents** or to those designated by their parents or guardians.
4. **Transporting Children/Youth:** When transporting children or youth in vehicles, two adults must be in each vehicle, except when multiple vehicles travel in a caravan. A roster of children assigned to drivers must include names and contact numbers for all adults and must be provided to all drivers. Personnel must obtain permission forms from parents or guardians prior to the transportation of children or youth by personnel or parent volunteers for activities or events related to a congregation, school or diocesan organization.
5. **Overnight Events:** All adults accompanying an overnight event must be SGC certified. When both boys and girls are participating in overnight activities, certified male and female chaperones must be present. (See [Overnight Events Help Sheet.](#))
6. **No person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member** unless another non-related adult is present. An immediate family member is defined as the

spouse, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, partner, or co-habitant. This also applies to in-law and step family relationships. Related personnel may minister together so long as one other unrelated adult is present.

7. An **up-to-date list of approved sponsored programs** for children and youth will be maintained by the congregation, school, or organization, in the office where such records are kept.
8. **Classrooms** or other areas used by children or youth **must have windows or a window in the door unobstructed by blinds, curtains, drapes, or posters, so that casual monitoring can occur.** Doors of occupied classrooms must be unlocked at all times during activities. Unused rooms should be locked.
9. **No adult may shower, bathe, or use restroom facilities in the presence of children or youth.**
10. Each program will **follow age-appropriate procedures** to ensure the safety of children and youth **using restrooms and showers or baths and during diapering.**
 - a. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering, or diapering infants or children, **personnel will remain in an area observable** by other adults or work in pairs.
 - b. **Diapering** should be done in diapering stations in proximity to other care providers and not behind closed doors or in isolated places.
 - c. An adult must accompany all children **age 2 through Kindergarten** to the restroom. If facilities are removed from the activity or classroom, the adult must check the bathroom to see if other adults are present before allowing the child to go in. If there is no stall in the restroom, the adult should stand outside the door while the child uses the bathroom. If there are stalls, the child should go into the stall alone. The adult should assist the child only if necessary, in which case the stall door and the outer door should remain ajar. The adult should not go into the restroom with the child and close the door, or into the stall and close the door. If the restroom is in the classroom with only one toilet, the child should go alone into the restroom.
 - d. In a classroom with attached restrooms with only one toilet, the **1st through 5th grade** child may go alone. If the restrooms are located away from the activity or classroom, another child of the same sex should accompany the child to the restroom. In no instance should a door be completely closed if adult assistance is needed.
 - e. Youth in **6th through 12th grades** may go alone to the restroom but are encouraged to use the buddy system if restrooms are located some distance

away from the activity or classroom.

- f. When there are **special needs** or extenuating circumstances, a specific policy may be formulated, approved by the head of the congregation, school, or diocesan organization, and the parent(s) of the child, and implemented with appropriate monitoring and supervision. If assistance is needed in formulating such a policy, contact the Safeguarding Minister.

H. Social Media

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

1. **Implement consistent privacy settings** that respect personal boundaries with all participants across all platforms.
 - a. Remember that privacy settings do not ensure confidentiality.
 - b. Each congregation/school/organization should develop and publish agreed upon privacy settings that staff and volunteers will use, and make that information available to parishioners, teachers, students, parents, and employees.
2. **Be accountable**
 - a. Adults (parents) should be aware of how leaders utilize social media platforms.
 - b. Communication should be with groups, in public areas rather than in private messages. This includes image sharing.
 - c. When personnel see electronic pastoral communications that raise questions or concerns or are of a potentially harmful nature, they should be saved and disclosed to the supervising head of the congregation, school, or organization and, as appropriate, to parents. (Examples: bullying, abuse, etc.)
 - d. Ministry presence on social media platforms should have more than one administrator.
3. **Social media is rarely appropriate for a sensitive matter** that requires pastoral care and attention. In those instances, a face-to-face meeting or phone call is preferable as it allows for an assessment of tone and demeanor that can be helpful in evaluating the situation and determining both the urgency and appropriateness of a response.

4. **Frequently review your accessible content** and photos. Keep informed about new and emerging social media platforms.
5. **Online Groups** are required to follow the same Safeguarding policies as all other diocesan entities. In group communication platforms, leaders shall create covenants to govern group communication by addressing:
 - appropriate and inappropriate language and behavior; profane or derogatory language is forbidden
 - who may join and/or view a group activity
 - content that may be posted/published on the site or page
 - how images will be taken and shared
 - consequences for breaking the covenant, which may include removal from group
 - mandatory reporting rules
6. **Any inappropriate material posted in online groups must be removed from the page** but should be saved by the administrator and reported to the ministry leader to be addressed or reported as necessary.
7. **When video chatting**, a leader should be mindful of appropriate attire and surroundings, as they are visible to the viewer. One-on-one video chatting should follow the same Safeguarding guidelines as when meeting with people face-to-face. Do not video chat behind closed doors.
8. **If posting photos of children online** or in any publication, obtain a photo release from parents. (This should be done annually for schools and programs). Do not provide personal or identifying information about the children or youth pictured.

Sample **Photo Release** wording to be added to school and program registration:

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

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

10. **Use prudent judgment in the timing of your communications.** For example, consider work hours, school hours, meal times, vacations, and sleep schedules.
11. **Reporting:** Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected child abuse or exploitation of children, youth, elders, and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world just as they do in the physical world. Report suspected abuse to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: 800-252-5400. The rules of reporting found in *Section V* of these policies also apply.

I. Teaching Children and Youth to Keep Themselves Safe

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas can also help younger children and youth learn to protect themselves. The “I KNOW!” series is a curriculum designed to equip children and youth to keep themselves safe and can be accessed online at www.epicenter.org/i-know

Section III. Code of Conduct

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

- I will do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among the children and youth involved in the activities and services of the congregations, schools, and organizations of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.
- I will not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- I will comply in spirit and in action with these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- I will immediately report my observations of inappropriate behaviors or boundary violations as outlined in these policies.
- I agree to report immediately known or suspected abuse to state and diocesan authorities.
- I will immediately seek advice from the Safeguarding Office if I have any questions or concerns about these policies or their expectations.

Section IV. Safeguarding Certification Requirements

A. Screening and Training.

1. The Safeguarding Record System (SRS) of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas will be used to obtain and retain all required documentation for Certification. Except as provided in *Section IV.C*. Personnel will be certified in Safeguarding only after the screening and training steps have been completed. Any person seeking to be certified in Safeguarding God's Children must:
 - **Be known** by the leadership of the congregation, school, or organization for at least **six months** or be a parent volunteer or be an employee. Any exception must be approved by the Safeguarding Minister.
 - Complete a personal **interview**
 - Complete a **standard application in SRS** for either volunteer or paid positions.
 - Consent to a nationwide sex offender and criminal history **background check in SRS** in any state where the applicant has resided in the past ten years.
 - Complete **Safeguarding God's Children training** and sign the Sign Out Sheet which includes the acknowledgement of the *Code of Conduct*.
2. All information gathered about an applicant must be carefully reviewed and evaluated to determine whether the person is appropriate to work with children or youth. **No person who is known to have a civil or criminal conviction or record of child abuse, or who has admitted to sexual abuse, may be employed or permitted to volunteer to work with or around children in the Diocese.** The Safeguarding Minister shall be consulted if there is any uncertainty. Guidelines for evaluating background check results may be found in the [Safeguarding Records System Manual](#).

B. Certification Deadlines, Recertification, and Transfers of Location

1. Safeguarding certification must be completed within 30 days of hire or start date. In the interim, anyone not certified must be supervised at all times by a fully certified adult.
2. Lay personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Texas should contact the Safeguarding Office to update their certification to their new location. Clergy who transfer from another Episcopal diocese must contact the Safeguarding office to arrange for Safeguarding God's Children training.
3. Persons who are becoming **certified in Safeguarding God's Children for the first time and persons new to the Episcopal Diocese of Texas must take in-**

person training.

4. Recertification must be **completed through Safeguarding Records System (SRS) every five years**. This includes updating contact information, a new background check, and training. **If SRS recertification begins before expiration of current certification, online training is an option.**
5. **In-person training** shall be administered by a **diocesan-certified trainer using the Safeguarding Record System (SRS)**. Because training involves a review of the policies of the Diocese of Texas, **no training other than a training provided by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas is accepted**, even when lay or clergy Personnel have received Safeguarding training elsewhere. **There are no exceptions.**

C. Certification Exceptions

1. **Parent Volunteers:**

Parent volunteers who assist no more than six times a year with a program in which their child is enrolled are exempt from certification requirements. Such assistance includes providing transportation but does not include overnight activities or a supervisory role at Vacation Bible Camp. All adults accompanying children or youth on overnight events or serving in any supervisory role at a Vacation Bible Camp must be certified. Exempt parents may only serve as helpers to certified leaders and may not be alone with a single child or youth other than their own. (See [Help Sheets in Section VI](#) for more information on particular youth events.)

2. **Youth Helpers:**

Youth (as defined in [Secton I.A.2](#)) who assist adults in the children and youth ministries of our congregations, schools, and diocesan organizations must always be under the supervision of two Safeguarding-certified adults and must follow the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*. **In order to assist in children and youth ministries, they must be screened and trained every 12 months as outlined below. Youth under the age of eighteen may not be entered into SRS;** all screening and training records must be kept in hard copy by the congregation, school, or organization.

a. **Screening procedures**

All youth helpers must:

- be known by the leadership of the congregation, school, or organization for at least six months.
- complete a personal interview
- complete an application
- undergo reference checks.

b. Training procedures

Youth must be trained in the [Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse](#) using the *SGC Training Procedures* found on the [Trainer's Corner](#).

3. Training Only Agreements

- a. **Schools:** When a school's screening methods for employees meet or exceed the diocesan requirements, heads of schools may sign an annual [Training Only Agreement](#) with the Safeguarding Office that allows them to use the "Training Only" function in SRS for their employees. The school agrees to provide to the diocese upon request a copy of an employee's personnel file (including all screening data) or, in the case of a parish day school, to the head of congregation upon request. Schools with a *Training Only Agreement* must still use the full six step SRS certification process for screening volunteers unless the school is (i) not a parish day school, (ii) uses the same screening method for volunteers as for employees, and (iii) has a written annual agreement with the Safeguarding Office to use the "Training Only" function for their volunteers. Additional [School Safeguarding](#) information is available on the Safeguarding website.
- b. **Vendors and Non-Episcopal Partners in Ministry:** When a congregation, school, or diocesan organization (i) uses a vendor to provide services with or around children, or (ii) partners with a vendor/business to run a ministry or program that involves children or youth, the vendor/business must comply with the Safeguarding policies and requirements of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

This *Safeguarding Training Only Agreement for Vendors* is available from the Safeguarding Office and must be submitted annually. The agreement states that the vendor/business has completed the following screening procedures for their volunteers and/or employees:

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

Adults from non-Episcopal vendor/business who are covered by a *Training Only Agreement* must complete Safeguarding God's Children training, including a review of the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*.

Examples of programs that may use outsourced organizations and staff:

- Boy Scouts (Section VI. [Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts Help Sheet](#))
- After school care
- Sports clinics
- Mentoring programs
- Mission trips, retreats or lock-ins
- School enrichment programs

c. **Other Diocesan Organizations**

Other diocesan organizations with screening procedures for employees and/or volunteers that meet or exceed diocesan requirements, may, in the discretion of the Safeguarding Minister, negotiate and sign an annual *Training Only Agreement* with the Safeguarding Office.

4. **Tutors and Independent Instructors**

- a. **Tutors or independent instructors under contract with a congregation, school, or other diocesan organization.** If any congregation, school, or organization contracts with tutors or independent instructors for their students/members, the tutoring must occur at the church, school, or organization, and all Safeguarding policies and certification requirements apply. The policies regarding vendors and *Training Only Agreements* may apply. (See [Training Only Agreements C.3.](#))
- b. **Parents contracting with independent tutors on site:** If a parent contracts with a tutor and requests that the tutor meet with the child at the church, school, or organization, the parent, the head of the congregation, school, or organization and the tutor must sign and date a letter acknowledging the following:
 - The tutor is not functioning as congregation/school/organization staff.
 - The congregation/school/organization will choose an appropriate place (open, easily observed, etc.) for the tutoring to take place but will not exercise oversight of the tutor and student.
 - The tutor has not been trained and certified in Safeguarding God's Children.

- The tutor must establish a specific time for tutoring that fits the schedule of the congregation/school/organization and must not change the schedule without notifying the head of the congregation/school/organization.
- The parent must notify the head of congregation/school/organization of any changes in the tutoring times and when the tutoring has ended.

The original letter must be retained by the diocesan organization and a copy provided to all parties. A sample letter may be used for independent tutors who use church/school/organization premises. (See [Sample Letter](#).)

- c. **Parents contracting with independent tutors at home.** If a parent contracts with a teacher or staff member at a congregation/school/ organization to tutor the child in the child's home, the parent must submit a written acknowledgement that when the teacher or staff member is tutoring in the child's home, he/she is not functioning as staff, and the congregation, school, or /organization has no oversight and bears no responsibility for their actions.

Section V. Reporting

A. Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth

1. **Personnel are required to report** any suspected or known abuse of children or youth by personnel or by other adults, youth, or children in connection with any programs or property of a congregation, school, or diocesan organization, directly to the head of congregation, school, or organization, or, if the head is involved in the allegation, directly to the Safeguarding Minister or the Canon to the Ordinary. (See [Section V.B.3](#).)
2. The **head** of a congregation, organization, or school who receives a report of suspected or known abuse **must immediately report it to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary** so that immediate and proper steps may be taken. Personnel who are the subject of an investigation may be placed on administrative leave until the investigation is concluded.
3. **Texas law requires that any known or suspected abuse of children or youth be reported to the Department of Family and Protective Services or to the police.** Abuse is mental, emotional, physical, or sexual injury to a child or failure to prevent such injury to a child. Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs and/or medical needs or to take action to protect a child or youth from harm. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect of children or youth is a crime.

- a. The head of the congregation, school, or organization, together with the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary, may help determine who best should make the report to the police or Department of Family and Protective Services.
- b. To report known or suspected abuse, call the toll free, 24 hour, seven days a week hotline 1-800-252-5400 OR report through the DFPS secure web site www.txabusehotline.org. DFPS does not accept e-mailed reports. See [Texas Family Code](#). To report an emergency, call 911.
- c. The report should be specific and objective and made as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours after the reporter knows or suspects abuse. A record should be made of all injuries or incidents observed, including the dates and time of day. This information should be included in the report, along with any available information on the relationship between the child and the suspected abuser, and (to the extent known), the following information.
 - Name, age, and address of the child
 - Brief description of the child
 - Current injuries, medical problems, or behavioral problems
 - Parents' names and names of siblings in the home, if known
- d. Reports may be made anonymously. A report is confidential and is not subject to public release under the Open Records Act. The law provides immunity from liability for persons who report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the reporter believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
- e. Anyone who has reason to suspect child abuse but is not positive, should make a report. If there are doubts about whether what has been observed constitutes abuse, a person should call the hotline (see 3.b. above) for guidance.

B. Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations with Children or Youth

When personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with *Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth*, or *behavior* that may violate any provision of these *Policies for Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*, they must immediately report their observations as directed below.

Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would include:

- seeking private time with children or youth
- youth on youth, youth on child, or child on child sexual activity
- taking children or youth on overnight trips without other adults
- swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth
- using staff or volunteers without Safeguarding God's Children certification

Personnel observing or receiving a report of inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations shall make a report immediately by email, a phone, or meeting as follows (see [Confidential Notice of Concern](#) for guidance on the information to include):

1. Unless the policy violation or inappropriate behavior is directly attributable to the head of congregation, school, or organization, the **report must be made to the head of the congregation, school, or organization** (or to the person designated by the head to receive such reports on his or her behalf). If the inappropriate behaviors or policy violations continue, a report must also be made to the Canon to the Ordinary or the Safeguarding Minister.
2. The **head** of the congregation, school, or organization who receives a report of inappropriate behavior or a policy violation **shall immediately report the same to the Canon to the Ordinary or the Safeguarding Minister**.
3. **If the complaint is against the head** of congregation, school, or organization, report the violation directly to the Canon to the Ordinary or the Safeguarding Minister.

C. Diocesan Contacts

All reports of inappropriate behavior/policy violations with children or youth are taken seriously. Please report to the Canon to the Ordinary or the Safeguarding Minister:

The Rev. Canon Christine Faulstich
Canon to the Ordinary
1225 Texas Ave. Houston, TX 77002
cfaulstich@epicenter.org
1-713-520-6444 or 1-800-318-4452
Secure Fax: 1-713-521-2218

The Rev. Canon Lisa Hines
Safeguarding Minister
510 Rathervue Pl. Austin, TX 78705
lhines@epicenter.org
1-512-478-0580 or 1-800-947-0580
Secure Fax: 1-866-241-7050

D. Investigation and Enforcement

All reports of inappropriate behavior involving children or youth will be investigated. The diocese may suspend any individual who is the subject of a complaint during the pendency of an investigation. If the investigation substantiates that the complaint is valid, immediate corrective action designed to stop the misconduct and prevent its recurrence will be taken, up to and including dismissal of the offending person.

Section VI. Help Sheets

Overnight Events Help Sheet

The following is a summary of the requirements for overnight events in the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse. It does not replace the Policies or change the definitions found in the Policies.

All adults and young adults participating in any capacity in an overnight event must be SGC certified. (A young adult is defined as anyone who is at least 18 years old and not yet 21 years old, is no longer enrolled in high school, and is not a vulnerable adult.)

All youth in leadership positions must receive annually the [Screening and Training Procedures for Youth](#), which includes a personal interview, completing an application, reference checks, and being trained according to the procedures outlined on the [Trainer's Corner](#).

When both boys and girls are participating in overnight activities, certified male and female chaperones must be present.

One adult chaperone may sleep in the same room or tent with no fewer than two children, providing the adult and children are of the same sex.

Multiple adults may sleep in an open space such as a parish hall or camp lodge with children and youth.

Adults are prohibited from sleeping in the same bed or sleeping bag with children or youth *unless* the adult is an immediate family member.

The adult will use the bathroom facilities alone, dressing/undressing in the bathroom with the door closed and with no children present.

Avoid situations in which one adult is alone with one child unless the child is an immediate family member.

Mission Trips, YES, and Happening Help Sheet

The following is summary of the requirements in the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse as they apply to mission trips and to the diocesan youth events, YES and Happening, along with suggestions for a successful experience. It does not replace the Policies or change the definitions found in the Policies.

Certification Requirements

Safeguarding God's People - Exploitation:

1. Mission trip leaders
2. Adult volunteers who will be supervising other adults

Safeguarding God's People - Harassment:

1. Employees

Safeguarding God's Children:

1. Employees
2. Leaders/adult volunteers who will be supervising or working with children/youth.
3. Young adults who will work with children or youth.

Youth serving in ministry who will be working with or around children require screening and training but are not be entered in SRS. Follow the [Screening and Training Procedures for Youth](#) in [Section IV.C.](#)

Suggestions for Pre-trip Preparation

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

Housing

- A single youth may not sleep alone in a room with an adult chaperone (unless the adult is a parent/guardian).
- Youth roommates should be same gender and in the same age range.
- Leaders should follow a "process for nightly check in".
- Review policy for overnight events [Section II.G.5](#) and [Overnight Event Help Sheet](#).

Recreation

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

Medical Treatment

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

Vacation Bible School/Camp Help Sheet

The following is a summary of the requirements of the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse as they apply to Vacation Bible School. It does not replace the Policies or change the definitions found in the Policies.

Certification Requirements

1. **Adults or young adults (as defined) with any supervision responsibilities for youth, or children, must be certified in Safeguarding God's Children even if they would otherwise be a parent volunteer exempt from certification requirements.**
2. Youth who serve as leaders or in ministry positions must be screened and trained using the [Screening and Training Procedures for Youth](#), which includes a personal interview, completing an application, reference checks, and being trained according to the procedures outlined on the [Trainer's Corner](#).
3. Parents whose only role is to accompany their own children or youth who are attending Vacation Bible School/Camp need not be certified but must never be left alone with children or youth other than their own.
4. Adults, young adults, and youth who have volunteered to help in some capacity that does not involve supervisory responsibilities or the opportunity to be alone with children or youth, may, in the discretion of the head of congregation, be allowed to participate without certification, provided they are always supervised by two certified adults. Examples would include volunteers who help to prepare or serve food or who make a presentation to children or youth in the presence of at least two certified adults.

Supervision

1. Two certified adults must be present at all times to supervise children, youth, and young adults.
2. The following adult to children/youth ratios must be observed:
 - Infants (ages 0-1) one adult to three infants (1:3)
 - Toddlers (ages 1-2) one adult to six toddlers (1:6)
 - Pre-K - 8th grade one adult to eight children (1:8)
 - 9th - 12th grade one adult to twelve youth (1:12)
3. Children and youth should not be released to anyone other than parents or guardians or those designated by them.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts Certification Help Sheet

The following is a clarification of the certification requirements of the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse as they apply to Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. It does not replace the policies or change the definitions found in the policies.

Boy Scouts

Boy Scouts require that troops be chartered by sponsoring organizations. Congregations, schools or diocesan organizations that charter Boy Scout troops must approve “all registering unit adults” (see [BSA New Unit Application](#)) who are designated by the executive officer of the Boy Scout organization or the person delegated by the executive officer. All “registering unit adults” must be certified in Safeguarding God’s Children through SRS or be covered by a *Training Only Agreement* prior to their approval as “registered unit adults.”

Only “registered unit adults” may be covered by a *Training Only Agreement*. All other adult volunteers and youth volunteers must follow the certification requirements Safeguarding God’s Children in *Section IV: [Safeguarding Certification Requirements](#)*.

Girl Scouts

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

Section VII. Sample Forms

1. [Youth in Ministry Application, Interview, and References Log](#)
2. [Permission Form for Children/Youth Events](#)
3. [Registration Form for Children/Youth Events](#)
4. [Participation Log - Parent Volunteer](#)