



★ The Episcopal Diocese *of Texas*

Safeguarding God's Children

Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth

epicenter.org/safeguarding
epicenter.org/wellness-and-care

2020

Table of Contents

<u>Section I. Definitions</u>	5
A. Age Categories	5
B. Personnel	5
C. Terms	7
<u>Section II. Creating Safe and Healthy Environments</u>	9
A. Behavioral Standards for Personnel	9
B. Sexual Activity Between Children/Youth	11
C. Basic Needs	11
D. First Aid and Medications	11
E. Harassment and Discrimination.....	12
F. Bullying.....	12
G. Weapons and Violence	12
H. Alcohol	13
<u>Section III. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs</u>	13
A. Accessibility of Information	13
B. Approval and Tracking of Activities	14
C. Responsible Person.....	14
D. Two Adult Rule.....	14
E. Unanticipated Circumstances	14
F. Unrelated Persons.....	14
G. Ratios	14
H. Release	15
I. Classroom Visibility and Security	15
J. Private Activities	15
1. No adult may shower, bathe, or use restroom in the presence of children or youth.....	15
2. Supervising dressing, showering, or diapering	15
3. Safe restrooms, locker rooms, and shower facilities.....	15
4. Diapering.....	15
5. Age Appropriate Restroom Supervision	16
K. Social Media	17
L. Teaching Children and Youth to Keep Themselves Safe	19
<u>Section IV. Prior Parental Approval and Registration, Waiver, and Release Forms</u>	19
A. Prior Approval by Parent.....	19

B. Registration, Waiver and Release Forms	19
Section V. Off-Site Events, Travel, and Overnight Events	20
A. Prior Approval of Off-Site Events	20
B. Adult Supervision	20
C. Additional Rules for Travel.....	20
D. Transporting Children and Youth.....	21
E. Overnight Events.....	22
Section VI. Code of Conduct	22
Section VII. Safeguarding Certification Requirements.....	23
A. Certifications	23
B. Deadlines, Recertification, and Transfers of Location	24
C. Certification Exceptions	25
1. Parent Volunteers.....	25
2. Youth Helpers	25
3. Training Only Agreements (Schools & Vendors).....	26
4. Tutors and Independent Instructors	27
Section VIII. Reporting.....	28
A. Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth	28
B. Behaviors Inconsistent with Policies.....	28
C. Diocesan Contacts/Intake Officers.....	29
D. Methods for Reporting.....	29
E. Reporting Protection.....	29
F. Investigation and Enforcement.....	30
Appendix i. Guidance in Reporting Neglect or Abuse of Children or Youth.....	31



★ The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Office of the Bishop

Dear People of the Diocese of Texas,

When we introduced Safeguarding God's Children in the Diocese of Texas in 2004, people were only beginning to acknowledge the potential for sexual abuse of children and youth in our churches and schools. Since then, we have raised awareness by training thousands of people each year to prevent sexual abuse and create cultures of safety. In 2018, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church passed a Model Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth that reflects a broader approach to the protection of children and youth from all types of abuse. A committee of General Convention is working to create new training materials for the Model Policy that will be made available in the future, at which point, we will likely do a major restructuring of our Safeguarding system. In the meantime, we have made changes to our diocesan policies to move us closer to the Model Policy and are rolling out interim training guides and procedures. As always, the Safeguarding staff stands ready to support you in this work and to answer any questions that arise.

Among other changes, these policies give guidance to our churches, schools, and organizations on how to nurture children and youth who do not conform to binary gender categories. We continue to welcome all people into our communities, and being aware of best practices in this area will be essential well into our future. As we continue our diocesan commitment to the safety and well-being of our children and youth, I ask you to continue your individual commitment to making our congregations, school, and entities safe places for all of our children and youth to grow and mature spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Children and youth 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 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 from 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 by the Safeguarding Minister.

No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Local leadership must understand these policies thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgements 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 and also includes anyone who is 18 years old or older and still in high school.
3. An **adult** is defined as anyone who is 18 years or older who is not in high school and who is not a vulnerable adult.
4. A **vulnerable adult** is defined as anyone who is 18 years or older who has special needs of a physical, age-related or mental nature.

B. Personnel

The following are included in the definition of personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the diocese or for a diocesan organization. **These individuals must complete screening and training in Safeguarding God's Children (SGC) as set out in Section VII:**

1. **All members of the 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 or diocesan organizations, whether or not the employees work directly with children. An exception may be made by the Safeguarding Minister

for employees of an organization when the organization has no contact with children or youth in the course of its ministry.

3. **Vendors** (those who are not employees but contract their services to the diocese or diocesan organizations) who routinely work with or around children or youth, unless their only contact with children or youth is during a worship service where children and youth are being supervised by other adults.
4. **Volunteers serving in staff positions** whether full time or part time, regardless of whether they work with children or youth.
5. **All persons with general key or code access to locked buildings** where children or youth may be present.
6. **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.
7. **All volunteers whose work routinely takes them throughout the facility or grounds** when children or youth are present, other than during a worship service where the children and youth are being supervised by other adults. For any other exception, consult with the Safeguarding Minister.
8. **Youth who assist in ministries or programs** for children or youth such as camp, Vacation Bible School, childcare, mission trips, or retreats.

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. Terms

Abuse: Includes **physical abuse** (non-accidental injury intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth, **sexual abuse** (any sexual contact, indecency, or activity of a sexual nature with a minor), and **emotional abuse** (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).

Bullying: Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbally, psychologically, or physically.

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 develop.

Clergy in Charge: A member of the clergy who is in charge of a program for children and youth. In a congregation, this is the head of the congregation unless he or she has appointed another clergy staff member as the Clergy in Charge of a program.

Diocese: The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

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"), or "gender non-conforming". This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality develop.

Intake Officer: The person(s) designated by the diocese to receive information regarding an offense for which a member of the clergy may be held accountable under Title IV of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, which sets out the disciplinary process for clergy. Anyone may contact an Intake Officer to report concerns.

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

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. Under Texas law, all adults are mandatory reporters of suspected abuse of children or youth.

Neglect: 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.

Off-Site: Any location other than the facility of the diocese or diocesan organization in which the ministry is based.

Organizations: All institutions authorized by the diocese or its congregations, including fellowships, missional communities, college ministries, schools, camps, retreat centers, and social service organizations.

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

Peer Abuse: Any bullying or abuse occurring between children, between a child and a youth, or between youth.

Programs: Official activities and programs sponsored by the diocese or its organizations. Programs include troops of the Boy Scouts of America who are chartered by an organization.

Responsible Person: The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program. Such person must be (i) an adult who has been trained and screened under these policies, and (ii) physically present during the event.

Sacramental Use: Consecrated or unconsecrated wine used in the setting of Eucharist.

Supervisor: A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or personnel in a ministry program. The Supervisor may or may not be the Clergy in Charge and/or the Responsible Person.

Title IV: A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability and ecclesiastical discipline.

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

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

Travel: An event for children and youth that involves spending the night in multiple locations over more than two calendar days.

Youth Helper: A youth who assists adult personnel in a program involving children and youth.

Section II. Creating Safe and Healthy Environments

A. Behavioral Standards for Personnel

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

1. Personnel **will treat children and youth with equal respect and consideration**, regardless of sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or socio-economic status. Personnel should not show favoritism. They will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. Using preferred pronouns is an important way to show respect to children and youth who are not cisgender.
2. 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. A Responsible Person shall be informed in advance about any planned conversations. When such conversation is unplanned, the Responsible Person shall be informed as soon as practical.
3. **Personnel are encouraged to offer appropriate displays of affection that respects physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries**, including but not limited to the following examples:
 - High fives and fist bumps
 - Handholding while walking with small children or in prayer
 - Brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms
 - “Laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision
 - Brief hugs and arms around shoulders
4. Personnel **shall not engage in behaviors that cross physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries**, including but not limited to the following examples:
 - Any unwanted form of physical affection
 - Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
 - Kisses on the mouth
 - Holding children over 3 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
 - Touching knees or legs, wrestling, or 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 children or youth
 - Snapping bras, giving “wedgies,” or similar touching of underwear
 - Comments or compliments (spoken, written or electronic) about physique or body development
 - Giving money or gifts to individual children or youth
 - Private meals with individual children or youth
 - Inappropriate interaction on social media (See [Social Media Policy](#))
5. Personnel who develop **private relationships** with children or youth outside of ministry activities (e.g., using youth as babysitters or for yard maintenance) will (i) do so only with the permission of parents or guardians and (ii) notify the Supervisor or Responsible Person of the program in which the personnel and child or youth are involved.
 6. Personnel **shall not use, possess, distribute, or be under the influence** of alcohol or illegal drugs, or misuse legal drugs or prescription medications while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children and youth.
 7. Personnel **shall not provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography.**
 8. Personnel **shall not engage in sexual contact with a child or youth or become romantically involved** with a child or youth.
 9. Personnel **shall not possess, download, or view any sexually oriented or explicit materials** on the property of the diocese or any organization or in the presence of children and youth (with the exception of sexually oriented materials that are part of an educational program that is pre-authorized by the diocese or the head of the organization).
 10. Personnel **shall not discuss their own sexual activities**, including dreams and fantasies, or discuss with children or youth their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos, or materials.

11. Personnel **shall not sleep in the same bed** or sleeping bag with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member.
12. Personnel **shall not use physical punishment** in any way for behavior management of children and youth, including spanking, slapping, pinching, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop behavior that may cause immediate harm to the child or to others.
13. Personnel **shall not use harsh language**, profanity, degrading punishment, or any mechanical restraint for behavior management.

B. Sexual Activity Between Children/Youth

Although not all sexual activity between children or youth is abuse, sexual activity of any kind between children or youth is not appropriate in connection with activities sponsored by the diocese or organization, regardless of where it takes place. Personnel must intervene to stop such activity by a child or youth and report it immediately as a policy violation and may need to report it as abuse. (See *Section VIII*)

C. Basic Needs

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, adequate sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event. Adequate sleep means the opportunity to sleep for at least 7 hours.

Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, needs, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program. 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 fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs met immediately.

D. First Aid and Medications

At all activities for youth or children, the following rules apply:

1. **First Aid Kit:** An appropriately stocked first aid kit shall be available in an easily accessible location.
2. **Medications:** All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person. Recommended exceptions include inhalers and epi-pens.

Subject to the above exception, the Responsible Person or their adult designee shall administer all medications.

3. **Records:** A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant that includes the name of the person administering the medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment.
4. **Current Certification:** Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is encouraged for persons working with children and youth.

E. Discrimination and Harassment

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas prohibits discrimination or harassment toward any person based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, religion, or disabilities. Personnel must report immediately incidents of discrimination or harassment under the provisions of *Section VIII*.

F. Bullying

Bullying violates a person's sense of worth and his or her immeasurable value to God. Bullying is manifested in various ways: abusive language, offensive name calling, acts or threats of physical abuse, vandalism, theft, or destruction of property. Bullying of all forms, including bullying or bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identification or expression, inhibit a person's ability to feel safe in our organizations. Bullying of any form will not be tolerated in organizations of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Personnel must report incidents of bullying under the provisions of *Section VIII*.

G. Weapons and Violence

1. **General Weapons Policy:** The Episcopal Diocese of Texas does not permit any person, including clergy, staff, students, volunteers, and visitors, to carry a weapon in our churches, congregations, schools, or organizations. This prohibition applies even if the person is licensed to carry a concealed weapon under Texas laws. Law enforcement officers 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 IX*.

2. **Specific Weapons Policy Involving Children and Youth:** Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind, or items which may easily be used as weapons (e.g., pocketknives, machetes, bows and arrows, etc.), at any event or program for children and youth except as expressly permitted in camp programs or other programs with prior approval from the head of the organization.
3. **Violence:** No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time at activities involving children or youth.

H. Alcohol

All alcohol, including alcohol for sacramental use, must be stored in an area inaccessible to children and youth. Alcohol may not be served at events designed for children and youth except for sacramental use. (See diocesan [Alcohol Policy](#))

Section III. 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 diocese or organization.

A. Accessibility of Information

The Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth shall be posted in an area where activities for children or youth take place, **along with the names and phone numbers of the member of the Clergy in Charge (if applicable), the program Supervisor, the head of organization, and (in the case of a congregation) a Warden.** Such information shall also be given to all parents, guardians, and personnel.

B. Approval and Tracking of Activities

No new activities for children and youth shall be developed without written approval of the head of the organization (or in the case of the diocese, of the person in the bishop's office who oversees programs for children and youth). Requests for new activities must be in writing so that the head can assure that any activity includes adequate adult supervision. An **up-to-date list** of approved programs for children and youth will be maintained by the diocese or organization in the office where such records are kept.

C. Responsible Person

For every youth or children's event, a **Responsible Person (as defined in Section I.C)** shall be **appointed** by the program Supervisor.

D. Two Adults Rule

Except as expressly provided elsewhere in these policies, there shall be at least two unrelated adult personnel (**at least two years older than the eldest participant**) present at ministry settings and events designed for children or youth. Only one adult personnel may be sufficient in a well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the grounds of the diocese or organization, provided that other adult personnel can maintain visual contact with the lone adult (such as by frequent random checks of classrooms). Such exception to the Two Adults Rule must be described in writing and approved by the head of the organization and the program Supervisor.

E. Unanticipated Circumstances

If unanticipated circumstances result in **an adult's being alone with children or youth**, that adult shall report those circumstances to the Responsible Person, Supervisor, and Clergy in Charge as soon as possible.

F. Unrelated Persons

No person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member unless another unrelated 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 stepfamily relationships. Related persons may minister together so long as at least one other unrelated adult is present who has been screened and trained under these policies.

G. Ratios

The following adult to child/youth ratios must be observed:

1. **Schools or camps** that are accredited or licensed may observe the adult to child ratio as established by the accrediting or licensing agency.
2. **For any other program or activity, the following adult to child ratios must be maintained:**

Infants (0-11 mo.)	1:3 (one adult to three infants)
1-5 years	1:5 for overnight participants and 1:6 for day participants
6-8 years	1:6 overnight and 1:8 day
9-14 years	1:8 overnight and 1:10 day
15-18 years	1:10 overnight and 1:12 day

H. 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.

I. Classroom Visibility and Security

Classrooms or other areas used by children or youth **must have windows or a window in the door so that casual monitoring can occur**. At least one window must be **unobstructed by blinds, curtains, drapes, or posters, except as part of a lock-down during a drill or an active security threat**. Doors of occupied classrooms must be unlocked at all times during activities, except that doors may be locked from the inside in occupied classrooms when recommended as a security measure by law enforcement or a security audit. Unused rooms should be locked or otherwise made inaccessible.

J. Private Activities

Each program will follow procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms, locker rooms, showers, or baths and during diapering.

1. No adult may shower, bathe, or use restroom facilities in the presence of children or youth.
2. 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. **Children and youth must be supervised at all times to prevent incidents of Peer Abuse.**
3. Safe restrooms, locker rooms, and shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned for the use of a single facility according to gender identification). **No child or youth should be required to use a locker room, shower, or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.** Transgender or gender non-conforming children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements whenever possible. Such arrangements may include the use of a private area or separate changing or showering schedule, or the use of a single stall restroom. To the extent possible, any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their gender status confidential.
4. **Diapering** must be done at diapering stations in proximity to other care providers and not behind closed doors or in isolated places.

5. **Age Appropriate Restroom Supervision**

- a. An adult must accompany all children **age two 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 the restrooms are in a public space and the absence of other adults cannot be achieved, the adult must be especially vigilant about the safety of the child. 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, if possible, 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.
- b. 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, two Personnel, or one Personnel and at least one other child should accompany the child to the restroom. For use of a public restroom or if adult assistance is needed, the rules in 5.a. above apply.
- c. Youth in **6th through 12th grades** may go alone to the restroom, but groups of adolescents must always be supervised in the restroom. If restrooms are located some distance away from the activity or classroom, follow the “rule of three:” one Personnel and two youth, or one Personnel and more than one youth, should accompany the youth to the restroom.
- d. When there are **special needs or extenuating circumstances**, a specific policy may be formulated, approved by the head of the organization and a parent or guardian of the child or youth, and implemented with appropriate monitoring and supervision. If assistance is needed in formulating such a policy, contact the Safeguarding Minister.

K. 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 organizations and, as appropriate, to parents. (Examples: bullying abuse, etc.)
 - d. Ministry presence on social media platforms should have more than one adult 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 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, users 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 judgement in the timing of your communications**; for example, consider work hours, school hours, mealtimes, 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 VIII* of these policies also apply.

L. 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 IV. Prior Parental Approval and Registration, Waiver, and Release Forms

A. Prior Approval by Parent

Prior approval by a parent or guardian is required prior to:

1. A minor’s viewing any movie rated “PG-13” or above or participating in any program containing sexually explicit or violent content. Such approval must be in writing.
2. A minor’s being photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media.
3. A minor’s image or voice being posted online or in any form of social media. Such approval must be in writing.
4. A minor’s participating in any off-site event. For each off-site event, a permission slip must be signed by a parent or guardian.
5. A minor’s participating in any sexually oriented educational program.

B. Registration, Waiver and Release Forms

A parent or guardian shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before a minor may participate in any programs for children or youth. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year and must be maintained in a secure location on-site or electronically.

Section V. Off-Site Events, Travel, and Overnight Events

A. Prior Approval of Off-Site Events

Prior approval of any off-site event must be given by the head of organization and one of the following: (i) the governing body of the organization, (ii) the executive committee of the governing body, or (iii) in the case of a congregation, a warden of the congregation. If the head of the organization is the Supervisor of the event, then prior approval must also be given by the Safeguarding Minister.

B. Adult Supervision

1. Except as provided in 2 below, at any off-site event for children and youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older.
2. In the case of an off-site event involving travel (as defined in *I.C*), at least three unrelated adults shall chaperone the trip, with one being age 25 or older, and the minimum ratios of adults to youth increase as follows:
 - **9-14 years – 1:5**
 - **15-18 years – 1:7**

C. Additional Rules for Travel

1. The **Responsible Person shall be at least 25 and be 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).
2. It is **recommended** but not mandatory that one adult at least 25 years old hold a current **medical certification** to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, first aid, and to triage medical situations to determine if an individual needs a higher level of care.
3. **A copy of all documents** shall be left with an accountable person at the facility of the organization and such person should serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

4. Insurance for Travel

- a. It is recommended that short-term trip or supplemental insurance, when available through the diocesan organization's policy as an added rider, be secured at least one month prior to travel.
- b. It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance in the form of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- c. If any person does not have health insurance, it is recommended that consideration be given to adding health insurance to trip insurance.

5. International Travel Considerations

- a. Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- b. Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond the scheduled return date.
- c. Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in the destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with person who serves as the local emergency contact person in C.3 above.
- d. A more thorough list of international travel considerations can be found in the [*Youth in Mission Manual*](#).

D. Transporting Children and Youth

1. For off-site events that originate and/or terminate at the facility of the organization, all **drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance, a current driver's license appropriate to the vehicle, and a completed volunteer driver information form.** It is recommended that the driver have a satisfactory DMV records check to be kept on file by the organization.
2. 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.**
3. All drivers and riders must **comply with state and local laws**, including seat belt and cell phone usage.
4. **Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children or youth to and from the facility of the organization or directly to off-site events that do**

not originate and terminate at the facility. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

E. Overnight Events

1. In overnight programming, particular consideration must be given to disabled children and youth and to LGBTQ+ children and youth. When requested, **preferences of these individuals merit additional consideration, accommodation, and action** to provide safety, privacy, equal opportunity to participate, and to prevent or minimize stigmatization of the participants who are not cisgender.
2. When both boys and girls are participating in overnight activities, it is recommended that both male and female chaperones attend. Exceptions may be made after consultation with the Safeguarding Minister.
 - a. Sleeping arrangements must be safe and supervised. No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
 - b. Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth or children are sleeping unless (i) the children or youth are participants in a program that meets the licensing requirements to which it is subject, or (ii) the Safeguarding Minister approves in writing an alternative arrangement.
 - c. It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area where dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
3. Except as provided in *Section II.C*, participants must have access to three meals per full day, have the opportunity for at least 7 hours of sleep each day, and have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.
4. It is recommended that in the case of a hotel stay,
 - a. there be at least three children or youth per room and that consideration be given to the relative age and size of the children or youth,
 - b. adult personnel 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 elevator, and
 - c. the Responsible Person assigns the rooms and room occupants.

Section VI. 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 not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- 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 comply in spirit and in action with these *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*.
- 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 VII. Safeguarding Certification Requirements

A. Certifications

1. In order to be certified in *Safeguarding God's Children*, **Personnel must be screened and trained under these policies unless they qualify for an exception under Section VII.C.** No person will be allowed to volunteer regularly with children or youth until the person has completed screening, has a background check on file, and has attended training, *unless* the volunteer is a parent/guardian volunteering with his or her own child's program.
2. Certifications for lay Personnel are managed by the Safeguarding Records Administrator (SRA) of the organization in which they serve.
3. Clergy certifications are managed by the Safeguarding Office of the Diocese. Contact the Safeguarding Office at safeguarding@epicenter.org or 800.947.0580 to verify certification and for information on training opportunities.
4. The Safeguarding Record Systems (SRS) of the diocese will be used to obtain and retain all required documentation for screening and training. Except as provided in *Section VII.C*, persons will be certified in Safeguarding only after the screening and training steps have been completed.

All Personnel who are employees or volunteers must:

- Be known by the leadership of the diocese or organization for at least six months unless (a) a parent of a child in the organization, or (b) an employee whose completed background check (see below) is accepted before beginning employment. Any exception must be approved by the Safeguarding Minister.
 - Complete a personal **interview**
 - Complete an **application and reference checks 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 an acknowledgement of the Code of Conduct.
5. 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. Deadlines, Recertification, and Transfers of Location

1. Safeguarding certification must be completed within 30 days of hire or start date prior to working with children or youth. In the interim, anyone not certified must be supervised at all times by an adult screened and trained in Safeguarding God’s Children.
2. Lay personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Texas should contact the Safeguarding Office to update their new location. Clergy who transfer from another Episcopal diocese must contact the Safeguarding office to arrange for Safeguarding God’s Children training.
3. Adults 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** by a diocesan-certified trainer (which may be satisfied by a live training with an online platform) and tracked by the Safeguarding Records System (SRS), unless the Safeguarding Minister agrees in writing to an alternative arrangement due to special considerations. The Safeguarding Minister may approve an online policy review in lieu of an in-person

training when the lay or clergy person has recently received comparable Safeguarding training elsewhere.

4. Recertification must be **completed through the Safeguarding Records System (SRS) every five years**. This includes updating contact information, a new background check, and training. **If SRS recertification begins before or within six months of the expiration of current certification, then online video training is available as an option.**

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 School. All adults accompanying children or youth on overnight events or supervising children at Vacation Bible School must be certified. Exempt parents do not count toward the Two Adults Rule and may not be alone with a single child or youth other than their own.

2. Youth Helpers

Youth 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*. **In order to assist in children and youth ministries, youth must be screened and trained every 12 months as outlined below. Youth under the age of 18 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:
 - 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* using the **SGC Youth Training Guide** found on the [Trainer's Corner](#) or another training program approved in writing by the Safeguarding Minister.

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 must 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 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 the diocese or an 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
- Application 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*.

Examples of programs that may use outsourced organizations and staff:

- After school care
- Sports clinics
- Mentoring programs
- Mission trips, retreats or lock-ins
- School Enrichment programs

- c. **Other Entities:** Other entities with screening procedures for employees and/or volunteers that meet or exceed diocesan requirements, may, at 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 an organization:** If any organization contracts with tutors or independent instructors for their students/members, the tutoring must occur on the property of the organization, and all Safeguarding policies and certification requirements apply.
- 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 site of the organization, the tutor must sign and date a letter to the parent acknowledging the following:
- The tutor is not functioning as staff of the organization.
 - The organization will choose an appropriate place (open, easily observed, etc.) for the tutoring to take place but will not exercise supervision or oversight of the tutor and student.
 - The tutor has not been screened or trained in Safeguarding God's Children.
 - The tutor must establish a specific time for tutoring that fits the schedule of the organization and must not change the schedule without notifying the head of the organization.
 - The parent must notify the head of the organization of any changes in the tutoring times and when the tutoring has ended.

The original letter must be retained by the organization and a copy provided to all parties.

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

Section VIII. Reporting

A. Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Youth

1. Anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse or neglect of a child or youth has taken place is required to contact the police or the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (1-800-252-5400, or online at [Texas Abuse Hotline](#)). The TDFPS does not accept emailed reports. In case of an emergency, call 911. Failure to report suspected neglect or abuse is a crime. For guidance on making a report, see the Child Protective Services Guide in *Appendix i* or call the number above.
2. **In addition**, anyone who has reason to suspect that **abuse or neglect has taken place within a facility or in connection with a program of the diocese or an organization** should immediately inform:
 - In the case of the **diocese**, the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary;
 - In the case of an organization, the Responsible Person, Supervisor, a Warden (of a congregation), and the head of the organization. A report does not need to be made to anyone who is the subject of the complaint. **If the head of the organization is the subject of the complaint, then the report must be made directly to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary;**
 - Anytime that a **member of the clergy is suspected** of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation, an Intake Officer under Title IV. (See *Section VIII.C* below)
3. **The head of an organization who has received a report under this section shall immediately inform the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary**, so that immediate and proper steps may be taken, including a determination of who should make the report to the Texas Department of Family Protective Services and providing for appropriate pastoral care for affected persons. (See *Section VIII.C* below)

B. Behaviors Inconsistent with Policies

Personnel must report any behaviors they observe that are inconsistent with these *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*, but which do not constitute knowledge or suspicion of abuse or neglect. Examples of such inconsistent behaviors include:

- seeking private time with children or youth
- age-appropriate sexual exploration between youth or children
- 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

1. **Personnel observing inappropriate behaviors shall make a report immediately by email, phone, or meeting as follows** (See [Confidential Notice of Concern](#) for guidance on the information to include):
 - To the Responsible Person, Supervisor, a Warden (of a congregation), or to the head of the organization;
 - Unless the policy violation or inappropriate behavior is directly attributable to the head of the organization, any Responsible Person, Clergy in Charge, Senior warden, or Bishop's warden who receives a report shall immediately report the same **to the head of organization**. If the inappropriate behaviors or policy violations continue, a report must also be made to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary (see *Section VII.C* below)
2. The head of the organization who receives a report of inappropriate behavior or a policy violation **shall immediately report the same to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary**.

C. Diocesan Contacts/Intake Officers

The Rev. Canon Lisa S. 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

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

D. Methods for Reporting

Reports may be made by telephone, email, fax, letter, or in person. (For assistance regarding what information to include in the report, see [Confidential Notice of Concern](#).)

E. Reporting Protection

No one who reports a violation of these policies will be retaliated against or adversely treated because he or she made a complaint.

F. Investigation and Enforcement

All reports of inappropriate behavior involving children or youth are taken seriously and will be investigated. The diocese may remove from ministry or place on administrative leave 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.

Appendix i

Guidance in Reporting Neglect or Abuse of Children or Youth

1. The head of the 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.
2. To report known or suspected abuse, call the toll free, 24 hour, seven days a week hotline 1-800-252-5400 OR online at [Texas Abuse Hotline](#). DFPS does not accept e-mailed reports. (See [Texas Family Code](#)). To report an emergency, call 911. 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 times 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.
3. 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.
4. Anyone who has reason to suspect child abuse but is not positive should make a report. For guidance as to what is cause for reasonable suspicion, see the [Child Protective Services Guide](#) provided by [childwelfare.gov](#). If there are doubts about whether what has been observed constitutes abuse, a person should call the hotline for guidance.