



★ The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Safeguarding God's People

Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation

College Ministries

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Table of Contents

Why We Have These Policies	3
Responsibility for Administration	3
Requirements for Clergy and Staff	3
I. Definitions	4
A. Sexual Misconduct	
B. Sexual Exploitation	
C. Sexual Harassment	
II. Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct	4
III. Preventing Sexual Exploitation	4
A. Pastoral Relationships	
B. Examples of Inappropriate Conduct	5
C. Examples of Appropriate Conduct	
D. Directives for College Missioners and Ministerial Staff	
1. Prohibition of Dating	
2. Limitations on Counseling	6
E. Ministry Settings	
IV. Code of Conduct	6
V. Certification Requirements	7
A. Screening and Training	
B. Ministry with Children or Youth	
C. Volunteer Exceptions	
D. Certification Process	
E. Recertification Process	8
VI. Reporting Sexual Misconduct Not Involving a Minor	8
VII. Other Policies	10
A. Social Media Policy	
B. Harassment and Discrimination Policy	12
C. Weapons Policy	
D. Bullying Policy	

Why We Have These Policies

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas is committed to establishing and nurturing environments of health, safety, and mutual care in its college ministries. This includes maintaining an environment free of abuse, exploitation and harassment. 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.

Responsibility for Administration

College Missioners (ordained or lay) are directly responsible to the Bishop for the implementation and administration of the policies and procedures outlined in *Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation, College Ministries*.

The 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 College Missioner is required to assure appropriate compliance and confidentiality.

Administrators of these policies must be certified in Safeguarding God’s People and must extensively familiar with 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.

Requirements for Clergy and Staff

The Diocese of Texas requires all clergy to be certified in Safeguarding by completing Safeguarding God’s Children and Safeguarding God’s People–Clergy training in our diocese **within 90 days** of hire. This is in addition to any other training which may have previously been taken in another diocese and/or seminary. Recertification is required every five years. Clergy certifications are managed through the [Safeguarding Office](#) of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

Clergy are required to know and comply with all directives as set forth in the current [Clergy Manual](#) of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Clergy must also know and comply with all directives in [Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons](#) of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and of [The Episcopal Church](#).

All employees of diocesan organizations and all volunteers who serve in staff positions are required to be certified in Safeguarding God’s People in the Workplace and in Safeguarding God’s Children (whether or not they work with children). Employees or volunteers who are in a pastoral relationship with adults as defined in these policies must also be certified in Safeguarding God’s People.

I. Definitions

A. Sexual Misconduct

For purposes of this policy, sexual misconduct is defined as any sexual or sexualized activity toward another person in a pastoral relationship, irrespective of age or marital status. This definition includes sexual abuse of a minor (under 18 years of age) as set forth more specifically in *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*. The sexual abuse of a minor must be reported in the manner described in those policies.

B. Sexual Exploitation

Sexual misconduct includes sexual exploitation, which is the development or attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a person in a ministerial position, lay or ordained, and an individual with whom he or she has a pastoral relationship. The general [Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation](#) for the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Sexual exploitation in college ministries are covered by these *Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation: College Ministries*.

C. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment in the workplace is also included in the definition of prohibited sexual misconduct. Sexual harassment is defined in the [Policies Prohibiting Sexual Harassment](#).

II. Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas is committed to providing healthy, safe, and nurturing environments wherein, by God's grace, the full work of the Church can be carried out. **Sexual misconduct on the part of any clergyperson, employee, or volunteer of any congregation, institution, organization, school, or agency within the diocese violates the mission of the church, is prohibited, and will not be tolerated.**

III. Preventing Sexual Exploitation

A. Pastoral Relationships

A pastoral relationship is defined as a relationship between a person in a duly appointed position, lay or ordained, whether employee or volunteer, and any individual who

- attends ministry events or other ministry settings in which the person serves, and
- either is supervised by the person or seeks ministry from the person.

B. Examples of Inappropriate Conduct for those in a Pastoral Relationship

Physical

- Sexual touching
- Unwelcome casual hugs/kisses
- Being in someone else's "space"
- Any touching after being told it is unwelcome
- Aggressive physical contact or assault

Verbal

- Off-color jokes
- Sexual language, references, propositions
- References of a sexual nature about any person
- Gossip/ speculation about a person's sexuality, sexual practices, pregnancy, or virility
- Remarks about anatomy
- Use of curse words or vulgarity

Other Interactions

- Photographs of a sexual or nature
- Texts, email messages, or electronic displays of a sexual nature, including inappropriate wallpaper, screensavers, or other graphics
- Any display, duplication, or transmission of pornography or inappropriate materials of a sexual nature

C. Examples of Appropriate Physical Contact

Some forms of physical contact may be appropriate between those in pastoral relationships, provided they are welcomed by the recipient. These include the following:

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

If a person in a pastoral relationship is ever unsure about whether one of these types of touching is appropriate, he or she should ask permission and wait for a response before making physical contact.

D. Directives for College Missioners and Ministerial Staff

- 1. Prohibition of Dating.** College missioners, program coordinators, and other ministerial staff members in pastoral relationships with students are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with students in the college ministry. These leaders are required to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

2. Limitations on Counseling. Clergy and other ministerial leaders may not go outside their areas of expertise and training, but should instead make a referral to a physician, psychologist or other mental health professional for issues that involve those specialties. Clergy are required to comply with all directives found in the current [Clergy Manual](#) of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

E. Ministry Settings

Locations where pastoral relationships take place should, whenever possible, be in open, visible spaces or in spaces with windows that are unobstructed by blinds or other barriers, where casual monitoring by others is convenient. The location that is selected should convey safety and comfort without the use of couches or other furniture that would encourage close seating.

IV. Code of Conduct

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

- Agree never to engage in any sexual or inappropriate relationship with a person in a pastoral relationship
- Agree never to exploit sexually any person they serve or work with on behalf of the college ministry or any other ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas
- Agree to comply with the *Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation: College Ministries*
- Understand that the Episcopal Diocese of Texas will not tolerate the sexual exploitation of any person
- Immediately seek advice from the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary if there are any questions or concerns about any of these policies or their expectations
- Agree never to engage in any inappropriate behavior, boundary violations, or policy violations

V. Certification Requirements

The Safeguarding Record System (SRS) of the Diocese of Texas must be used to obtain and retain all the required documentation for certification and recertification, including registration for training. All information gathered about an applicant must be carefully reviewed and evaluated. The Safeguarding Minister should be consulted if there is any uncertainty.

A. Screening and Training

People in the following positions must be certified in Safeguarding God's People: Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation, using the full certification process in the Safeguarding Records System (SRS).

- Clergy; College Missioner
- Other ministerial staff, such as program coordinators (paid or volunteer)

B. Ministry with Children or Youth

Volunteer leadership involved in ministry programs for youth or children (mission trips; community outreach, etc.) are required to be certified in Safeguarding God's Children, as set forth in [Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth](#).

C. Volunteer Exceptions

Persons in short-term volunteer positions of one semester or less that involve pastoral relationships require only a policy review in order to be approved for ministry. Examples of such positions include student Bible study leader; student small group facilitator; student mentor, etc.

Prior to starting in their positions and annually thereafter, such persons must receive and review these *Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation: College Ministries* and agree to comply with the code of conduct by signing the *Acknowledgment of Receipt and Review of Safeguarding God's People: College Ministries*. ([Section VIII](#))

D. Certification Process

1. In the case of volunteer, the applicant has been known to the missioner and student vestry for one semester
2. Individual **Interview** with the applicant
3. **Application** completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct a background check.
4. **Background** check via a nationwide sexual offender and criminal history registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past ten (10) years.

5. **Reference checks** with persons who know the applicant. No more than one may be a relative and one must be outside the college ministry
6. **Safeguarding God’s People: Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation** training and signature on Sign-out Sheet, acknowledging compliance with the *Code of Conduct*.

This process must be completed by the applicant within 90 days of the start of the position.

E. Recertification Process

Certified persons who continue to have Pastoral Relationships as defined in this policy are required to be recertified in SRS every five years. Recertification includes a new background check and completion of Safeguarding God’s People training. On-line recertification training is available to lay persons who begin the recertification process before the expiration of their current certification.

VI. Reporting Sexual Misconduct Not Involving a Minor

Any person who believes that he or she is being subjected to any type of sexual misconduct must promptly report it to an individual described below.

- The College Missioner
- A member of the student vestry
- The Canon to the Ordinary or Safeguarding Minister

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

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

The person complaining of sexual exploitation or sexual harassment is not required to address the matter with the individual who is the subject of the complaint. For guidance on what information to include in a report, see [Confidential Notice of Concern](#).

All clergy and ministry leaders are required to report immediately any suspected or known sexual exploitation to one or more of the individuals above.

College Missioners and other diocesan employees who suspect or know of sexual exploitation or who have received a report of suspected or known exploitation must report it immediately to the Canon to the Ordinary or to the Safeguarding Minister.

No person who reports sexual misconduct will be retaliated against or adversely treated because he or she made a complaint.

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas may suspend any individual who is the subject of a complaint of sexual exploitation or sexual harassment 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.

VII. Other Policies

A. Social Media Guidelines

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 the urgency and appropriateness of a response.

4. **Frequently review your accessible content** and photos. Keep informed about new and emerging social media platforms.
5. **Online Groups** are required to follow the same Safeguarding policies as all other diocesan entities. In group communication platforms, 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 view. 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 V* of these policies also apply.

B. Harassment and Discrimination Policy

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, sex (including sexual orientation and sexual or gender identity), national origin, age, religion, or disability toward any person. To report discrimination or harassment based on any of these protected classes, please follow the guidelines for reporting sexual harassment in [Policies Prohibiting Sexual Harassment](#). All complaints will be promptly investigated, and if substantiated, corrective action designed to stop the harassment or discrimination will be taken.

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](#). Personnel must report violations under the provisions of Section II of these policies.

D. Bullying

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

**VII. Acknowledgment of Receipt and Review of
Safeguarding God's People:
Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation: College Ministries**

I _____ (print name)

volunteer as _____ (print position)

in _____. (print name of ministry, ex: UT, UH, etc.)

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed The Episcopal Diocese of Texas' *Safeguarding God's People: Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation: College Ministries*.

I agree to comply with the Code of Conduct set forth in these policies.

I commit myself to following these policies faithfully, by treating my leaders and fellow students with honor and respect at all times, and by promptly reporting any policy violations that come to my attention.

Signature: _____

Date: _____ Email address: _____

College Missioners: ensure that each student volunteer in a pastoral relationship has received, reviewed, and agreed to comply with *Safeguarding God's People: Policies for Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation: College Ministries*.

Please submit this form to the Safeguarding Office.

1. Email form to Marty Brickley, Manager of Safeguarding Certifications mbrickley@epicenter.org
or
2. FAX to 866-898-8976 Attn: Marty Brickley

Questions? Call the Safeguarding Office for assistance 800-947-0580 or 512-609-1876