

The Episcopal Church in South Carolina Child Abuse Prevention Policies Condensed

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1. Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian Ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to demonstrate more fully its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This Code of Conduct has been adopted by the Episcopal Church in South Carolina and its parishes to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code and within the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church.

Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth:

- Church Personnel agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Church Personnel agree not to physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth.
- In the event that Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, church personnel agree to report their observations promptly.
- All Church Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies and applicable state statutes.
- Church Personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

2. General Definitions

Church Personnel

For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definitions of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
3. Those who contract their services to the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
4. Volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, vestries, Bishop's committees, and boards of directors.

Children and Youth

A **child** is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years.

A **youth** is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

Regularly or Occasionally Work With or Around Children or Youth

For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel who *Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth*:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid or volunteer Church Personnel whose work regularly takes them throughout the facility or grounds or have keys giving them access to the buildings on the grounds.
3. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth, in ministries, programs or activities more often than occasionally.
4. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle more often than occasionally.
5. Any paid personnel whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church, school or other related agency.
6. Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth.
7. All vestry members or other members of similar decision-making groups who have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs or activities for children or youth.

Examples of Church Personnel who *Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth*: include, but are not limited to:

- Children or youth choir directors
- Organists who work with children or youth
- Lay youth ministers
- Volunteers youth directors
- All Church Personnel who work or assist in the nursery more than four times a year
- All Church Personnel who work in the nursery if they are the only person over 21 present at any time
- All Staff, whether volunteer or paid, at church camps
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth.

For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel who *Occasionally Work With or Around Children or Youth*:

1. Church school teachers.
2. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities infrequently, generally no more than three times a year or for one program or activity during a year that lasts less than a month (i.e. assisting with preparation for the Christmas pageant, or teaching on “unit” of Church School for a month).
3. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle infrequently, generally no more than three times a year.
4. All persons who work or assist in the nursery four or fewer times a year, whether on an emergency basis or otherwise.

Types of Abuse

1. **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
2. **Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.
3. **Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
4. **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth’s growth, development or psychological functioning.
5. **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child or youth’s basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
6. **Economic exploitation** is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth belongings or money.

3. Safeguards for Children and Youth

A. Screening and Selection

1. Any and All Church Personnel who *Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth* shall be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
 - a. **A standard application** completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the **Code of Conduct Standard can include:**
 1. **Criminal records check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church.
 2. **Sexual offender registry check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. (www.sled.state.sc.us)
 - b. **Individual interview** with the applicant.
 - c. **Reference checks** of persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children.
 - d. **Driving or Motor Vehicle records check** if the person may be transporting children or youth.
2. Any and all Church Personnel who *Occasionally Work With or Around Children or Youth* shall be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
 - a. **A standard application** completed by the applicant that includes an acknowledgement for the release of information to conduct background checks and the Code of Conduct.
 - b. **Individual interview** with the applicant.
 - c. **At least one Reference Check** of a person outside the congregation who knows the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant interacts with children.
 - d. **Driving or Motor Vehicle records check** if the person will be transporting children or youth.
 - e. **Sexual offender registry check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. (www.sled.state.sc.us)
3. All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not the person is appropriate to work with children or youth.
4. Church Personnel who work with or around children or youth must have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.
5. Criminal records checks and sexual offender registry checks will be conducted every five (5) years for Church Personnel who *Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth*. (Sex offender registry: www.sled.state.sc.us is a free service)
6. To the extent possible, no person should be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with or around children or youth. For the purpose of this policy, an immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar in-law relationship, stepchild, stepparent, stepsibling, grandparent, or co-habitant.
7. Church Personnel who transfer within the Episcopal Church in South Carolina and apply for, or are asked to, or who do undertake a position working with or around children or

youth are required to undergo the same screening and selection process in *Section A* above. This requirement may be met through a transfer of a copy of their personnel file to the new congregation, school, agency, or program together with completion of a new application, individual interview and reference checks with the congregations, schools, agencies or other programs for which the applicant has worked with or around children or youth since the screening was last done as shown in the applicant's personnel file.

B. Education and Training Requirements

1. Participation in the Diocesan training for child abuse prevention education and training is required for all *Church Personnel Who Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth* before they start their work with children or youth or, if that is not possible, one hour of child abuse awareness training before they start their work and the rest of the training within three months of starting.
2. *One hour of child abuse awareness education and training is required for all *Church Personnel Who Occasionally Work With or Around Children or Youth* before they start their work with children or youth.
3. *Church Personnel who are responsible for screening, selection and supervision of others in programs for children and youth are required to complete an additional three (3) hours of specialized education and training in screening, selection and monitoring every two years.

*Items 2 and 3 will be brought into effect as we are able to break this training down to the parish level.

C. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

The monitoring and supervision of programs and activities involving children or youth is important for safeguarding children and youth and involves several aspects. One aspect involves having structural guidelines or standards for the programs and activities for children and youth. These include such things as who approves new programs, how many adults need to be present and the like. In addition to setting structural guidelines and standards, church leaders must make sure the structural safeguards are followed. Programs and activities have to be monitored and supervised to do that.

Another aspect of monitoring and supervision is that supervisory personnel and others monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth and other children, working with children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped. Some behaviors and interactions are potentially harmful to children and youth in and of themselves. Examples include providing alcohol or drugs to children or youth or actually having sexual contact with a child or youth. Other behaviors and interactions are not necessarily harmful in and of themselves but are the same behaviors and interactions known to be used by those who abuse children or youth to *groom* them or their parents for eventual abuse or which provide the privacy child molesters need in order to abuse children or youth alone, and the like.

The structural guidelines and standards are covered in both this *Monitoring and Supervision* section and in the following section, **General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth**. The behaviors and interactions of persons with children and youth that need to be monitored and supervised are covered in this section on **General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth** and in the **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**.

Parishes are encouraged to develop supervisory plans for each area of ministry with children and youth. These plans specify personnel involved; supervisory chain and methods of recording; overnight, specific procedures addressing implementation of personal safety requirements, and procedures regarding the safety of the physical environment. Sample attached.

1. Every program for children and youth should have established ratios for adults and children. Compliance with the established ratio is required at all times, including activities that occur off church premises.
2. Church Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.
3. Church Personnel over the age of 21 must directly supervise Church Personnel under the age of 18 and be physically present during all activities.
4. An up to date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth will be maintained in the church office or other place where church records are kept.
5. Church Personnel are not permitted to develop new programs for children or youth without approval from the rector or canonical equivalent. Requests to develop new programs should be submitted in writing to the rector. The rector will consider whether the plan for a new activity includes adequate adult supervision.
6. Each program 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, Church Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
8. When possible, at least two unrelated Church Personnel must supervise activities. When both boys and girls are participating, male and female adults are encouraged to be present.

D. General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth

The following guidelines are intended to assist Church Personnel in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children and youth to identify and stop those that may be inherently harmful to children or youth, that are the type used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or that may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily. These guidelines should also be used to make decisions about interactions with children and youth in church sponsored and affiliated programs. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families. When exceptions to these guidelines must be made, they should be reported to the supervisor of the Church Personnel making the exception as soon as possible.

1. All Church Personnel who work with children or youth must agree to comply with the **Parish Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth (Appendix A)**.
2. No person will be allowed to volunteer to *Regularly Work With Children or Youth* until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months through regular attendance and activities other than those related to children and youth activities.
3. Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
4. Church Personnel are prohibited from the non-sacramental use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
5. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Church Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose on more than an occasional basis.
6. Church Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic states. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.
7. One-to-one counseling with children or youth will be done in an area where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.(such as behind doors with glass inserts for visibility)
8. Church Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
9. Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.
10. Church Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented material (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
11. Church Personnel 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. Church Personnel 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. Church Personnel unrelated to participating youth are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, or tents of youth. For overnight conferences or activities at least one adult should occupy adjoining rooms to the best of your ability. 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. Church Personnel are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.
15. Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children or 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. Church Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
17. Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

E. Suggested Practices and Guidelines for Use of Social Networking Websites and Other Forms of Digital Communication

As an ever increasing number of people use and prefer digital communication over other forms, it is essential that the church be present in this mission field. Social networking sites, on-the-spot communication devices and email can enhance communication, faith sharing and deepen relationship. The following recommended practices and guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church to the virtual world of digital networking and communication.

These guidelines were developed through the Office of Pastoral Response, the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. The Diocese is grateful for the work and generosity of the Connecticut Conference of United Church of Christ for developing and sharing Internet Safety Guidelines, upon which these guidelines are based.

General Information about Digital Communications

- All communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts, etc.) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL and may be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent, as a window in the door provides transparency in the physical world.
- In the virtual world healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, "friend" can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:

Social Networking Sites-Relationships

1. Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Adults should not submit "friend" requests to minors or youth. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be "friends", and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
2. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with their community of faith, other adult leaders must have full access to all aspects of that adult's profile and correspondence.

3. Adults who want to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to “friend” an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult’s personal profile account. The purpose of these two separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.
4. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police. The DCF hotline is 1-800-842-2288.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:

Groups on Social Networking Sites

1. Confirmation, pilgrimage, mission trips, etc.
2. Groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth Closed groups, but not “hidden” groups, should be used for youth groups (J2A, Rite 13, administrators).
3. Invitations to youth to join the group should be made by youth administrators, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite him/her to join the group.
4. Behavioral covenants should be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for an online youth group.
5. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or DCF. If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police.
6. Inappropriate material that does not raise suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should immediately be removed from the site.
7. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established behavioral covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adult youth leaders and parents.
8. Social networking groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.
9. Parents should be informed that the content of youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of adult youth leaders.
10. leaders of youth groups and former youth members who, due to departure, removal from position, or are no longer eligible because they “aged-out” of a program should be immediately removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Adults:

Social Networking Sites-Relationship

1. Clergy are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.

2. Individual personal profiles of clergy are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Clergy should not submit “friend” requests to parishioners and others to whom they minister. The disparity of power may not give the other person the ability to decline such request.
3. Clergy who want to connect via a social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all parishioners may join. The purpose of having a personal profile and parish group is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with parishioners and real family, friends and colleagues.
4. Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from parishioners. These encounters may create a tension in “real world” relationships. Clergy can direct “friend” requests from parishioners to the parish’s group page.
5. Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
6. When a cleric’s ministry at a parish or other ministry setting ends, the cleric should remove parishioners as “friends” or contacts in all forms of digital communications.

Recommendations for digital communications and content

Behavioral Covenants

1. Covenants should acknowledge that materials posted on Church Sponsored sites (and/or group pages) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL.
2. Covenants should acknowledge that content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
3. Covenants for communities of faith should address the following issues:
 - a. Appropriate language
 - b. Eligibility of membership to join a social networking group. Things to consider include whether you have to be a member of a parish or youth group and whether there are age requirements/restrictions for participation for youth groups.
 - c. Loss of eligibility of membership and removal from the social networking group. Consider how and when members will be removed from the group due to moving away, leaving the faith community, becoming too old for youth group, clergy leaving to minister to another parish or exclusion from ministry positions for other reasons.
 - d. Who, how and when may photos be tagged (members identified by name; for example, individuals may tag themselves in photos but should not tag others)
 - e. Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior.
 - Compliance with mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse.

Recommendations for Video Chats, Blogs or Video Blogs

1. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
2. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.
3. All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.

4. All clergy and adults engaged in ministry with youth should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth. Your voice is often considered the voice of the church.

Recommendations for Publishing/Posting Content Online

1. Congregations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space.
2. Any faith community that distributes video of its worship services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media MUST post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
3. All communities of faith should take care to secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
4. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

Recommendations for Use of Email or Texting (Includes Twitter)

1. Email can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic factual information such as the time of an event, agenda for a meeting, text of a document, etc.
2. Email is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
3. If an email message is longer than a couple of sentences, then the matter might more properly be addressed via live conversation.
4. Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted in an email.
5. All email users should take a moment to consider the ramifications of their message before clicking on the “send” or “reply to all” button.

4. Responding to Problems

A. Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations with Children or Youth

1. When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection, or which may violate any provision of these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, they must immediately report their observations. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using staff or volunteers without the required screening.
2. Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:
 - a. A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor of the person,
 - b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the person is not the rector;
 - c. A telephone call or meeting with a church warden if the person is the rector;
 - d. A telephone call, meeting or fax to the bishop or archdeacon;
 - e. Submit a *Confidential Notice of Concern* (Appendix C), signed, to the bishop or archdeacon.

3. All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously.

B. Reporting Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth

1. All Church Personnel are required by this policy and State statute, to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities. (SC Code of Laws 20-7-510A) Persons required to report include members of clergy, teachers and childcare workers.
2. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth is a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provided immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
3. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, Church Personnel are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the rector of the Parish so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and/or other children and youth.
4. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involves Church Personnel must be reported to the Episcopal Church in South Carolina in the following ways:
 - a. A telephone call to or a meeting with the bishop or archdeacon;
 - b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the rector is not the person being complained about.
 - c. Submit a Confidential Notice of Concern (Appendix C), signed, to the bishop or archdeacon by hand or by mail.
5. The Episcopal Church in South Carolina and its Parishes will cooperate with any investigation by state authorities to the fullest extent appropriate and inform authorities that an internal investigation will be directed by the Episcopal Church in South Carolina.
6. All personnel will maintain confidentiality of a report.

Please refer to the complete Diocesan Policy posted on the diocesan website including all Appendices.