



# **The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana**

## **Safeguarding God's Children**

### **Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse**

#### **ANNOTATED VERSION FOR TRAINING VOLUNTEERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18**

**(In training youth volunteers, the adult in charge should summarize and present the information contained in the highlighted sections of this document in a way that is appropriate to the age of the volunteers.)**

**November 1, 2017**

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# SAFEGUARDING GOD'S CHILDREN

## Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse

### Introduction

The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana is committed to welcoming and protecting all children and youth who participate in ministries, activities and events in our congregations and Diocese. We are committed to providing safe places for our children and youth to grow in their life in Christ. We believe all who participate in our ministries, activities, and events should be protected from behavior that is physically, emotionally, spiritually, or sexually abusive or harassing.

The Diocese has established the following *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*. These policies are based on the *Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* developed by The Church Pension Group in partnership with The Nathan Network, with some adaptations for the Diocese.

**Training for Youth.** The training program described in this document is designed primarily for adults. The Diocese has modified the program for youth under age 18.

**Online Training.** The *Safeguarding* program is designed to help people recognize, report, and, perhaps most importantly, prevent abuse and neglect of our children and youth. A guide to recognizing abuse and neglect and reporting requirements in the State of Louisiana is on the Diocesan website. The *Safeguarding* program consists of instructional materials found on the Diocesan website (<http://www.diocesewla.org/safe-church/safeguarding-online/>) including informational videos. If you or a loved one has experienced abuse or neglect you might consider first talking with your clergy or a counselor before taking this training.

**Other Rules May Apply.** These Diocesan policies are provided as a guide for Episcopal institutions in the Diocese. They do not cover every issue. If there is any discrepancy between the policies and any state or federal law, the state or federal law will prevail. In addition, there may be certain instances, particularly with **Episcopal schools**, where the schools' rules and regulations will take precedence.

**Diocesan Contacts.** All questions about these *Policies* and *Safeguarding* training should be directed to the Safe Church Coordinator, Joy Owensby ([jowensby@diocesewla.org](mailto:jowensby@diocesewla.org), 318-442-1304). All reports of suspected policy violations or inappropriate behavior, or concerns regarding clergy behavior or questions about making reports should also be directed to her.

## **I. Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth**

The following *Code of Conduct* has been adopted by the Diocese to help create a safe environment for children and youth and for those who minister to them. In order to participate in ministry with children or youth you must sign a copy of the following *Code of Conduct*, as set out on *Appendix C*, and deliver it to your congregation's Safe Church Minister. A copy, which can be printed and signed, is also on the Diocesan website at <http://www.diocesewla.org/safe-church/safeguarding-online/>. When you take *Safeguarding* training online you may submit the document electronically with your electronic signature.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

- I will do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church, school or Diocesan ministries, activities and events.
- I will not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- I will comply with all applicable policies, standards and guidelines set forth in these *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*.
- If I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible violations of policies, standards or guidelines, or concerns about clergy behavior, I will immediately report my observations pursuant to the procedures in Section V of the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*.
- I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and will report suspected or known abuse or neglect to appropriate law enforcement authorities, state agencies and/or church leaders in accordance with Diocesan policies and the reporting procedures set forth in *Recognizing and Reporting Abuse of Children and Youth*.
- I understand that the Episcopal Church does not tolerate abuse or neglect of children or youth and agree to comply with these *Policies* in both spirit and action.

## **II. Definitions**

### **A. Church Personnel**

For the purposes of these *Policies*, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel. **These individuals must be certified in *Safeguarding God's Children*:**

1. **All clergy** who are engaged in ministry or service to the church in this Diocese.
2. **All paid personnel**, full- or part-time, employed by the Diocese or any of its churches, schools or institutions, whether or not they work with or around children.
3. **Those who contract their services** to the Diocese, its churches, schools or institutions and who work with or around children or youth.
4. **Adult volunteers serving in staff positions** whether full-time or part-time, regardless of whether they work with or around children or youth.
5. **Adult volunteers in activities in which they work with or around children or youth.**
6. **Adult volunteers whose work routinely takes them throughout the facility or grounds** of a church, school or Diocesan institution when children or youth are present.
7. **Any person whose living quarters are on the grounds** of the church, school or other related institution.

**Examples include, but are not limited to:**

- Children's or youth choir director
- Sunday School teachers and staff
- Vacation Bible School teachers and staff
- Lay youth ministers
- Directors of religious (Christian) education
- Staff or volunteers who work or assist with the nursery
- Teachers, substitute teachers, and staff in parochial schools, full- or part-time, contract or volunteer
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth

**B. 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. In addition, for the purposes of these *Policies*, a youth includes any individual enrolled in high school even if 18 years old or older.

**C. Other**

1. **Safe Church Coordinator.** The **Safe Church Coordinator** is the person serving as the Diocesan contact for questions about *Safeguarding* policies and training. Joy Owensby ([jowensby@diocesewla.org](mailto:jowensby@diocesewla.org), 318-442-1304) serves as the Safe Church Coordinator for the Diocese.
2. **Safe Church Minister.** The **Safe Church Minister** is the person appointed by a congregation, school or institution to help coordinate *Safeguarding* training and record

keeping and to serve as the primary contact with the Diocese for the congregation, school or institution with respect to *Safeguarding* matters. See page 8 for more information.

### **III. Certification Requirements for Working with Children or Youth**

Church Personnel become certified in *Safeguarding* when they have completed each of the screening and training steps below. Each congregation is responsible for maintaining CONFIDENTIAL certification files for each employee and volunteer. These files may be kept electronically or in paper format. Background checks and other documents relating to screening or *Safeguarding* certification must be maintained by the congregation in secure confidential files. The background checks and related application and screening documents should be maintained indefinitely.

#### **A. Screening and Selection Process**

##### **All Clergy; all Employees; Volunteers Supervising Ministries for or Regularly Working with Children or Youth**

1. All clergy, employees, and volunteers supervising ministries for or regularly working with children or youth must complete the procedures below.
  - a. **Clergy** are hired via Diocesan procedures for items 2, 3, 4 and 5 below.
  - b. **Employees** must go through a formal hiring process established by the employing church or institution.
  - c. **Volunteers** supervising ministries or regularly working with children or youth must be known to the clergy and congregation for at least 6 months.
2. Each applicant for a paid or volunteer position will complete an Application Form (*Appendix D*) and a Disclosure and Authorization Form for background checks (*Appendix I or J*), and receive a copy of the Summary of Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (*Appendix K*) prior to having a background check performed.
3. Each applicant will be interviewed by a person of appropriate supervisory authority.
4. The Rector or Priest-in-Charge will request and confidentially receive for each applicant the results of a nationwide sex offender and criminal history background check for all paid and volunteer staff and a check from the Department of Motor Vehicles for all paid and volunteer staff except for paid and volunteer staff not working with children or youth. The searches will include each state in which the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. **Clergy** and all who are **supervising ministries or programs for youth or children** must undergo a background check to be initiated by the Diocese with Oxford Documents or a service providing a comparable level of services.
5. The person with hiring or appointing authority will complete at least 3 reference

checks with persons who know the applicant.

6. Each applicant will complete the required components of *Safeguarding God's Children* training set forth on the Diocesan Safeguarding Requirements Chart, which is on the Diocesan website (<http://www.diocesewla.org/safe-church/safeguarding-online/>).

All information gathered about an applicant must be carefully reviewed and evaluated by the appropriate decision makers to determine whether the person is appropriate to work with children or youth. The Safe Church Coordinator shall be consulted if there is any uncertainty. Guidelines for evaluating background check results may be found in *Appendix H*.

**Volunteers Assisting More than Four Times Per Year with Children or Youth or Accompanying Children or Youth on Overnights; VBS and Sunday School Volunteers; Children's Chapel Volunteers; Nursery Workers**

1. Volunteers must be known to the clergy and congregation for at least 6 months.
2. Each volunteer must complete an information form (see *Appendix E*).
3. Each volunteer applicant must have an interview appropriate for the position with a person with supervisory authority over the ministry.
4. The Rector or Priest-in-Charge will request and confidentially receive for each applicant the results of a sex offender and criminal history background check, and in certain cases a Department of Motor Vehicles check, in each state in which the volunteer has resided during the past seven (7) years. The Diocese will make available a list of approved background check providers. The volunteer applicant will complete a Disclosure and Authorization Form for background checks (*Appendix J*), and receive a copy of the Summary of Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (*Appendix K*) prior to having a background check performed.
6. Each volunteer will complete the required components of *Safeguarding God's Children* training set forth on the Safeguarding Requirements Chart which is on the Diocesan website (<http://www.diocesewla.org/safe-church/safeguarding-online/>).

All information gathered about a volunteer must be carefully reviewed and evaluated by the appropriate decision makers to determine whether the person is appropriate to work with children or youth. The Safe Church Coordinator shall be consulted if there is any uncertainty. Guidelines for evaluating background check results may be found in *Appendix H*.

## **B. Training Required but Not Certification**

### **Vestry Members; Members of Diocese of Western Louisiana Diocesan Council, Standing Committee and Disciplinary Board**

Each person serving on a Vestry or Bishop's Committee and each member of the Diocesan Council, Standing Committee and Disciplinary Board of the Diocese will complete the required components of *Safeguarding God's Children* training set forth on the Safeguarding Requirements Chart, which appears on the Diocesan website at (<http://www.diocesewla.org/safe-church/safeguarding-online/>).

## **C. Certification Exceptions**

Parents who assist no more than six (6) times a year with a program *in which their child is enrolled and attending* are exempt from certification requirements. This includes providing transportation, but does not include overnight activities/events or Vacation Bible School. Exempt adults shall not serve as the lead adult, but may serve as a helper to a certified leader. All adults accompanying children or youth on overnight excursions must be certified in *Safeguarding God's Children*.

## **D. Certification Deadlines, Recertification, and Transfer of Location**

1. *Safeguarding* certification must be completed within 30 days of hire or start date. In the interim, anyone not certified must be supervised at all times in the presence of children or youth by a fully certified adult.
2. *Safeguarding* training must be renewed every three (3) years. A new sex offender registry and criminal background check, and for those for whom it is required, a new Department of Motor Vehicles check, must be performed every six (6) years. The Diocese will make available a list of approved background check providers.
3. Lay employees and volunteers who transfer within the Diocese of Western Louisiana should contact the Safe Church Coordinator, Joy Owensby ([jowensby@diocesewla.org](mailto:jowensby@diocesewla.org), 318-442-1304) to update their certification to their new location. Clergy who transfer from another Episcopal Diocese must contact the Safe Church Coordinator to arrange for *Safeguarding God's Children* training and certification.
4. No training program other than *Safeguarding God's Children* will be accepted.

## **E. Safe Church Ministers at Each Congregation and School**

Each congregation, school and institution will appoint a person who is certified in *Safeguarding God's Children* to serve as the Safe Church Minister of that congregation, school or institution. The Safe Church Minister will be responsible for informing the congregation, school or institution about *Safeguarding* training, changes to policies or procedures, assisting with enrollment in *Safeguarding* training, and maintaining proper records with respect to those who have been trained. Each congregation, school and institution will ensure that all applications for paid and volunteer positions, background checks and other confidential information is kept in secure individual files. The background checks and related application and screening documents should be maintained indefinitely. The Safe Church Minister will be the primary contact with the Diocese with respect to *Safeguarding* training, questions about *Safeguarding* policies and similar matters. The contact at the Diocese for these issues is the Safe Church Coordinator, Joy Owensby ([jowensby@diocesewla.org](mailto:jowensby@diocesewla.org), 318-442-1304).

#### **IV. Standards for Ministries with Children or Youth**

##### **A. Standards for Ministries**

The following standards should be followed for all events activities for children or youth sponsored by a parish, group of parishes, deanery, diocesan institution or the Diocese.

##### **Structural Standards**

1. Every program for children or youth must have established ratios for adults and children. Compliance with the established ratio is required at all times, including activities. There needs to be 1 adult for every 6 children or youth.
2. No person should be alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.
3. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be directly supervised by adults over the age of 21 who are physically present during all activities.
4. An up-to-date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth must be maintained in the church office or some other location that is easily accessible to parishioners.
5. Any new activities developed for children or youth that take place at a location other than the church or at a time when parents are not present must be approved

by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge. Requests to develop new activities must be submitted in writing to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, leaders of children or youth ministries and appropriate ministry teams. The Rector or Priest-in-Charge determines whether the plan for a new activity is appropriate and includes adequate adult supervision.

6. Each ministry will develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths.

7. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, all persons shall remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.

8. When possible, at least two unrelated adults shall supervise activities. On overnight trips supervision by male and female adults is mandatory when both boys and girls are in attendance.

9. Church computers must have adequate password protection.

10. Congregations must have clear guidelines and adequate supervision (by church staff or authorized persons) of anyone using a church computer to access the Internet. Be advised that any activity on a church computer is not considered private and may be accessed by authorized persons.

11. Each parish is encouraged to conduct a “safe church audit” annually to review practices and policies within the congregation.

12. Congregations are expected to comply with these *Safeguarding* policies, standards and guidelines. Copies of these *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* and *Recognizing and Reporting Abuse of Children and Youth* should be made readily accessible to members of the congregations, such as keeping a copy at the receptionist’s desk or other easily accessible location and posting a copy on the congregation’s website and providing a link to <http://www.diocesewla.org/safe-church/safeguarding-online/>.

### **General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth**

The following guidelines are intended to assist all persons in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children and youth in order to identify and prevent persons who may intend to harm children or youth, those who may try to groom or improperly influence children, youth and their parents, or who may create the conditions under which abuse can occur more easily. These guidelines should also be used in making decisions about interactions with children and youth in church sponsored and affiliated programs. These guidelines are not designed or intended to address interactions within families. When exceptions to these

guidelines must be made, the exception must be reported to the appropriate supervisor as soon as possible.

1. All persons who work with children or youth must agree to comply with the Diocese of Western Louisiana's *Guidelines for Appropriate Demonstrations of Affection (Appendix A)* and have completed and signed the *Code of Conduct (Appendix C)*.

2. No person is allowed to volunteer to work regularly with children or youth until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months. The Rector has the authority to refuse to allow any person to work with children and youth.

3. Programs for children under twelve (12) years of age must have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.

4. All persons are prohibited from using, possessing, distributing, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misusing legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities for children or youth.

5. A parent or guardian must provide written permission forms before anyone may transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose on more than an occasional basis.

6. All persons will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, socioeconomic status or similar characteristics. All persons will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity, avoiding even the appearance of favoritism.

7. One-to-one counseling with children or youth will be done in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but which occur in full view of others.

8. Adults are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.

9. All persons are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.

10. All persons are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted in writing as part of a preauthorized educational program.

11. All persons are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.

12. All persons are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.

13. Adults are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with children or youth. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.

14. Adults are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.

15. All persons are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.

16. All persons are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.

17. All persons are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities at or in preparation for any children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

18. All persons should be vigilant in preventing questionable situations from arising.

## **V. Reporting Abuse, Neglect, Inappropriate Behavior and Policy Violations**

EXPLAIN  
PROCEDURE  
FOR  
REPORTING  
BY YOUTH  
UNDER 18

The *Code of Conduct* (see *Appendix C*) requires that all adults who work with children or youth make reports required under Louisiana law, as discussed below, and also report to the church, school, institution or Diocese any inappropriate behavior or policy violations involving children or youth.

### **Reporting Abuse, Including Sexual Abuse, or Neglect**

All adults who work or volunteer with children and youth at church, school or Diocesan activities or events are considered to be mandatory reporters for child abuse and neglect under Louisiana law. Please see *Recognizing and Reporting Abuse*

of Children and Youth on the Diocesan website at <http://www.diocesewla.org/safe-church/safeguarding-online/> for more information on how to recognize abuse and neglect and how to make a report if you suspect a child or youth is being abused or neglected.

### **Reporting Suspected Abuse Committed by Children or Youth**

If you witness or have knowledge of sexual abuse or rape of a child or youth by anyone, including another child or youth, it must be reported immediately under Louisiana law. Call **911** immediately.

If you suspect other types of abuse, including bullying, stalking, or similar behaviors committed by a child or youth upon another child or youth, promptly make a report under the policies of your church, school or institution. If the church, school or institution does not have a reporting policy or if you do not know the policy, report to the Rector, Head of School, or other appropriate person in authority at the church, school or other institution. If you have made a report and are concerned that adequate steps are not being taken, contact the Safe Church Coordinator, Joy Owensby, at [jowensby@diocesewla.org](mailto:jowensby@diocesewla.org) or 318-442-1304. You may submit a Confidential Notice of Concern (see *Appendix F*).

### **Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations Involving Children or Youth**

If you observe any inappropriate behaviors, including violations of school, church or institutional policies, report your observations and/or concerns as set forth below.

**Examples** of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would include:

- seeking private time with children or youth,
- taking children or youth on overnight trips without other adults,
- swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth,
- selecting staff or volunteers who have not completed *Safeguarding God's Children* certification required by these *Policies*

Any person observing or receiving a report of inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should report immediately by:

- (i) A telephone call or meeting with the rector or priest-in-charge, head of school or executive director of the Diocesan institution. Notification may also be made to the Safe Church Coordinator.
- (ii) A telephone call or meeting with the Intake Officer if the complaint is against a clergy person; with the Safe Church Coordinator if the complaint is against a head of school, Diocesan employee or executive director of a Diocesan institution.
- (iii) A Confidential Notice of Concern may be sent to the Safe Church Coordinator at the address below. The form of Confidential Notice of Concern is attached as *Appendix F*.

**All reports of inappropriate behavior/ policy violations with children or youth are taken seriously.**

Make reports to the Safe Church Coordinator:

Mrs. Joy Owensby  
The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana  
P.O. Box 2031, Alexandria, LA 71309  
Phone: 318-442-1304  
Fax: 318-442-8712  
Email: [jowensby@diocesewla.org](mailto:jowensby@diocesewla.org)

The Diocese will work with the parish, school, or other Diocesan institution as well as local law enforcement authorities to determine the appropriate course of action.

*The Diocese of Western Louisiana is grateful to the Diocese of Louisiana for their work in developing this policy,*

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**

**Appendix B: Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communication**

**Appendix C: Code of Conduct**

## **APPENDIX A: GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION**

The Diocese is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protects our children and youth from abuse and protects persons who work with children or youth from misunderstandings.

When creating safe boundaries for children or youth, it is important to establish which types of affection are appropriate and which are inappropriate. If appropriate boundaries are not established the lack of guidance may lead to inappropriate decisions about boundaries. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows persons who work with children or youth to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth.

The following guidelines must be followed by all persons working around or with children or youth. The following guidelines are by no means an exhaustive list of either appropriate or inappropriate forms of affection. It is important that all adults who work with children or youth inquire as to the appropriateness of specific behaviors if they have questions.

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth.

Some POSITIVE and APPROPRIATE forms of affection include the following:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.

The following forms of affection are considered INAPPROPRIATE with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding children over three years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

## APPENDIX B: Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications

### A. Practices and Guidelines

The following recommended practices and guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries to digital networking and communication.

- Use prudent judgment in the time you contact individuals via social media. The “home phone rule” is a basic rule of thumb to use: do not text, chat, or email back-and-forth at a time you would not normally call the home phone line, *i.e.* before 8:00 AM or after 9:00 PM or during school hours.
- Consider whether creating separate private and professional profiles on networking sites/social media makes sense for your ministry. It may make sense to maintain separate personal and professional accounts.
- Implement appropriate privacy settings and personal boundaries when using social networking sites and all digital communication and apply privacy settings that are consistent with all youth and adults across all social media platforms. *Have the same rules for everyone that you are communicating with online.*
- Review accessible content and photos frequently.
- If you choose to utilize any social networking site to communicate with your community of faith, your rector or priest-in-charge should have full access to all of your profiles and correspondence.
- Parents should be aware of how your ministry uses social media platforms, including such information as the fact that their children or youth are in the “Youth Group Facebook Group” or “friends” with the youth leaders.
- The group names and individual names of social media sites used by a ministry should be public and all members of a youth group or congregation should be able to be part of the online group if they participate in the specific ministry.
- Communication should be sent to entire groups, posted on their Facebook wall or in public areas - not in private messages – this includes images.
- Adults should not participate in ongoing individual communication with a child or youth through text messages, email, or Facebook conversations. If there is a need for ongoing pastoral communication between a youth and an adult, the adult should notify their rector or youth minister and then arrange to meet the youth in a public place. *Face-to-face meetings, or a phone call if meeting in person is not possible, are ALWAYS the preferred mode of communication, particularly when responding to emotionally driven communication or pastoral emergencies. Email, text messages, and Facebook communications should be used to get information*

*out to a large community, not to individually counsel children or youth.*

- Video Chatting with a youth is strongly discouraged – if you must, be aware of what you're wearing and of your surroundings, the only situations where a video chat is appropriate are in a group setting (e.g., Skype with a group of youth while on a mission trip), and transcripts of on-line chats (video or text) should be saved.

## **B. Covenants for Online Communities or Digital Groups**

Covenants should be created to address the following:

- Appropriate and inappropriate language and behavior
- Who may join and/or view group activity and when they should leave the group
- Content that can be posted/published on the group site or page
- Who, how and when photos can be tagged (e.g., did guardians give written permission to post pictures of their youth)
- Mandatory reporting laws and how they will be followed
- Consequences for breaking the covenant

If you are the adult responsible for the online community or digital group you should consider the following:

Any inappropriate material posted in your online groups should be deleted and addressed with the person who posted; a report should be made to the rector or priest-in-charge. In general, parents should be informed that content, including images, that appears on student pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of the church ministry. (i.e., youth leaders are not responsible for pictures on the Facebook pages of youth group members)

## **C. Photography and Video Policy**

When using photos and videos of children or youth for ministry purposes:

- Respect the dignity of every person depicted in the image or video
- Avoid identifying names with images (e.g., captions, tagging on Facebook) let

**Each youth attending training must read and sign. Adult in charge of training should keep this document on file.**

children, youth, or adults tag themselves rather than doing it for them.

- Never attach specific names to pictures on church, youth group, or other any other website open to the public.

## **APPENDIX C: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18**

## WHO WORK WITH OTHER CHILDREN AND YOUTH

This *Code of Conduct* is to be signed upon the completion of *Safeguarding* training.

- I will do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church, school or Diocesan ministries, activities and events.
- I will not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- I will comply with all applicable policies, standards and guidelines set forth by the Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana for volunteers under 18 who work with other children and youth
- If I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible violations of policies, standards or guidelines, or concerns about clergy behavior, I will immediately report my observations to an adult leader of the event for which I am volunteering.

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**Signature**

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**Printed Name**

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**Date Signed**