



★ The Episcopal Diocese *of Texas*

Safeguarding God's People

Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults

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Why We Have These Policies

The final promise of our Baptismal Covenant asks us to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.” Diocesan Safeguarding policies give life to that baptismal promise. The Episcopal Diocese of Texas is committed to maintaining an environment free of abuse, exploitation, and harassment in its congregations, schools, and other organizations.

Application of These Policies

These policies apply to all congregations, schools and other organizations that operate under the authority of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, with the exception of college ministries, which are covered by *Safeguarding God’s People: Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation: College Ministries* rather than by these policies to the extent they are inconsistent.

If ministry involves both a Pastoral Relationship and involvement with a Vulnerable Adult, the rules for both situations will apply.

These policies address ministry with adults. Ministry with children and youth are covered by The Episcopal Diocese of Texas, *Safeguarding God’s Children: Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth (2020)*.

Responsibility for Implementation

The heads of congregations, the heads of schools, executive directors, and any other person serving in these or equivalent roles in diocesan organizations are directly responsible to the Bishop for the implementation and administration of the policies and procedures outlined in *Safeguarding God’s People: Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults*.

The implementation and administration of these policies and procedures may be delegated to other staff members or volunteers, but the ultimate responsibility may not be delegated. Supervision of these administrative processes by the heads of congregations, schools, and other organizations is required to assure appropriate compliance and confidentiality.

The administrator (Safeguarding Records Administrator) of these policies must be certified in *Safeguarding God’s People* and must have a working knowledge of the policies and procedures in order to make appropriate decisions about their application in the local ministry setting. The administrator is to contact the Safeguarding Minister for clarification of the policies or guidance in applying them.

I. Definitions

A. Pastoral Relationship and Persons in a Pastoral Relationship

1. A **Pastoral Relationship** is a relationship

between any member of the clergy and any individual who attends a congregation or other ministry setting in which the member of the clergy serves or who seeks ministry from the member of the clergy,

OR

between any member of the clergy or any duly appointed lay person, whether employee or volunteer, who is authorized to provide and does provide one or more of the following ministries, and any individual who receives such ministries:

- counseling
- pastoral care
- spiritual direction or spiritual guidance
- ministrations of any sacrament (other than the distribution of the bread and wine by a lay person at a public service of Holy Communion)
- life/leadership/peer coaching
- hearing a person's confession in the course of the duly authorized ministry

OR

between a Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Visitor, or Catechist who is licensed under the canons of The Episcopal Church and those individuals they serve in the course of these ministries.

2. Persons who are in a ministerial position described above are called **Persons in a Pastoral Relationship**.

B. Vulnerable Adult

- Any **adult who is infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness, or disability**
- Any adult who is ministered to in their home (by Lay Eucharistic Visitors or duly appointed pastoral care visitors)
- Any adult who is wholly or partially dependent upon one or more persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support (such dependency may be temporary as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child)
- Any adult who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lacks agency in a Pastoral Relationship, as in the wake of a death or job loss.

C. Program Supervisor

Persons who have oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or personnel in a ministry program. Examples include choir directors, directors of religious education, and the directors of commissioned ministries like the Daughters of the King and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew.

D. Decision-Makers

All members of decision-making bodies who have the authority to (i) approve the creation of ministries, programs, congregational activities, or policies involving Pastoral Relationships or ministry to Vulnerable Adults; (ii) appoint or approve Persons in a Pastoral Relationship or persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults; or (iii) influence the salary or benefits of employees.

E. Terms

Adult: Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school.

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 involving Persons in a Pastoral Relationship or Vulnerable Adults. 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

Elder Abuse: An intentional or negligent act by any person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to an older adult. It includes physical abuse; financial fraud, scams and exploitation; caregiver neglect or abandonment; psychological abuse; and sexual abuse (involuntary or nonconsensual sexual conduct that would constitute an offense under Texas law).

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 gender or sex assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientations 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 Vulnerable Adults.

Neglect: The failure to provide for a Vulnerable Adult’s basic needs and/or medical needs or to take action to protect a Vulnerable Adult 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 one calendar day and ends on a different calendar day.

Programs: Official activities and programs sponsored by the diocese and its organizations.

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.

Sexual Exploitation: The development or attempt to develop a sexual relationship between (i) a person and an individual with whom he or she has a Pastoral Relationship or (ii) between any person and a Vulnerable Adult to whom such person is ministering or (iii) between any individual and anyone who is supervised by them or whose salary and/or benefits such person has the power to influence.

Title IV: A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability and ecclesiastical discipline. *Canons 3 and 4 of Title IV* set out

the standards for members of the clergy and can be found in *Appendix i*.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality 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 Vulnerable Adults that involves spending the night in multiple locations over more than two calendar days.

Warden: Includes the senior warden, junior warden, or bishop's warden of a congregation.

II. Rules of Behavior

In addition to the policies for creating a safe environment found in *Section IV*, the following policies govern behavior in Pastoral Relationships and in ministry to Vulnerable Adults.

A. Conduct in Pastoral Relationships and/or Ministry to Vulnerable Adults

1. Examples of **inappropriate conduct** in Pastoral Relationships or when ministering to a Vulnerable Adult include:
 - a. **Physical Contact**
 - **Any** form of unwanted affection
 - Surprise or sudden touching
 - Full frontal hugs, bear hugs, or lengthy embraces
 - Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas
 - Lying down or sleeping beside another
 - Massages
 - Patting others on their thigh, knee, or leg
 - Tickling or wrestling
 - Touching or hugging from behind
 - Kisses on the mouth
 - Showing affection while in isolated areas
 - b. **Verbal/Electronic Communications**
 - Comments/compliments that relate to a person's body or appearance, or that could

be viewed as sexually suggestive

- Repeated nonessential communications, e-mails, or texts, especially those that contain personal disclosures or solicitations of an intimate or secret relationship
- Providing personal access, such as a personal e-mail address or cell phone number, that is not generally available to others
- Possessing, using, sharing, or referring to any sexually oriented materials, such as magazines or videos, whether it occurs on or off the property of the church, school, or other organization
- Discussing sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing the use of sexually oriented or explicit material
- Inappropriate interaction on social media (See *Appendix ii*)

c. Giving or Receiving Gifts

- Giving gifts other than token gifts that are an accepted part of the ministry
- Giving money other than money distributed from a monitored discretionary fund or emergency assistance fund as an accepted part of the ministry
- Requesting money, personal loans, or gifts
- Receiving gifts other than token gifts. Any gifts received from a Vulnerable Adult to a person ministering to the Vulnerable Adult must be reported to the Supervisor, or in the case of a head of a congregation, to a Warden.

d. Other Interactions

- Using the Pastoral Relationship or relationship with a Vulnerable Adult to meet one's own needs
- Any attempt to unduly influence the person who is receiving ministry
- Agreeing to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of the person who is receiving ministry
- Frequent or private meetings after hours or away from church property
- Seeking excessive private time
- Unwillingness to cease otherwise appropriate physical conduct after learning it is unwelcome

2. Examples of Appropriate Physical Contact

Some forms of physical contact are appropriate by Persons in Pastoral Relationships or by persons who minister to a Vulnerable Adult, **provided they are welcomed by the recipient.**

Examples include:

- Handshakes

- Brief hugs
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Touching hands, arms, shoulders
- Holding hands when a person is ill or upset

If a Person in a Pastoral Relationship or a person ministering to a Vulnerable Adult is unsure about whether any type of appropriate touch is welcome, the person should ask permission and wait for a response before making physical contact.

B. Sexual Exploitation Prohibited

- Persons in Pastoral Relationships are **prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved or having sexual contact with anyone with whom they have a Pastoral Relationship, so long as the Pastoral Relationship continues.** This prohibition specifically includes having a sexual relationship or attempting to develop a sexual relationship with any person in the Pastoral Relationship.
- Persons who minister to a Vulnerable Adult are **prohibited from dating, becoming romantically involved or having sexual contact with the Vulnerable Adult.** This prohibition specifically includes having a sexual relationship or attempting to develop a sexual relationship with the Vulnerable Adult.
- No person may enter into a dating, romantic, or sexual relationship** with anyone who is supervised by them or whose salary and/or benefits they (individually or as a member of a decision-making board or vestry) have the power to influence for so long as they remain in such supervisory or decision-making relationship.
- Members of the clergy are also subject to the provisions regarding dating and sexual relationships in the diocesan Clergy Manual and in Title IV.

C. Other Restrictions regarding Vulnerable Adults

Persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults shall not:

- Provide Vulnerable Adults with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a Vulnerable Adult
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse of legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a Vulnerable Adult
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit others to engage in illegal behavior
- Engage in any illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with a Vulnerable Adult.

III. Additional General Policies for Creating Safe Environments

A. 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 disability. Personnel must report immediately incidents of discrimination or harassment under to the provisions of *Section VII*.

B. Inclusiveness

The Episcopal Church seeks to support all persons by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort. Transgender or gender non-binary persons should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity. Transgender or gender non-binary adults who express the need or desire for increased privacy in restroom use or other private activities shall whenever possible be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a single-stall restroom, a private area for changing clothes, or a separate changing schedule. To the extent possible, any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the person's ability to keep their gender status confidential, if they so desire. Safe bathroom/shower facilities are to be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned for the use of a single facility).

Violations of this policy must be reported under the provisions of *Section VII*.

C. 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, schools, or organizations. This prohibition applies even if the person is licensed to carry a concealed weapon under Texas law. Law enforcement officers are the only exception to this policy. There are three ways to legally give notice that the church 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](#). Violations of this policy must be reported under the provisions of *Section VIII*.

D. Violence and Bullying

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

No one is to control or attempt to control another by bullying, intimidation, threats, verbal/emotional abuse, or isolation from others. Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.

Bullying violates a person's sense of worth and 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 based on sexual orientation or gender identification, inhibit a person's ability to feel safe in our congregations, schools, or other organizations. Bullying of any form will not be tolerated in entities of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

Violations of this policy must be reported under the provisions of *Section VII*.

E. Social Media

All digital communications must comply with the Safeguarding policies for organizations. The full policy is found in *Appendix ii*.

IV. Monitoring and Supervising Pastoral Relationships and Ministry to Vulnerable Adults

A. Prior Approval and List of Activities or Programs

Approval of all new activities or programs that involve Pastoral Relationships or ministry to Vulnerable Adults must be obtained from the head of the diocese or organization before the activity is to begin. Requests to develop new activities or programs should be submitted in writing. An **up-to-date list of persons** who have Pastoral Relationships or who work with Vulnerable Adults must be maintained by the diocese or organization.

B. Appointing a Responsible Person

For any program or event designed for Vulnerable Adults, a **Responsible Person (as defined in *Section I.E.*) shall be appointed** by the program Supervisor.

C. Creating Safe Space for Pastoral Relationships and/or Ministry to Vulnerable Adults

Ministry involving Pastoral Relationships or Vulnerable Adults must, whenever possible, take place in **visible spaces with appropriate furnishings where casual monitoring by others is convenient**; such as in areas where other persons are visible or work nearby.

- If the ministry setting is not out in the open, there must be windows or open doors that are unobstructed by blinds, furniture, curtains, or posters so that the space is always subject to casual monitoring.
- It is preferable that the location conveys safety and comfort without the use of couches, loveseats, or other furniture that encourages close seating. For example, chairs positioned at a 45-degree angle from each other create a good area for conversation.
- A sense of privacy can be maintained in Pastoral Relationships by arranging the furniture so that persons who provide pastoral care are always visible, but the visitor does not feel exposed.
- Artwork should be tasteful and inoffensive.
- If the space has a private entrance, the staff should be informed when it is being used for ministry involving Pastoral Relationships or Vulnerable Adults.

D. Avoiding Appearance of Impropriety

Persons in Pastoral Relationships and persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults are required to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries and to **avoid even the appearance of impropriety**. Whenever possible, one-on-one meetings should occur during regularly scheduled hours, by appointment, on the organization's premises, or in other appropriate professional settings when others are present in the building. When it is not possible, care should be taken to notify the appropriate person or persons of the time and place of the meeting.

E. Visiting Vulnerable Adults

Ministry to Vulnerable Adults often involves visits to hospitals, private homes, and residential facilities, which calls for particular care and supervision.

1. When visiting a Vulnerable Adult outside of the guidelines described in *IV.D* above, **avoid situations that may compromise the Vulnerable Adult's privacy or appear inappropriate**, including
 - Visiting behind closed bedroom doors
 - Sitting on the bed of the Vulnerable Adult
 - Visiting a Vulnerable Adult while they are not fully clothed
2. **Private Residence:** When visiting a Vulnerable Adult in a private residence, it is recommended to visit in teams of two or more. When only one minister is present, it is recommended that a member of the Vulnerable Adult's household be present (which may include a paid caregiver). If that is impractical or impossible, the minister should notify the Supervisor of such visit in advance and document the time, duration of visit, and the general matters discussed. In the case of a visit from the head of an organization, it is recommended that a warden or staff member be notified of the visit in advance.
3. **Residential Facility:** When visiting a Vulnerable Adult in a residential facility, the visitor should inform the facility staff of the visitor's presence. If the visit takes place out of sight of staff, staff should be notified in advance and informed when the meeting is concluded. The door to the Vulnerable Adult's room must remain open during the visit. Visitors should be mindful that LGBTQ+ residents may not feel comfortable expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity in the facility.

F. First Aid and Medications

- a. Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with Vulnerable Adults.
- b. A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.

- c. If a Vulnerable Adult requires assistance with medications of any type, then a record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage and/or treatment given.
- d. All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to Vulnerable Adults requiring assistance with medications shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- e. Only the Responsible Person, or the Responsible Person's adult designee, shall administer medications.

G. Off-Site Visits, Events, and Programs for Vulnerable Adults

Off-site programs, trips, and events may present additional challenges for safe and healthy ministry with Vulnerable Adults. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site. In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the Responsible Person should contact the program Supervisor for guidance.

Permission and documentation must be obtained as described below.

1. Prior Approval

Prior approval of any offsite 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.

These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, and the event is a cook-out, progressive dinner, etc.

2. Registration, Waivers, and Release Forms

- a. All participants shall complete and sign a registration, waiver, and release before participating in any program (these may cover a program year). Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical information.
- b. There must be a signature on all release and waiver forms. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then the signature of that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required. Digital signatures are acceptable if noted on the form.
- c. Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site.
- d. Permission slips shall be provided for each event and shall be signed by the Vulnerable Adult, guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member.

- e. Prior permission for an individual to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required.

3. Transportation

- a. For events that originate and/or terminate at the organization's facility, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license, and a completed volunteer driver information form. It is recommended that each driver also have a satisfactory DMV records check on file with the organization.
- b. A list of those approved to provide transportation to Vulnerable Adults shall be maintained in the office of the organization.
- c. Anyone being transported must consent to such transportation beforehand. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then prior approval by that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required.
- d. All drivers and riders must comply with state and local laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.

4. Insurance for Overseas Pilgrimages and Mission Trips

- a. It is recommended that short-term trip or supplemental insurance (available through most church and organization's policies 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 an individual does not have health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

5. International 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 return date.
- c. Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- d. 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 the Responsible Person at home.

V. Code of Conduct

Persons must meet and comply with the following code of conduct:

- To understand and follow the *Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults*
- Never to engage in any sexual or inappropriate relationship with an adult with whom one is in a Pastoral Relationship or with a Vulnerable Adult to whom one is ministering

- Never to engage in the sexual exploitation of any person with whom one works or serves on behalf of the diocese, church, school, or organization
- To seek advice immediately from the Safeguarding Office if one has any questions or concerns about any of these policies or their expectations
- To report immediately any inappropriate behavior, boundary violations, or policy violations that one observes
- To acknowledge the obligation and responsibility to prevent the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults in the ministries of the Diocese of Texas.

VI. Screening and Training Requirements

A. Clergy and Persons Training for Ordained Ministry

1. Within **90 days** of hire or appointment in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, all clergy must be screened and trained (“certified”) through the diocese in **Safeguarding God’s People – Clergy**, which includes training in both *Safeguarding God’s People: Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults* and *Safeguarding God’s People: Policies Prohibiting Sexual Harassment*.

Persons training for ordained ministry are considered clergy for the purposes of these policies and must be certified within 90 days of beginning any field placement.

2. **Clergy certifications and recertifications are managed through the Safeguarding Office of The Episcopal Diocese of Texas.** Contact the Safeguarding Office at safeguarding@epicenter.org or 800.947.0580 to verify certification and for information on training opportunities.
3. **Recertification is required every five years.**
4. **In addition to these policies, clergy are required to know and comply with all directives as set forth in the current [Clergy Manual](#) of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and in Title IV of the [Constitutions and Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas](#) and of [The Episcopal Church](#).**

B. Lay Persons in Pastoral Relationships or Vulnerable Adult Ministry, Program Supervisors, and Wardens

1. Persons in Pastoral Relationships, persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults, and Program Supervisors and Wardens as defined in these policies **must be screened and trained** (“certified”) in *Safeguarding God’s People: Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults* **within 90 days** of the start of the Pastoral Relationship, ministry, or role as Supervisor or Warden.
2. Certifications for lay persons are managed by the Safeguarding Records Administrator (SRA) of the organization they serve. The **Safeguarding Record System (SRS)** of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas must be used to obtain and retain all required documentation for screening and training.
3. Except as provided in item 5 below, persons will be certified in these policies only after the following screening and training steps below have all been completed:
 - **In the case of a volunteer, be known for at least six months** to the leadership of the congregation, school or organization prior to appointment to the position creating the

Pastoral Relationship, the ministry with Vulnerable Adults, or the supervisory role. Any exception must be approved by the Safeguarding Minister.

- **Individual interview.**
 - **Application** (through SRS) for either volunteer or paid positions.
 - Nationwide sex offender and criminal history **background check** (through SRS) in any state where the applicant has resided in the past 10 years.
 - **Reference checks** (through SRS) with persons who are unrelated to the applicant. One reference must be outside the congregation, school, or organization.
 - **Training** in *Safeguarding God's People: Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults* led by a certified trainer in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, complete with **signature on Sign-out Sheet** that consents to the *Code of Conduct*.
4. All information gathered about an applicant must be carefully reviewed and evaluated. The Safeguarding Minister may be consulted if there is any uncertainty. **If a person's background check reveals an arrest or conviction for a sexual or violent offense, contact the Safeguarding Minister for consultation and guidance.**
 5. Persons covered by a **Training Only Agreement** with the Episcopal Diocese of Texas (similar to that described fully in *Section IV.C.3* in the diocesan [Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth](#)) may be certified after meeting the screening and training requirements set out in such agreement.
 6. **Recertification and Transfer of Location**
 - i. Lay persons who transfer within the Episcopal Diocese of Texas should contact the Safeguarding Office to update their certification to their new location.
 - ii. Lay persons who are being screened and trained in these policies for **the first time and persons new to the Episcopal Diocese of Texas must take in-person training**. The in-person training shall be administered by a diocesan-certified trainer using SRS (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.
 - iii. Recertification must be **completed through SRS every five years**. This includes updating contact information, a new background check, and training. **If SRS recertification begins before the expiration or within six months of current certification, online video training is an option.**
 7. All employees or volunteers who serve in staff positions must be trained in *Safeguarding God's People in the Workplace*. This consists of a short video and acknowledgment form found online. ([Harassment Prevention Training](#)) Guidance on tracking the training in SRS is found in the *SRS Manual*.

C. Decision-Makers

Decision-Makers, **with the exception of the Wardens of a congregation, must receive training** in these policies but **do not need to be screened or certified** in *Safeguarding God's People: Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults*, unless such persons are required to be screened or certified under another provision of these policies. Guidance on tracking the training of Decision-Makers in SRS is found in the *SRS Manual*.

VII. Responding to Concerns

A. Suspected Sexual Exploitation or the Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult

1. Anyone who has reason to suspect that **Sexual Exploitation** or any **abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult has taken place within a facility or program of the diocese or an organization** should immediately inform:
 - In the case of the **diocese**, the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary (see *Section VII.C* below);
 - In the case of an organization, the Responsible Person, Supervisor, and 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** (see *Section VII.C* below);
 - Anytime that a **member of the clergy is suspected** of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation, an **Intake Officer** (see *Section VII.C* below).
2. In addition, any adult who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult with disabilities under Texas law or of an adult who is over 65 has taken place is required to contact the police or the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (1-800-252-5400, or online at texasabusehotline.org). TDFPS does not accept emailed reports. Under Texas law, all persons are Mandated Reporters. In case of an emergency, call 911.
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** (see *Section VII. D* below) so that immediate and proper steps may be taken, including providing for appropriate pastoral care for affected persons.

B. Lesser Policy Violations

1. Policy violations that do not rise to the level of Sexual Exploitation or the abuse, neglect or exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult, as defined in these policies, **must first be reported to the head of the organization** or, in the case of the diocese, to the Safeguarding Minister. If the head of the organization is the subject of the complaint, the policy violation must be reported to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary. (See *Section VII.C* below)

2. **If the policy violation continues after a report has been made to the head**, the person must also report such policy violations to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary.
3. The **head** of a congregation, school, or organization who has knowledge of a policy violation **must inform 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 (other than in *Section A.2* above) 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 complaints and reports will be investigated. The diocese may remove from ministry or put on administrative leave any individual who is the subject of a complaint of Sexual Exploitation or of the abuse, neglect or exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult during the pendency of the 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. Such corrective action may include discipline, up to and including discharge or dismissal of the offending person.

G. Local Resources for Response

The diocese and each congregation and other organization shall provide a copy of these policies to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate these policies, along with contact information for:

- any Responsible Person, Supervisor, Clergy in Charge, head of organization
- the Safeguarding Minister, Canon to the Ordinary, and Intake Officers
- the Texas Department of Family Protective Services.

Appendix i

Title IV Accountability and Standards of Conduct for Clergy

Title IV, CANON 3: Of Accountability

Sec. 1. A Member of the Clergy shall be subject to proceedings under this Title for:

(a) knowingly violating or attempting to violate, directly or through the acts of another person, the Constitution or Canons of the Church or of any Diocese;

(b) failing without good cause to cooperate with any investigation or proceeding conducted under authority of this Title;

(c) intentionally and maliciously bringing a false accusation or knowingly providing false testimony or false evidence in any investigation or proceeding under this Title (*added in 2018*);

(d) intentionally misrepresenting or omitting any material fact in applying for ordination, reception from another church, or nomination as a bishop (*added in 2018*); or

(e) discharging, demoting or retaliating against anyone who opposes misconduct or reports information regarding an Offense or participates in any Title IV proceeding (*IV.3.1*),

Sec. 2. A Member of the Clergy shall be accountable for any breach of the Standards of Conduct set forth in Canon IV.4.

Sec. 3. In order for any conduct or condition to be the subject of the provisions of this Title, the Offense complained of must violate applicable provisions of Canon IV.3 or IV.4 and must be material and substantial or of clear and weighty importance to the ministry of the Church.

Title IV, CANON 4: Of Standards of Conduct

Sec. 1. In exercising his or her ministry, a Member of the Clergy shall:

(a) respect and preserve confidences of others except that pastoral, legal or moral obligations of ministry may require disclosure of those confidences other than Privileged Communications;

(b) conform to the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer;

(c) abide by the promises and vows made when ordained;

(d) abide by the requirements of any applicable Accord or Order, or any applicable Pastoral Direction, restriction on ministry, or placement on Administrative Leave issued under Canon IV.7;

(e) safeguard the property and funds of the Church and Community;

(f) report to the Intake Officer all matters which may constitute an Offense as defined in Canon IV.2 meeting the standards of Canon IV.3.3, except for matters disclosed to the Member of Clergy as confessor within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent;

(g) exercise his or her ministry in accordance with applicable provisions of the Constitution and Canons of the Church and of the Diocese, ecclesiastical licensure or commission and Community rule or bylaws;

(h) refrain from:

(1) any act of Sexual Misconduct;

- (2) holding and teaching publicly or privately, and advisedly, any Doctrine contrary to that held by the Church;
- (3) engaging in any secular employment, calling or business without the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident;
- (4) being absent from the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident, except as provided in Canon III.9.3(e) for more than two years without the consent of the Bishop Diocesan;
- (5) any criminal act that reflects adversely on the Member of the Clergy's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a minister of the Church;
- (6) conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation; or
- (7) habitual neglect of the exercise of the ministerial office without cause; or habitual neglect of public worship, and of the Holy Communion, according to the order and use of the Church; and
- (8) any Conduct Unbecoming a Member of the Clergy.

“Sexual Behavior” Any physical contact, speech or other activity sexual in nature or intended to arouse or gratify sexual desires

“Sexual Misconduct” Sexual abuse (i.e., sexual behavior with a minor),
 Sexual behavior with a person for whom it is unwelcome or does not consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation (*added in 2018*), or
 Sexual behavior with an employee, volunteer, student, or counselee of the Clergy Member or in the same congregation as the Clergy Member or a person with whom the Clergy Member has a pastoral relationship

Appendix ii

Social Media Policy

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.