



Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth

December 2015

Prayer for the Care of Children

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Introduction

The policies of The Diocese of Rhode Island are designed to make The Episcopal Church a safer place for those who worship, for those who minister, for those who come in need, and for all who seek or serve Christ, particularly children and youth. There is an expectation that every individual who serves the Church will maintain the highest ethical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister. The policies are adopted in recognition of the Baptismal covenant promise to respect the dignity of every human being.

Policy on Sexual Abuse and Misconduct

The Diocese does not tolerate sexual misconduct involving clergy, lay employees, or volunteers. The Diocese prohibits any relationship between children and youth and anyone who has a civil or criminal record of sexual abuse of children or who has admitted prior sexual abuse. No convicted sex offender should ever be involved with children. No person accused of being a sex offender should be involved with youth or children until the investigation is complete and the person has been cleared.

Preventing Sexual Abuse

To strive to make the Church a safer place for children and youth, the Diocese shall:

1. **Screening and Selection.** Undertake screening (i) for all clergy who are deployed or licensed to officiate within Rhode Island, (ii) for all diocesan employees, and (iii) for all diocesan volunteers who regularly work with children or youth. Screening and selection shall include a written application, a review of public records, an interview, and references. Generally, no volunteer shall have responsibility or shall participate in any program or activity for children or youth sponsored by the Diocese unless the volunteer has been known to the sponsoring program for at least six months, or if there is former verifiable work experience with children and youth.

2. **Behavioral Standards.** For all programs and activities for children and youth, prohibit (i) issuance to children or youth of non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs or pornography, (ii) consumption of non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse of legal drugs, (iii) participation of any adult who is under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or misusing legal drugs (iv) illegal behavior of any type at any activity for children or youth (v) participation by an adult in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive

relationship or conduct with any children or youth, (vi) discussion of sexual activities or fantasies, unless in the context of an approved program or the sacrament of confession, (vii) corporal punishment, (viii) smoking and (ix) firearms or other concealed weapons.

3. Monitoring and Supervision. For all programs and activities of children and youth, (i) recognize that the normative standard is the presence of at least two unrelated adults, and, for coed activities, the presence of male and female adults, (ii) prohibit transporting children and youth in personal vehicles without consent of parent or guardian, (iii) require approval by an appropriate authority in writing of new programs and activities, including trips and other activities, (iv) require an appropriate setting for counseling conversations between children and youth and adults with all having the opportunity to leave at will, (v) prohibit programs and activities occurring in a private residence without prior written approval by an appropriate authority, and (vi) adopt appropriate guidelines and supervision for the use of computers.

4. Education and Training. Require all clergy, employees and volunteers who work with children or youth to complete education and training designated by the Diocese to promote healthy boundaries and seek to prevent the abuse of children, youth, the elderly and vulnerable adults. From time to time, the Diocese shall set and publicize the minimum number of education and training units and maintain records of those who have completed the requirements.

Definitions

1. Children shall mean individuals under the age of twelve (12) years.
2. Youth shall mean individuals who are at least twelve (12) years old, but not yet eighteen (18) years old, and individuals over the age of eighteen (18) who are enrolled in high school.

Responding to Concerns

In compliance with Rhode Island law, all persons (including clergy, employees, volunteers and members) who know of or suspect an abuse of children and youth shall make a report to the Rhode Island Department of Children and Families. Rhode Island law requires a report within twenty-four hours of the knowledge or suspicion of abuse. The Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-RI Child (1-800-742-4453). In the case of a report of child/youth abuse where the victim is now an adult, the RI State Police may be contacted. Anyone who knows of a violation of diocesan policies should make a report to the Bishop or Canon to the Ordinary or Diocesan Intake Officer.

Adoption of Policies by Parishes and Missions

The Diocese strongly recommends the adoption of similar policies by each parish, mission or institution of the Diocese.

Diocesan Report Persons

Diocesan Intake Officers are listed on the Diocese of Rhode Island website (www.episcopalri.org) and are available in the Diocesan Directory; it is recommended that each parish, mission, or institution post these names in an area readily accessible to all.

Approved by Diocesan Council, DECEMBER 2015