

# MODEL POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING ALL PEOPLE

INCLUDES: The Protection of Children, Youth  
and Vulnerable Adults



REVISED BY THE SAFE CHURCH TASK FORCE 2019

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER 3825 E. HENRIETTA RD. HENRIETTA, NY 14467

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

**This model policy includes the following segments:** \*Note: When accessing this document in Microsoft Word format on a computer, hold CTRL (or  $\mathcal{H}$  command for Apple Computers) and click on the titles for direct links to the corresponding section.

**Table of Contents**

<b>I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>III. DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
A. Public Records Checks.....	9
B. Additional Screening Requirements.....	10
<b>V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
A. Unrelated Adults Required for Children and Youth .....	12
B. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth .....	12
C. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth .....	13
D. Basic Needs.....	13
E. Inclusiveness for Children, youth and vulnerable adults.....	14
F. Violence and Weapons .....	14
G. Behavioral Standards .....	14
H. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming.....	17
I. Overnight Programs.....	20
J. Transportation.....	21
K. Camps and Retreat Centers.....	21
L. Travel.....	21
1. Adults Leaders and Chaperones.....	21
M. Insurance for Travel.....	22
<b>VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS.....</b>	<b>24</b>
A. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth.....	24
B. Suspected Violations of this Policy.....	24
C. Local Resources for Response.....	24

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

<b>VII. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>A. The Episcopal Church Adoption and Implementation.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>B. Diocesan Adoption, Implementation, and Audit .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>C. Congregation and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<b>Appendix A: Screening and Training Protocols .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>General Information about Digital Communications .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Churches and Organizations: .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with children, youth and vulnerable adults: .....</i>	<i>30</i>

## I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld the Word’s glory, glory as of the only Child from God.”— John 1:14 (*An Inclusive Language Lectionary*)

God expressed the fullness of humanity in Jesus of Nazareth, whom we worship as the Word made flesh. To be human is to live with God and the whole of creation in the fullness of freedom and the challenge of responsibility. The pattern of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection resonates unreservedly with God’s call to perfect freedom and responsibility.

In baptism, God speaks through the Church to claim us in Christ. We become, in Christ, the community of God’s final purpose: justice and peace, love, and plenty for the whole creation. This new community lives in Eucharistic fellowship with God and Creation, as a sign and instrument of God’s reconciling purpose in the world.

The Church is called to embody and advance God’s mission. Ministry is the vocation of the whole community: laypersons, deacons, priests, and bishops who together represent Christ and the Church in the world.

The obligation to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being is binding for all the baptized. The authority with which *leaders* — ordained persons and adults who minister with children, youth and vulnerable adults, and youth in leadership roles — are entrusted creates an inherent power imbalance in the *pastoral relationship*. This power imbalance derives from the leadership role and, in the case of clergy, the symbolic authority of an ordained person. Christian leadership is intended to provide occasions for guidance and grace, and its abuse is always and unequivocally wrong.

Ministry involves a necessary tension between a Gospel-based integrity and a Gospel-based intimacy as modeled by the life of Christ. A rigid adherence to a system of rules leads to an unproductive legalism. Yet, without the framework of the law, the intimate relationships into which Christ calls us risk distortion and harm. All the people of God are called to minister attentively within this tension. These model policies are intended to provide a pattern for attentive practice of ministry.

This document is a statement for the Episcopal Church, setting forth expectations for its leaders in their relationships with children, youth and vulnerable adults. The purpose of these model policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings

- The document includes: *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)),
- which explains the level of screening and training required before engaging in ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults;
- A description of requisite training that is specialized and tailored to ministry role and function;
- Behavioral standards designed to ensure that children, youth, vulnerable adults and all who engage in ministry with them are treated with dignity and respect in all settings; and *Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications* ([Appendix B](#))

## **II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION**

This model policy sets forth statements of general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults. This policy is mandated for all such activities sponsored by every congregation, institution, organization, school, and agency of each diocese. The purpose of these policies is to create safe and welcoming space for all children and youth in our communities and those engaged in ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults and to prevent sexual abuse.

This policy is a model and, as such, it presents best practices for creating such safe space. Circumstances in many localities may make some of these best practices difficult to implement or even unworkable. As a result, local entities may make additions or revisions in developing local policy so long as they meet or exceed the requirements of these policies. This requires that local leadership understand this policy thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments about local circumstances. Any such additions or revisions must be submitted in writing for the approval of the bishop. No provisions may be omitted from a local policy.

Church governing bodies and all leaders should understand these policies and all local requirements thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments and should consult with the Office of the Bishop when unanticipated situations arise.

*No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Whenever applicable, questions of civil, criminal, and/or ecclesiastical discipline and employment offenses should be addressed with the relevant authorities immediately. Please contact the Office of the Bishop for consultation and resources if assistance is needed.*

### III. DEFINITIONS

*NOTE: These definitions reflect our understanding of terms describing gender identity and sexuality, which are evolving as these model policies are being written.*

**Adults:** Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school (*see footnote to youth on page 6*).

**Bullying:** Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbal, psychological, social, physical, or otherwise.

**Child:** Anyone under the age of 12 years (*see footnote to youth on page 6*).

**Church Personnel:** Refers to the following:

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. These would include secretaries, sextons, choir directors, organists, nursery or daycare staff, camp counselors, etc.
3. Those who contract their services in and through the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies, e.g., nursery schools, day care programs, etc. (Repair and delivery people are exempt.)
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, youth group leaders, Sunday School teachers, nursery attendants, trip leaders, persons whose positions give them keys and regular access to the building, etc.

**Church Personnel Who 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 whose work takes them throughout the facility or grounds or who have keys giving them access to the buildings on the grounds.
3. All Nursery, Sunday school teachers, substitutes and assistants.
4. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth, other than Sunday school teachers, in ministries, programs or activities.
5. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle.
6. Any paid personnel whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church, school or other related agency.
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.
8. Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

**Cisgender:** An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender or sex assigned at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Counseling:** As used in these policies, refers to private or group meetings with the specific intention of making a therapeutic intervention in the lives of the persons receiving the counseling. Clergy **MUST** have separate credentialing and licensing to offer such counseling.

**Gender Non-Binary:** An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both ("bigender"), neither ("agender"), a mix between the two ("genderfluid"), or they can be unsure of their gender ("genderqueer"). This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

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

**Leader:** A person, adults or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of others engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, program team, eucharist visitors and members of pastoral care teams.

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

**Mandated Reporter:** A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. State laws vary greatly. Generally, state law mandates that either all adults or adults in certain professions report suspected abuse of elders, vulnerable and/or dependent adults, children and/or youth. It is imperative to know the requirements of applicable state laws. Typically, individuals who are not mandated to report suspicions of abuse may make a report to the appropriate state agency, even though not legally required to do so.

**Off-Site:** Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal Church, institution, facility, or campus.

**Organizations:** All institutions for which the diocese or congregations have legal or fiduciary responsibility (examples: diocesan departments, commissions, conference & retreat centers, adults day care centers, retirement communities, religious orders, congregations, schools, etc.).

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

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

**Pastoral Relationship:** Any relationship (1) between a Member of the Clergy and any person to whom the Member of the Clergy provides or has provided counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance, or from whom such Member of the Clergy has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, or (2) between a lay minister and any person to whom the lay minister is offering prayer, ministry, and/or any person from whom the lay minister has received sensitive, personal, or confidential information in the course of offering ministry.

**Power:** In these policies, refers to the authority and influence conveyed to a cleric, employee or volunteer by their leadership role. Pastoral Relationships are intended to benefit the persons served. The imbalance of power in Pastoral Relationships calls into question the possibility of genuine consent in the development of personal and/or sexual relationships.

**Programs:** Official activities and programs sponsored by The Episcopal Church and its provinces, dioceses, and congregations (examples include: The Episcopal Youth Event, Provincial Youth Events, Happening, Teens Encounter Christ, pilgrimages, mission experiences, New Beginnings, camp programs, Acolyte Festival, etc.).

**Protective Services:** A social services program provided by state and local governments serving children, youth and vulnerable adults and their families who are in need of assistance. Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation

**Public Records Check:** A search of documents and data available to the public, including criminal and civil court records, credit reports, and driving records from the Department of Motor Vehicles. Typically, such searches are conducted by a third party with expertise in this area.

**Residential Facility:** Any institutional or group home setting where vulnerable adults reside on a permanent or temporary basis, such as a nursing home, rehabilitation center, assisted living facility, treatment center, or memory care facility.

**Responsible Person:** The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program.

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

**Sexual abuse or sexual molestation:** Any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent. New York State has statutes establishing criminal penalties and reporting requirements concerning sexual abuse. It is diocesan policy to make required reports immediately and to cooperate fully with law enforcement officials in investigating allegations of sexual abuse that is within the scope of such statutes.



**The sexual abuse of children is part of a continuum of abuse that includes the following:**

1. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted on 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 adults, 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 where 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. In New York State, an age difference of three years could make sexual activities a crime.
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's belongings or money.

**Sexual misconduct:** A broad term encompassing any behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or capacity for consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different gender.

**Spiritual Guidance:** Either generally or specifically, may be seen as teaching, preaching, liturgical or other activity between a cleric, employee or volunteer and every member of the parish, individually and collectively.

**Supervisor:** A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or Leaders in a ministry program.

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

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

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

**Universal Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all people that includes a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. This training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant. (Includes all employees, vestry, volunteers, leaders, & committee members)

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

**Specialized Training:** A standard of additional training that equips people who participate in or have oversight responsibility for ministries. In addition to Universal Training, a person will have access to training that is specialized and tailored to their role and ministry function. (Clergy, Wardens, volunteers with specific ministry roles, leaders, committee members, those working with children, youth and vulnerable adults)

**Youth:** 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, and still in high school.

**Vulnerable Adults** are any adults who is infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness/disability;

Any adults who are ministered to in their home (by Eucharistic Visitors, Pastoral Care Visitors, Stephen Ministers, or others);

Any adults who are wholly or partially dependent upon one or more other persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support, such dependency may be temporary as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child; and

Any adults who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lack agency in a pastoral relationship as in the wake of death of a family member or job loss.

## IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations are required to screen all persons according to the standards in the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)). For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

### A. Public Records Checks

- Congregations and other organizations shall use a provider approved by the diocese to conduct public records checks. Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children, youth and vulnerable adults;
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries;
- A Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records check is needed if transporting children and youth as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the church or for a church-sponsored event;
- A credit check is required with check signing authority; and
- Public records checks must be updated at least every five years.

## **B. Additional Screening Requirements**

Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries as specified in the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)). Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:

- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written “job description.” The application includes verifiable personal information;
- Personal interview;
- Reference verification conducted by congregations and other organizations to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant); and
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

Potential Leaders or Supervisors must be known and active in the congregation for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth, unless they are required to have public records checks and reference checks pursuant to the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)).

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the diocese, congregation’s, or organization’s office. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy, including any local procedures or variations.

## V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Training shall be appropriate to each person's function according to the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)).

All Leaders shall have Universal Training that fosters a culture of safety and inclusion for all people and covers a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. Universal Training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant. All members of the Episcopal Church shall have access to this training.

In addition to Universal Training, all Supervisors and those with oversight responsibilities for ministry programs and/or other adults who engage in ministry with children and youth shall have Specialized Training that is tailored to their role and ministry function.

### **Depending on role and responsibility, Specialized Training should include:**

- Prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect including financial exploitation;
- Mandated and voluntary reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults;
- Vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;
- An introduction to gender non-binary;
- The needs of LGBTQ+ children and youth; individuals who often struggle to find care or residential facilities adequately equipped to meet their needs;
- The ways that children, youth and vulnerable adults can engage in self-advocacy;
- The needs of differently-abled children and youth.

Certification of training shall be renewed every **three years**.

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations with responsibility for programs with services or ministries to children, youth and vulnerable adults shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

## VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS

A Responsible Person shall monitor and supervise the behavior of children, youth and vulnerable adults to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

All people who minister to children, youth and vulnerable adults must have ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by the Supervisor who may be parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry with the person engaged in the ministry. Each person engaged in such ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact the Supervisor at all times.

Dioceses, congregations, and organizations shall ensure that all people who minister to children, youth and vulnerable adults receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

Dioceses, congregations, and organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister to children, youth and vulnerable adults or engage in pastoral relationships with others. This list shall be kept in the organization's office or other place where records are kept.

### A. Unrelated Adults Required for Children and Youth

There shall be at least two unrelated adults (at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adults shall report those circumstances to the Supervisor, clergy in charge, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

Only one adult may be sufficient in well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the church grounds, such as a Sunday School classroom, provided that another adult can maintain visual contact with the adult program leader. This can be accomplished by designating an individual to conduct frequent random checks of classrooms and unlocked spaces throughout the building(s). These exceptional circumstances must be specifically described in a written document and approved by the governing body of the congregation. See also sections on *Overnight Programs* ([Section VI, I](#)) and *Transportation* ([Section VI, J](#)).

### B. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth

To create a safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances in which children and youth are exposed to inappropriate consumables, materials, unmonitored adults contact, or unsupervised peer contact.

For example:

- **Alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings.

- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to dioceses, congregations, and other organizations. Devices shall have adequate password protection. Each user shall have their own account and password. See *Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications* ([Appendix B](#)).
- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** *Anyone with keys or electronic access to church buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training according to the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)).*
- **Unused spaces.** Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible. Given the vast differences in facilities, each diocese, congregation, and other organization should determine how best to meet this standard.

### C. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

Examples include:

- Planned or unplanned on-site conversations can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws.

Impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, may foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided. See *Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications* ([Appendix B](#)).

### D. Basic Needs

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event.

Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, need, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs met immediately.

### **E. Inclusiveness for Children, youth and vulnerable adults**

No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

The Episcopal Church seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary children, youth and vulnerable adults who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects children, youth and vulnerable adults ability to keep their transgender status confidential. They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.

Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).

Adults (Re: children and youth) should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on *Overnight Programs* ([Section VI, I](#)).

### **F. Violence and Weapons**

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Children, youth and vulnerable adults shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.
- Report suspected violations immediately. See *Suspected Violations of this Policy* ([Section VII, B](#)).

### **G. Behavioral Standards**

Adults who work with **children and youth** are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships that children and youth deserve in all settings. Interactions should meet all requirements outlined above, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth from the church away from sanctioned church activities.

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

All who work with **vulnerable adults** are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships. To this end, lay, and ordained ministers working with vulnerable adults shall:

- Take care not to unduly influence a person to whom they minister;
- Accept only token gifts from those to whom they minister. Ministers given gifts shall report those gifts in writing to their Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person;
- Decline to accept loans of any kind from those to whom they minister;
- Decline to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of anyone to whom they minister; and
- Inform Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person of anything that causes concern for the safety or wellbeing of those to whom they minister.



Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

**DOs**

All who minister are encouraged to:

- Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include; daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
- Spend time with and listen to children, youth and vulnerable adults, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:
  - high fives and fist bumps;
  - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer;
  - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;
  - “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision;
  - brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and
  - maintaining healthy boundaries when sharing personal information.
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.

**DON'Ts**

Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- Provide children, youth and vulnerable adults with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children, youth and vulnerable adults event.
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any children, youth and vulnerable adults; or
- Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use, or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in *Responding to Concerns* ([Section VII](#)).

### **Visits to Private Residences with Vulnerable Adults**

The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a private home.

- Avoid situations that might compromise personal privacy; common examples include:
  - Visiting behind closed bedroom doors;
  - Sitting on the bed of the person being visited; or
  - Visiting a person while they are not fully clothed.
- The best practice is to visit in teams of two or more. If it is not possible for another adult minister to be present, a member of the vulnerable adult's household should be present. If neither is possible, documentation of the time, duration of visit, general matters discussed, and any pastoral concerns shall be provided to the Supervisor as soon as possible after the visit.

### **Visits to Residential Facilities with Vulnerable Adults**

The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are also essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a Residential Facility. Best practices include:

- Facility staff should be informed of the visitor's presence;
- If a visit takes place out of sight of staff, they should be notified in advance and informed when such meeting is concluded;
- The door to a resident's private room must remain open during visits;
- Visitors should be mindful that LGBTQ+ residents may not be safe to express their sexual identity or orientation, as staff members may not yet have been trained; and
- In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the visitor is encouraged to contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.
- 

### **H. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming**

Off-site programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development of children, youth and vulnerable adults. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

In the event of uncertainty about application of the policy, the Responsible Person should contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

Because of the unique risks that can't always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

**1. Prior Approvals**

- Prior approval by the governing body and the member of the clergy in charge is required, and that approval shall be reflected in the minutes of the governing body. Diocesan sponsored programs, trips, or events shall receive prior diocesan approval.
- Written parental (children and youth) approval is required prior to viewing any movie, whether off- site or on-site, rated “PG-13” or above, or participating in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.
- These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, pool parties, progressive dinners, etc.

**2. Registration, Waiver, and Release Forms**

- All participants shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any programs. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year.
  - There must be a vulnerable adult signature and for children and youth a parent/guardian’s signature on all release and waiver forms for minors. Please check with your bishop’s office concerning whether digital signatures are acceptable in your state.
  - Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online. Please check with your bishop’s office concerning whether such forms may be saved electronically and the length of time the forms must be saved.
- Permission slips shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by vulnerable adults, guardian, spouse, or other family members, and for children and youth the parent/guardian.
- Prior permission (in writing) for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.

### **3. First Aid and Medications**

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- A First Aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors or vulnerable adults shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person. Exceptions may include inhalers, epi-pens, and birth-control pills.
- Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

### **4. Supervision for Children and Youth**

- At any gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants.
- Minimum ratios of adults to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:
  - 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
  - 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
  - 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
  - 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day
- Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy.
- When you have new leaders-in-training, the leadership teams should also have a reasonable number of experienced adult leaders to provide support.

## **I. Overnight Programs**

In overnight programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as those with mental health issues, LGBTQ+ and differently-abled individuals. In a situation of unequal power and safety, preferences of these individuals merit additional consideration, accommodation, and action to ensure:

- Participant privacy;
- Maximization of social integration of all participants;
- Minimization of stigmatization of any participants;
- Equal opportunity to participate; and
- Safety of all participants.

Other guidelines for overnight programs:

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires dioceses, congregations and other organizations to consider numerous factors, including, but not limited to; age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
  - No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
  - Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping.
  - It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water.
- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hide-a-beds, and rollaway beds;
- At least 2 children or 2 youth in each room.
- Adults supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered
- among the rooms with children or youth, and at least one adult room is by the stairs or elevators; Adults leader assigns rooms and room occupants

## **J. Transportation**

- For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed: For events that originate and/or terminate at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's facility, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory DMV records check.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

## **K. Camps and Retreat Centers**

All camps, camping programs, and retreat centers of the diocese shall follow the guidelines for off-site programming established in this policy. In addition, camps should aim to follow American Camp Association standards to the best of the camp's ability.

## **L. Travel**

Travel with children and youth presents amazing opportunities for participants to experience the church and the world on a larger scale with vastly different perspectives of faith communities and their contexts. It also presents challenges to normal safety protocols and opportunities for creativity if managed well. The following policies will help groups prepare for a variety of potential scenarios, as well as for domestic and international travel.

### **1. Adults Leaders and Chaperones**

- Minimum ratios of adults to youth need to be greater due to the possibility of leaving an adult behind with a participant in the event of a medical emergency.
  - 9–14 years — 1:5
  - 15–18 years — 1:7
- Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than three adult chaperones.
- One adult, minimum age 25, should serve as the travel administrator who is responsible for all aspects of the trip, including carrying all necessary documentation, contacts, and forms including:

medical release, community covenant; emergency contacts; itineraries; and cash and/or credit card capacity to address emergencies.

## Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

- It is a best practice that, one adult, minimum age 25, should hold a current medical certification to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, administer immediate and necessary first aid, and triage medical situations to determine if care of an individual needs to be taken to a higher level of care. When this is not possible, one person should be designated to supervise the administration of medications as instructed on medical release forms, and a clinic near your destination should be identified ahead of time in order to respond to health emergencies as rapidly as possible.
- Acceptable medical certifications include:
  - Wilderness Medical Response
  - Outdoor Emergency Care
  - Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic
  - Nurse — RN/LPN/Nurse Practitioner
  - Physician's Assistant
  - Medical Doctor
- Best practice is to designate an adult to serve as back-up to the travel administrator, and as back-up for simple first aid and administration of prescriptions. These could be the same person.
- A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

### **M. Insurance for Travel**

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most church and organization's policies as an added rider, must be secured at-least one month prior to travel.
- It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

**International Considerations**

- Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
- Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.
- A more thorough list of international travel considerations with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in the *Youth in Mission Manual* here: [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling\\_7.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling_7.pdf)



## **VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS**

### **A. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth**

Any adults who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place is strongly encouraged, and all mandated reporters are required, to contact the state's Child or Adult Protective Services.

In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place within a facility or program of the diocese, congregation, or other organization, should immediately inform one of more or the following:

- The bishop or the bishop's office in the case of a diocese;
- Member of the clergy in charge or the senior warden in the case of a congregation;
- The director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or
- The Intake Officer in case a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.

### **B. Suspected Violations of this Policy**

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person, member of the clergy in charge, and senior warden.

Clergy in charge receiving reports of violations of this policy shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the church. If the Responsible Person is a lay person, they are responsible to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a member of the clergy shall immediately report the violation to the bishop's office and/or the Intake Officer. Anyone can make a report to an Intake Officer.

The bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by laity at diocesan events, shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/ or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action, as provided by Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons and/or termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the diocese.

### **C. Local Resources for Response**

Each diocese, congregation, or organization shall provide a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate this policy. Such resources with contact information shall include:

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

- Responsible Person(s) for programs and ministries with children and youth;
- Clergy in charge of a congregation;
- Wardens;
- Bishop;
- Intake Officer(s); and
- Child or Adult Protective Services.

## VII. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT

### A. The Episcopal Church Adoption and Implementation

The Episcopal Church shall ensure that all programs and events of the Episcopal Church involving children and youth comply with the standards set out in this model policy.

The Episcopal Church shall also ensure that each diocese adopts a *Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of Children, youth and vulnerable adults* in accordance with this model policy by January 1, 2019.

### B. Diocesan Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

Dioceses shall adopt a *Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults* that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements in this model policy.

Dioceses may adopt site-specific variations from this model policy, where permitted by their governing body, which shall be described in detail, including the circumstances under which those variations are to be permitted and their rationale. This approval shall be recorded in the minutes of the governing body.

The bishop or ecclesiastical authority for each diocese shall inform congregations and other organizations within the diocese of the contents of the diocesan policy, the requirement that each congregation or organization adopt a policy in accordance with the diocesan policy, and the vendor(s) approved by each diocese to conduct Public Records Checks.

Each diocese is required to conduct a *Safe Church Self-Audit* every three years to confirm compliance with diocesan safe church policies.

#### **Procedures to be confirmed by audit will include (but are not limited to):**

- Existence of diocesan policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements of this model policy;
- Provision of accessible and appropriate training for all those who work with children and youth in accordance with *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)). Such training shall include, at a minimum, topics identified in this model policy;
- Verification that each congregation and/or organization within the diocese has adopted a policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the diocesan policy; and
- Verification that each congregation and/or organization has a process to ensure members access training and conduct public record checks.

### C. Congregation and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

Congregations and organizations must adopt a *Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults* that is consistent with and/or exceeds the

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

requirements in this model diocesan policy.

Congregations and organizations may adopt site-specific variations from diocesan policies, where permitted by vestries or governing bodies, which shall be described in detail, including the circumstances under which those variations are to be permitted and their rationale. This approval shall be recorded in the minutes of the vestry or governing body.

The ***Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults*** shall be posted in an area where activities take place, and shall be given to all adults, guardians, and all paid and unpaid persons who minister to children or youth. These policies shall include the names and phone numbers of the member of the clergy in charge, the senior warden, and a contact person in the bishop's office.

Each congregation and organization are required to conduct a ***Safe Church Self-Audit*** annually to confirm compliance with safe church policies, and to report such audit to the bishop's office.

**Procedures to be confirmed by audit will include (but are not limited to):**

- Public records checks, application forms, records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;
- Records of compliance with ***Screening and Training Protocols*** ([Appendix A](#));
- Procedures for responding to concerns and incidents; and
- Evidence of compliance with “safe space” requirements.

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

## Appendix A: Screening and Training Protocols

Screening and Training Chart	Ministry Function	Public Records	App/Inter/Ref	Universal Training	Leader	Supervisor
<b>Staff &amp; Contracted Ministers</b> (not covered below)	Church Employees	X	X	X		X
	Diocesan contractors (1099)	Depends		X	X	
	Clergy	X	X	X		X
	Church contractors (1099)	Depends		X		
	Diocesan Employees	X	X	X		X
	Diocesan Staff - unpaid	X	X	X		X
<b>Program Supervisors</b>						
	Child/Youth Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Commissioned Ministry Teams	X	X	X		X
	Director of Religious Education	X	X	X		X
	Camp Director	X	X	X		X
	Youth Minister	X	X	X		X
<b>Program Participants (non-supervisory)</b>						
	Acolyte Mentor	X		X	X	
	Choir parents			X		
	Church School Teacher	X		X	X	
	Counselor in Training	X- 18 and over	X	X	X	
	Nursery Worker - unpaid	X		X	X	
	Parish Nurse	X	X	X		X
	Teenage assistants			X	X	
	Musicians who work with youth	X	X	X		X
*Off-site	Camp Counselor	X	X	X		X
	Confirmation mentors	X	X	X	X	
	Lay Chaplains	X	X	X		X
	Pastoral Care Teams	X	X	X	X	
*Overnight	Youth Group Leaders	X	X	X		X
<b>Drivers</b>						
	Drivers	DMV		X		
<b>Governance</b>						
	Church Elected			X	X	
	Treasurer	Criminal & Credit		X	X	
	Vestry			X	X	
	Wardens	Criminal & Credit		X		X
<b>Key Access</b>						
	Altar Guild	Recommended		X		
	Building Hosts	Recommended		X		
<b>Home Visitors</b>						
	Eucharistic Visitors	X	X	X	X	
	Home Visitors	X	X	X	X	
	Stephen Ministers	X	X	X	X	
	Church Staff- unpaid	X	X	X		X
*Off-site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal church, institution, facility, or campus.						
*Overnight: Any event that starts on one calendar day and ends on a different calendar day.						

## **Appendix B: Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications for Children, youth and vulnerable adults**

Social media shapes the lives of young people and has the potential to empower ministry. Behavior in the digital sphere is never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations, putting them at risk. In addition, these powerfully connective tools are subject to the same dynamic of unequal power and potential for abuse that present a risk in all ministry relationships. Churches face the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in social media use in the midst of rapidly evolving technology. The following recommended practices and guidelines are designed to be a flexible template for developing policies and covenants governing the safe use of social media and digital communication in ministry settings.

### **General Information about Digital Communications**

- All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL and can be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- 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, or exploitation of children or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. Check your local applicable laws.

### **Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Churches and Organizations:**

- Establish a policy that outlines professional and institutional standards for profiles and interactions on social networking sites and platforms.
- Establish a policy of transparency regarding social media accounts. The best practice is to have the diocese, congregation, or organization create and “own” the social media accounts representing the diocese, congregation, or organization respectively and have multiple administrators and/or supervisors with access. If personal accounts are used, a system of monitoring should be established.
- Establish a policy regarding the identification or “tagging” of individuals in online photos or videos. For example, on Facebook, “tagging” someone in a photograph or video creates a hyperlink to that person’s profile page that can be clicked by anyone. The best practice is for the diocese, congregation, or organization not to identify or “tag” individuals. The “tagging” of children, youth and vulnerable adults should be prohibited. When written permission is provided by a vulnerable adult or guardian or for children and youth a parent/guardian, the captioning of photos or videos of minors may be permitted.

## Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

The caption should not include the minor's full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone's personal profile. A policy of whether or not an individual can "self-tag" in a diocese, congregation, or organization's online photo or video should also be established.

- A diocese, congregation, or organization does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by that diocese, congregation, or organization, except as described in #2 above. The preceding statement should be included in the diocese, congregation, or organization's Social Media Policy.
- Email can be a good method of communication, and it also has the opportunity to be misunderstood. Having a clear understanding and procedure for responding to digital communication that raises concern is prudent for all. Best practices can include not responding immediately and sharing the communication with a supervisor before responding. Phone and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications or pastoral emergencies.
- When using photos and videos for ministry purposes, obtain a media release for each person and only post images that respect the dignity of every person depicted.
- Dioceses, congregations, or organizations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space. Signs should be posted that indicate a service or activity will be broadcast when worship services or activities are streamed or distributed on the web or via other broadcast media.

### **Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with children, youth and vulnerable adults:**

Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a child, youth or vulnerable adult is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 10:00 pm, unless it's an emergency.

Privacy settings and personal boundaries should be implemented.

- Create and use profiles on social networking sites that meet professional and institutional standards.
- Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or "Add Me" on Snapchat) to child, youth or vulnerable adult for personal interactions. 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 nature of contact appropriate for healthy ministry.
- Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all children and youth, across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.
- Establish a regular ongoing and consistent system of review that focuses on settings, accessible content, photos, and videos to ensure compliance with professional and institutional standards.
- Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.

Model Policy for Safeguarding All People & the Protection of  
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

- When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual's "wall," or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos.
- When sending emails to a child, youth or vulnerable adult that contain personal or private information regarding that child, youth or vulnerable adult, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well. Examples of these types of emails include; payment due information, specific medical requests or questions, etc. Mass emails sent to an entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.
- Disclose **ongoing** digital pastoral communications (i.e.: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc.) with children, youth and vulnerable adults to a parent and/or a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.
- Create covenants to govern digital groups, which include:
  - Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior;
  - Who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group and when/if the group will be disbanded;
  - Description of content that can be posted or published on the site or page;
  - A prohibition of "tagging" photos and videos of children, youth and vulnerable adults. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with written permission from a parent or guardian;
  - Notification that mandatory reporting laws will be followed; and consequences for breaking the covenant.
- Delete inappropriate material posted in digital groups, address the behavior and report it, if necessary, in accordance with legal and institutional requirements.
- In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed. Comply with the following best practices regarding "groups" on social networking sites:
  - Have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators for groups that are designed for youth;
  - Use closed groups, but not "hidden" or "secret" groups, for children, youth or vulnerable adult. Have only youth administrators invite other youth to join the online group, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite them to join;
  - Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant; Open social networking groups for youth to parents of current members;
  - Remove adult leaders of youth groups and youth who are no longer members, due to departure, removal from position, or are ineligible because they "aged-out" of a program from social networking sites, list serves, etc.; Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.