

Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan

## Best Practice Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth

*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 Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

Approved by Executive Council March 2007

Presented to Diocesan Convention April 2007

***Prayers for the Gift of Children***

*Holy God, you sent your own Son into this world. We thank you for the life of these children entrusted to our care. Help us to remember that we are all your children, and so to love and nurture them, that they may attain to the full stature intended for them in your eternal kingdom; for the sake of your dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*- From the Book of Common Prayer*

**Letter from the Bishop**

April 2007

Dear People of God,

During the past four years a dedicated group within the diocese has worked to develop standards for protecting the young people in the church from sexual abuse. These policies along with the *Safeguarding God's Children* workshops help equip those people who are to be involved in the leadership and teaching of children and youth. Included are procedures for appropriate screening, clear standards of behavior of leaders, and effective training to recognize the signs that sexual misconduct has occurred, as well as the steps that should be taken when misconduct is suspected.

We expect all clergy, leaders, and teachers of children and youth to attend the *Safeguarding God's Children* certification workshop. This three-hour program is offered in deaneries throughout the year and will help people both see the need for these policies and discuss ways to implement them in your parish.

Enclosed is the *Best Practice Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth* (Policies for Protection). I want to emphasize that our efforts to protect our children and youth will be ongoing, and sadly never really finished. This is true both in the sense that our understanding of the evil of sexual misconduct broadens over time and in the sense that we hope to continuously improve the content of our training.

I commend to you these *Policies for Protection* and support each congregation enacting these policies and training their volunteers and paid staff for the safety of our children and youth.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Rev. Robert R. Gepert  
VIII Western Michigan

## Table of Contents

Why do we have policies	page 4
How do we implement the policies	page 5
Code of Conduct for Protection of Children	page 6
Definitions for terms used in the Best Practice Policies	page 7
Guidelines	page 9
1. Screening, selection and certification	page 10
2. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs and Facilities	page 11
3. Alcohol and Drugs	page 12
4. Team Leadership and Adult Supervision	page 13
5. Transportation	page 14
6. Appropriate Boundaries	page 15
7. Inappropriate Sexual Behavior	page 17
8. Responding to Problems	page 18
Forms	
1. Certification of Parish Compliance	page 20
2. Diocese of Western Michigan Notice of Concern	pages 21
Sample Forms for Parish Use (can also be found on-line)	
1. Sample Permission and Registration form for activities	page 23
2. Sample Application form for Working with Children and Youth	page 24
Other Information	
1. Background checks for Church Personnel	page 27
2. State of Michigan Laws on Mandated Reporters	Page 28
3. Reporting Child Abuse or Suspected Child Abuse in the State of Michigan	page 29
4. Department of Human Services Contact Information – by County	page 30
5. General Convention Resolutions of Child Sexual Abuse	page 31

# Why do we have Policies?

## **Why do we have policies?**

We are a diverse Diocese with very diverse parishes. We worship differently, we educate differently and we have varying sizes, demographics and locations. But having a set of guidelines that we all live by is what makes us a community, it's what makes us a Diocese.

## **Why do we need policies for protection?**

Children are one of our greatest responsibilities. At each Baptism we are asked, "Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?" Our answer is "We will." However, abuse does happen and statistics show that churches are one of the places that pedophiles search out to find victims.

## **How were these policies developed?**

These were developed using the Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse from the Episcopal Church office and the Nathan Network and using the information found in the Safeguarding God's Children curriculum. Laws from the State of Michigan were also incorporated.

## **Why do we have to follow these policies?**

It is a canonical requirement of the Diocese of Western Michigan that we have a "Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy" and that each parish comply with the policy. Canon 3; Section 1 and 2 states, "The failure to abide by the provisions of any policy adopted in accordance with Section 1 ... shall subject such a person to the sanctions and discipline as provided in these Canons and in the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church."

# How do we implement the Best Practice Policies?

Each parish, church sponsored activity or diocesan wide activity involving children and/or youth must incorporate these policies as their own by October 31, 2007.

Steps to implement:

1. In a parish, gather a team of people, including the rector if a church is in between rectors, the church school director, vestry, and other interested persons.  
In a church sponsored activity or diocesan wide activity, gather the board of directors or design team.
2. Go over the new policies to see where current practices will need to change.
3. Map out how changes will occur.
4. Create ways to alert entire parish or organization of changes, such as presenting at the annual meeting or forum times, or other times the parish is gathering.
5. Update handbooks and other information given to employees and volunteers
6. Update personnel files for employees and volunteers.
7. Update church facilities with observable rooms by October 31, 2007.
8. Schedule employees and volunteers for Safeguarding God's Children Certification workshops by October 31, 2007.  
A list of workshops is available on the Diocesan website.  
Register at least one week before workshop by contacting the Diocesan office at (269) 381-2710  
There is a \$10 fee for the training – financial assistance is available and must be arranged at time of registration.

# 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, the church to more fully demonstrate 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 Diocese of Western Michigan 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 *Best Practice Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth* before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in or begin service to the church.

## Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth

- Church Personnel agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.

*All people working with children and youth in parishes, church sponsored activities and diocesan activities are required to be screened and be certified in Safeguarding God's Children*

- 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.

*Monitoring and supervising by the rector or a designee of the rector is to occur with all programs with children and youth, and include an "open door" policy for parents and a procedure for releasing children*

- All Church Personnel agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.

*Alcohol (with the exception of Eucharistic wine), illegal drugs and the misuse of legal drugs are prohibited from all programs with children and youth.*

*At no time will just one adult be present with a young person or a group of young people*

*Transportation of young people must be done with the parent's written permission and only by licensed drivers over the age of 18*

- Church Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth and agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.

*Appropriate boundaries between individuals are to be adhered to at all programs with children and youth*

*Inappropriate sexual behavior is prohibited at all programs with children and youth*

- 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 this policy. Church members will be made aware of this "duty to warn."

*If a child or youth is in danger of being hurt by him/herself or by someone else, or is in danger of hurting someone else, a supervisor must be told*

# Definitions for terms used in the Best Practice Policies

## Church Personnel

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

**Rector** may be substituted by priest in charge, interim, senior warden if the parish is without a priest, or by the adult program leader in the event of a Diocesan or other sponsored activity.

**All clergy** whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church

**All paid personnel** whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies

**Those who contract their services** to the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies

**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.

### Some specific examples

- All church school or Sunday school staff
- Children's or youth choir directors
- Organists who work with children or youth
- Lay youth ministers
- Volunteer youth directors
- All who work or assist in the nursery, whether teen or adult
- All staff, whether volunteer or paid, at church camps
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth

## Supervision

**Supervision** of children and youth is defined as being within eyesight or earshot of the participants.

## Children and Youth

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

**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.

## Abuse, Molestation, Harassment and Exploitation

**Child abuse** is defined as harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through nonaccidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment

### Sexual abuse or sexual molestation

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.

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.

**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.

**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.

**Economic exploitation** is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money.

**Sexual harassment** in a situation where there is an employment, mentor or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to, sexually-oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated and unwelcome requests for social engagements.

**Sexual exploitation**, including but not limited to, the development of or attempt to develop a sexual relationship by an individual in a leadership role (mentor, cleric, counselor, etc.) with a person he or she is leading, whether or not there is apparent consent.

**Sexual contact**, include touching or exposure of the breast, buttocks or genitalia

**Pedophilia**, is the condition of people (either adult or adolescent) whose primary sexual attraction is toward prepubescent children.

**Exhibitionism** involves the exposure of one's genitals to a stranger

**Voyeurism** involves the act of observing unsuspecting individuals, usually strangers, who are naked, in the process of disrobing, or engaging in sexual activity.

### **Self-Destructive Behaviors**

**Self-Destructive behaviors** include but are not limited to self inflicted cutting, anorexia, bulimia and steroid use.



# Guidelines for Living into the Best Practice Policies

The following Guidelines are intended

- To assist Church Personnel in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children and youth
- To identify, prevent and stop those behaviors and interactions that may be inherently harmful to children or youth
- To identify behaviors and interactions that are the type used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents
- To identify situations that may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily.
- To make decisions about interactions with children and youth in church sponsored and affiliated programs.

When exceptions to these guidelines must be made, they should be reported prior to the event or immediately following to the supervisor of the Church Personnel making the exception. It is a good practice to put these exceptions in a written log. Church Personnel should determine when and how parents should be alerted to these changes in practice.

**The following categories are included in the Guidelines**

- 1) Screening, Selection and Certification
- 2) Monitoring and Supervision of Programs and Facilities
- 3) Alcohol and Drugs
- 4) Team Leadership and Adult Supervision
- 5) Transportation
- 6) Appropriate Boundaries
- 7) Inappropriate Sexual Behavior
- 8) Responding to Problems

## Screening, Selection and Certification

*All people working with children and youth in parishes, church sponsored activities and diocesan activities are required to be screened and be certified in Safeguarding God's Children*

### Screening and Selection

- Working as a leader among the children and youth in our congregations is a privilege, and it is also an immense responsibility. Screening and selection processes must be implemented into every ministry with children and youth.
- Church Personnel who work with or around children or youth must have a personnel file that is kept securely confidential where other church records are kept. All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, as to whether or not the person is appropriate to work with children or youth.

The following will be included in the file.

- Completed standard application (an example of which is in the appendix)
- Completed background check which should include:
  - Criminal records check (see page 26)
  - Sexual offender registry check (see page 26)
  - Driving or Motor Vehicle records check, if the person will be transporting children or youth
  - May include a financial background check, if the person will be handling money
    - Criminal records checks and sexual offender registry checks to be conducted every 5 years
- Notes from an individual Interview with the rector or a person designated by the rector
- Reference check of persons outside the congregation and not related to the applicant, but who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children or youth
- Church Personnel who transfer from parishes or ministries within the Diocese of Western Michigan and will be working with or around children or youth may transfer a copy of their personnel file.

The following is required for every transfer:

- A new application
- Individual interview
- 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.
- No person will be allowed to volunteer to work with children or youth until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months. This time limit may be suspended if the volunteer is transferring from another Episcopal parish with a letter of recommendation and verbal contact from the previous Rector.
- The Diocese of Western Michigan strictly prohibits personal interaction with children and youth by anyone with a civil or criminal record of child sexual abuse or who has admitted prior sexual abuse or anyone known to have a paraphiliac diagnosis (e.g., pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism) as defined by the American Psychiatric Association.

### Certification

- All parochial clergy, church employees, Sunday school teachers, chaperones and leaders of youth and children (volunteer, staffed, lay people or ordained) must be certified in the Diocese of Western Michigan's *Safeguarding God's Children* on or before October 31, 2007.
- All new parochial clergy, church employees, Sunday school teachers, chaperones and leaders of youth and children (volunteer, staffed, lay people or ordained) must be certified before they start their work with children or youth or, if that is not possible, be made aware of these Diocesan policies before they start their work and complete *Safeguarding God's Children* certification within six months of starting.

## Monitoring and Supervision of Programs and Facilities

*Monitoring and supervising by the rector or a designee of the rector is to occur with all programs with children and youth, and include an “open door” policy for parents and a procedure for releasing children*

### Monitoring and Supervision

- All congregation sponsored programs must be regularly monitored by the rector or a designee of the rector. Monitoring permits the evaluation of structural guidelines or standards for the programs and activities for children and youth. Supervisory personnel and others monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth and other children who work with children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped.
- All adults working with children and youth must be regularly supervised by the rector or designee and meet regularly. Some customs of supervision can be monthly or quarterly individual meetings or monthly or quarterly “teachers” meetings. During these times adults can express concerns with the children and youth or with other teachers. It is a good practice to take notes during these supervisory times to be reminded of what issues came up and what topics were discussed. It’s also good to do informal check-ins and ask the supervisee how things are going.
- To the extent possible, no person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with or around children or youth. For the purpose of this policy, immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar in-law relationship, stepchild, stepparent, stepsibling, grandparent, or co-habitant.

### Congregation sponsored programs

Examples for congregation sponsored programs would be youth groups, bible studies, discussion groups, children’s choir, mentoring programs, etc. These could meet either at the church building or off-site.

- An up to date list of congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth will be maintained in the church office or other place where church records are kept.
- New activities for children and youth must be developed with the approval from the rector. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing to the rector, who will then consider whether the plan includes adequate adult supervision.

### Open Door Policy

- All youth events and Sunday school classes are to function with an open door policy. Parents should be encouraged to drop in, but not disrupt the flow of the activities.

### Release of Children

- Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old are to have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them. This may include a sign-in/sign-out form or a letter signed by parents if an unknown person is to pick up the children. This may also include a letter signed by the parents, or a place where parents can write, any adults who are not allowed to pick up their children.

### Church Facilities

- All church areas are to be observable, for example windows in doors, with the windows not covered. It is the expectation that by October 31, 2007 all church facilities will have implemented this practice.
- In rooms that are not being used, the doors should be kept locked.

## Alcohol and Drugs

*Alcohol (with the exception of Eucharistic wine), illegal drugs and the misuse of legal drugs are prohibited from all programs with children and youth.*

- Church Personnel are prohibited from the 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
- Children and youth are prohibited from the 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

## Team Leadership and Adult Supervision

*At no time will just one adult be present with a young person or a group of young people*

- A young person or group of young people is never to be left in the primary care of just one adult. Teams of adults are to supervise youth activities. When exceptions to this guideline must be made, they should be reported prior to the event or immediately following to the supervisor of the Church Personnel making the exception. It is a good practice to put these exceptions in a written log. Church Personnel should determine when and how parents should be alerted to these changes in practice. If there is only one adult who agrees to regularly supervise a group of children or youth in a situation like a youth group meeting a different additional adult can be asked to attend each meeting, helping with activities or just sitting in the corner and reading, but at least two adults must be present with every group of children or youth.
- There is to be an adequate ratio between adults and youth. A ratio of ten youth to two adults is recommended as a minimum (2:10, 3:15, 4:20, etc.).
- If there are male and female youth and children, then there needs to be male and female adults in leadership roles.
- Non-related adults are to be paired for team leadership.
- For youth events (grades 6-12), adult leaders must be at least 18 years old and out of high school and at least three years older than the oldest participant.
- Experienced youth leaders are to be included with leaders who are newcomers to youth ministry.
- In an instance where someone under the age of 18 is working with children or youth, an adult over the age of 21 must directly supervise and at least two adults must be physically present during all activities.
- Each program will develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths. Examples are: For a child who can use the restroom on his or her own Church Personnel can stand outside in the hall and if the child does call for assistance go in. If this is done, the Church Personnel can alert the parent and his or her supervisor that the child needed assistance in the bathroom. With youth, it is a best practice to have an adult within ear shot of the rest room and shower room, especially if there is more than one young person in there. That way if there is trouble the adult can go in and help out.
- When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, the Church Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults and/or work in pairs.

### **Individual Counseling and Mentoring**

- Unless you are a certified counselor or in an approved mentoring situation, interacting with youth should take place in a team context (meaning at least 2 adults). This includes instances when you need to discuss a specific disciplinary incident or situation with a young person at a youth event or during a regular meeting.
- At times when one-on-one interactions are needed, an adult leader who is not participating in the one-on-one interaction should be provided advance knowledge of the time and place where such interaction is to take place.
- One-on-one interactions must happen in a public place, which affords privacy yet is in plain view of others (e.g., an office with a window or with the door cracked, or the corner of the youth room when others are present or at a local coffee shop).
- When meeting with a young person one-on-one, the adult must tell a clergyperson or other supervisor in the parish office whom they are meeting with, where they will be meeting and an approximate amount of time. If this is a clergyperson, telling the church secretary would be appropriate.

## Transportation

*Transportation of young people must be done with a parent's written permission and only by licensed drivers over the age of 18*

- Families are encouraged to arrange their own transportation.
- 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 (an example of which can be found in the appendix).
- Adult advisors are to avoid transporting youth during, or to and from, a parish or diocesan-sponsored event without being accompanied by another adult. Another acceptable method of transportation would be for vehicles to caravan in close but safe formation.
- No one under the age of 18 may transport another minor during a parish or diocesan-sponsored event. Young people may only transport other young people to or from an event with the prior written consent from the parents of all of the youth involved.

## Appropriate Boundaries

*Appropriate boundaries between individuals are to be adhered to at all programs with children and youth*

### Overnight Activities

- Sleep deprivation is not encouraged. A minimum of 7 hours of sleep for the participants and all leaders is needed for overnight activities
- If the participants are both male and female there are to be both male and female chaperones.
- It is never appropriate for two people to share a bed or other sleeping space (i.e. sleeping bag) designed for one person, or for a young person and a chaperone to share a bed or sleeping space.
- Males and females (both youth and adult) should sleep in separate rooms at all events and have separate access to bathroom facilities.
- It is desirable that youth and adults should have separate sleeping quarters, and, when possible, separate bathing facilities. If separate sleeping quarters for adults and youth are not possible, adults should sleep at a different end or side of the room. If separate bathing facilities are not available, there needs to be a way to differentiate if adults are using the facility or youth, so they are not present while the others are showering and they are not showering together.

### Hazing

- “Hazing” refers to any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person’s willingness to participate.
- Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children’s or youth ministries.

### Behavior Management

- Use positive reinforcement and help children and youth understand and develop positive alternative behaviors which are appropriate to replace the unacceptable ones.
- At no time is discipline for unacceptable behaviors to include
  - deprivation of food or sleep,
  - being placed alone without staff supervision, observation and interaction, or with only one adult
  - be subjected to
    - ridicule
    - threat
    - corporal punishment
    - excessive physical exercise
    - excessive restraint
- Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force.
- If discipline for unacceptable behaviors does need to occur both the rector and the parent will be notified. It is a good practice to put these instances in a written log.

## **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**

- The Diocese of Western Michigan is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Personnel from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth.

- **Appropriate boundaries**

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

Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

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

- **Inappropriate Boundaries**

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

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



## Inappropriate Sexual Behavior

*Inappropriate sexual behavior is prohibited at all programs with children and youth*

- Church Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
- Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact (touching or exposure of the breast, buttocks or genitalia) with a child or youth.
- Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact (touching or exposure of the breast, buttocks or genitalia) with another adult on the church property or at a parish or diocesan sponsored event.
- Children and youth are prohibited from having sexual contact (touching or exposure of the breast, buttocks or genitalia) with another child or youth or an adult on the church property or at a church or diocesan sponsored event.
- Church Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
- 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.
- 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.

## Responding to Problems

*If a child or youth is in danger of being hurt by him/herself or by someone else, or is in danger of hurting someone else, a supervisor must be told*

Responding quickly to a problem is essential for keeping children and youth safe.

### Observing Inappropriate Behavior or Policy Violations

- When Church Personnel observe any **inappropriate behavior or policy violations** or when a person sees the Best Practice Policies not being used the first response should be to confront the offender and to make the supervisor of the program aware of the situation. All reports of this nature must be taken seriously.
- When a supervisor, rector receives a report they can do the following things;
  - If the inappropriate behavior is illegal, read below “Reporting Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth”
  - If you are not certain if the behavior is illegal or not you can call the Department of Human Services for a confidential conversation (county phone numbers listed in the appendix)
  - You can call the Diocesan office and speak with either the Bishop, the Canon to the Ordinary, or Assistant to the Bishop for Children, Youth and Young Adult Ministries at any point
  - If the behavior is not illegal you can speak to the offender and let him or her know that this behavior is not permitted at church events. A written statement about the discussion should go in the Church Personnel’s file or into another secure file
  - If the behavior continues or the offender continues with other inappropriate behavior you can remove the person from children and youth ministryIn all instances notes should be taken about all steps and kept in a permanent file

### Observing Inappropriate Sexual Behavior or Recurrent Behavior or Policy Violations

- When Church Personnel *observe* any **inappropriate sexual behavior or recurrent (two-times or more) behavior or policy violations** they must immediately report (within 24 hours) their observations to the rector and to the Office of the Bishop
  - The person reporting must give a written statement (see “Notice of Concern” page 20)
  - The rector shall consult with Diocesan officials to determine whether the incident is within the scope of applicable laws that require filing of a report with governmental authorities.
  - The rector can also contact the Department of Human Services to discuss the incident before officially reporting

### Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth

- **All Church Personnel are required by this policy to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities.** Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime.
  - Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides 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.

Phone numbers for each county and a flow chart of what happens when suspected abuse is reported can be found in *the appendix*. Phone numbers of local police can be found in the phone book.

### Suspected Abuse Occurring at Church or by Church Personnel

- Church Personnel are required to immediately report (within 24 hours) any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the state authorities and the rector of the parish so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.
- Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve Church Personnel or occurred at a church activity must be made to the Diocese of Western Michigan within 48 hours with a telephone call and conversation with the Bishop or Canon to the Ordinary.
  - While the alleged abuser is not seen as guilty in the eyes of the law, the first need is to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. The alleged victim and abuser must be kept separate at all times

- The Diocese of Western Michigan and the parish involved will cooperate with any investigation by state authorities to the fullest extent appropriate and inform authorities that a concurrent internal investigation will be conducted by the Diocese of Western Michigan

**Suspected abuse that may have occurred outside of church**

- If Church Personnel is told of or suspects abuse at home or at school he or she should contact proper authorities and should also contact the rector. Contacting a church official should be done to both alert the church authorities as to what is going on, and also to have an advocate in the process. If it is not felt that the rector is serving as sufficient support or advocate in this process, the bishop’s office needs to be notified immediately.

**Observed or Suspected Self-Destructive Behaviors**

- If a young person is hurting or threatening to hurt him or her-self action must be taken, this is considered “duty to warn”. The Church Personnel must report conversations such as these to his or her direct supervisor and the rector.
- If Church Personnel observes or suspects that a child or youth is participating in self-destructive behaviors (see definition on page 8), illegal drug use or legal drug or alcohol abuse, discussing possible suicide, etc. actions will be taken.
  - Actions to be taken for the care of the child or youth will depend on the degree of severity and potential safety and will be decided by the rector.
  - The rector may consult with Diocesan officials at any point to decide what further actions if any need to be made
  - Parents and/or guardians will be notified

This still means that discussion at “youth groups” or other church or diocesan sponsored youth activities are considered confidential in that there is an agreement to honor one another’s privacy.

## Appendix to the Best Practice Policies for Protection of Children and Youth

### State of Michigan Laws on Mandated Reporters

#### **722.623** Law on Mandatory Reporting reads as such

Persons required to report child abuse or neglect; written report; transmitting report and results of investigation to prosecuting attorney, county family independence agency, or law enforcement agency; pregnancy of or venereal disease in child less than 12 years of age.

#### Sec. 3.

(1) An individual is required to report under this act as follows:

(a) A physician, dentist, physician's assistant, registered dental hygienist, medical examiner, nurse, person licensed to provide emergency medical care, audiologist, psychologist, marriage and family therapist, licensed professional counselor, certified social worker, social worker, social work technician, school administrator, school counselor or teacher, law enforcement officer, member of the clergy, or regulated child care provider who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect shall make immediately, by telephone or otherwise, an oral report, or cause an oral report to be made, of the suspected child abuse or neglect to the department. Within 72 hours after making the oral report, the reporting person shall file a written report as required in this act.

#### **MCL722.631** Privileged communications, section 11 reads as such

Any legally recognized privileged communication except that between attorney and client or that made to a member of the clergy in his or her professional character in a confession or similarly confidential communication is abrogated and shall not constitute grounds for excusing a report otherwise required to be made or for excluding evidence in a civil child protective proceeding resulting from a report made pursuant to this act. This section does not relieve a member of the clergy from reporting suspected child abuse or child neglect under section 3 if that member of the clergy receives information concerning suspected child abuses or child neglect while acting in any other capacity listed under section 3.

# Diocese of Western Michigan Notice of Concern

## To document Inappropriate Sexual Behavior or Recurrent Behavior or Policy Violations

*(page 1 of 2)*

*Filing instructions*

- *Please print*
- *After completing make one copy to mail to the Bishop's office (to maintain confidentiality)*
- *Give the original to Rector*

Name(s) of alleged offender \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of alleged victim \_\_\_\_\_

Date of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish (name and town) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Concern:

- Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth
- Policy violation with a child or youth
- Possible risk of abuse
- Other concern:

*Attach additional sheets if needed*

Describe the situation: What happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, who was present, who was notified? If reported to the State, what was their recommendation about investigating?

Are you aware of any action that has been taken (eg parents been notified, etc.) (yes or no) \_\_\_\_\_

Has this situation occurred previously? (yes or no) \_\_\_\_\_ What action was taken in previous occurrence? How was the situation handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were police called?

What is the follow-up plan? Does anyone else need to be notified? Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation?

Submitted by (print name): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

*Used by Diocesan office*

Date Received \_\_\_\_\_ Person reviewing \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken:

*Sample* Permission & Registration form  
*Name of parish or ministry*  
*(available in electronic form also)*

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ home phone \_\_\_\_\_ alternate phone \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ home phone \_\_\_\_\_ alternate phone \_\_\_\_\_

Person to be notified in case Parent/Guardian cannot be reached \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant medical Information**

Health Insurance Company \_\_\_\_\_ Policy # \_\_\_\_\_

Insured's name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies/medical conditions \_\_\_\_\_

Required medications \_\_\_\_\_

Dietary needs/restrictions \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box if you give permission for photographs or video footage of my child to be used by the Parish

***Please read and sign the following:***

**As a parent/guardian**, I hereby give permission for the designated youth to attend the Diocesan Convention in the Diocese of Western Michigan and to participate in all the activities and follow all rules set forth by the Diocesan office. If my child breaks a rule and needs to be sent home, I will arrange for transportation immediately.

**As a youth or young adult**, I agree to follow all rules set for by *this parish*.  
*List rules and norms*

I give permission to the leaders of this program to secure emergency medical or surgical treatment for my child if there is insufficient time to contact me, and to secure routine, non-surgical medical care as needed.

I agree to hold *this parish* and any associated agencies and persons free and waive any claims for payment of accident, injury, disability or damages to the person or property of the aforementioned child arising out of or connected with his/her participation in any activity related to his/her participation in the aforementioned activity.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Sample Application Form for Working with Children and Youth

## Name of Parish or Ministry

### (available in electronic form also)

*Instructions: Please print and complete all of the questions accurately and fully. Attach additional sheets if needed.*

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
*First* *Middle* *Last*

Did you serve with (name of parish) in previous years?  Yes  No

Note: If you served in this parish in previous years you only need include any changes or additions with this application.

You also must include one recommendation from a non-related person and please answer the following question:

What have you been doing in the past year that has helped you grow spiritually? What have you done that will help you in your continued work with children and youth?

Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_ Drivers License Number & State \_\_\_\_\_

Former Legal Names \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived at this address? \_\_\_\_\_ year or months

**Previous Addresses (from the past 5 years) – please use extra paper if needed**

Years	Address

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Male or Female (circle)

**Emergency Contact** \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers: Day \_\_\_\_\_ Night \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

What position are you applying for? \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are applying for a position where you will be driving others:** Have you ever had a moving violation?  No  Yes

List year(s) and violation(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are applying for a paid position:** You will be required to show documents verifying your employment eligibility and identity to complete the INS Form I-9 as required by the Immigration Reform and Control Act.

Are you legally eligible to work in this country?  Yes  No

Can you perform the essential functions of the job for which you have applied, with or without reasonable accommodations?

Yes  No Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Statement** Please write a personal statement and answer the following questions.

- 1) What interests you about the position for which you are currently applying?
- 2) What has prepared you for the position for which you are currently applying?



**References** from persons who know you well and are willing to supply data regarding your qualifications are an important part of your application. These persons might be teachers, employers or an adult friend, none of whom are related to you.

Name of Reference	Company	Relationship to applicant	Years known	Address (street, city, zip)	Day-time phone (with area code)

**Volunteer Experience**

Dates	Organization	Director/Contact	Address	Phone	Duties

**Education History**

Years	School	Major Subjects	Degree Granted

**Employment History** (Provide a full record of employment and explain any gaps in employment. Use a separate sheet, if necessary.)

Dates	Employer	Address & Phone	Nature of Work	Supervisor	Reason for Leaving

Given recent incidents regarding children and to assure the safety of children and youth, the *(name of parish or ministry)* \_\_\_\_\_ reserves the right to request a background check which could include criminal records and/or motor vehicle checks on prospective Church Personnel.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime, including any drug or alcohol offense other than a minor traffic offense?  
 Yes  No If yes, please describe?

Under penalty of perjury, I swear or affirm that all the information on this application is true and complete, and I understand that if any false information, omissions or misrepresentations are discovered, my application may be rejected, and, if I am selected, my service may be terminated at any time.

I authorize the *(name of parish or ministry)* \_\_\_\_\_ to investigate the statements I have made in this application, and specifically authorize any parties listed in this application or reference sheet to release information they have about me to the *(name of parish or ministry)* \_\_\_\_\_.

I agree to comply with the *(name of parish or ministry)* \_\_\_\_\_ rules, regulations and policies. I agree that my selection may be evaluated and can be terminated at any time either by the *(name of parish or ministry)* \_\_\_\_\_ or me. I understand that the terms and conditions of my service may be changed at any time by the *(name of parish or ministry)* \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth

*(available in electronic form also)*

*To be read and signed by all Church Personnel – and kept in their Personnel file*

*Read and initial each item to signify your agreement to comply with the statement.*

- I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- I agree not to physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- I have received a copy and agree to comply with the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan Best Practice Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth
- I agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
- In the event that I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, I agree to immediately report my observations.
- I acknowledge my 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 the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

Have you ever been accused of physically, sexually or emotionally abusing a child or an adult?

Yes  No

If yes, please explain.

## **Acknowledgment, Release and Signature**

- To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application is complete and accurate. I understand that providing false information is grounds for not hiring me or choosing me for a volunteer position or for my discharge if I have already been hired or chosen.
- I authorize any person or organization, whether or not identified in this application, to provide any information concerning my previous employment, education, credit history, driving record, criminal conviction record, sexual offender registry or other qualifications for my employment or volunteering. I also authorize \_\_\_\_\_ [Parish] to request and receive such information.
- If hired or chosen, I agree to be bound by \_\_\_\_\_ [Parish's] policies and procedures, including but not limited to its Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse and Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth. I understand that these may be changed, withdrawn, added to or interpreted at any time at the \_\_\_\_\_ [Parish's] sole discretion and without prior notice to me.
- I also understand that my employment or volunteering may be terminated, or any offer or acceptance of employment or volunteering withdrawn, at any time, with or without cause, and with or without prior notice at the option of \_\_\_\_\_ [Parish] or myself.
- Nothing contained in this application or in any pre-employment or pre-volunteering communication is intended to or creates a contract between myself and \_\_\_\_\_ [Parish] for either employment, volunteering or the providing of any benefit.
- I have read and understand the above provisions.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Background Checks for Church Personnel

Background Checks must be completed for all Church Personnel and the finding must be kept confidential in the personnel file. (For a complete definition of Church Personnel please refer to page 7 of the Best Practice Policies)

### **Oxford Document Management Company**

Complete background checks can be done through Oxford Document Management Company. This company is recommended by the Diocese of Western Michigan and is used for background checks of Diocesan Clergy and Lay Employees. There is a cost connected to using this company.

Oxford Document Management Company, Inc.

655 West Highway 10

Anoka, MN 55303-1623

Phone: (763) 971-0124

(800) 801-9114

Fax: (763) 971-0126

(800) 951-9114

E-mail: [info@oxforddoc.com](mailto:info@oxforddoc.com)

<http://www.oxforddoc.com/>

For more information on this company and how to perform a background check with them you can contact the Episcopal Center at (269) 381-2710

### **State of Michigan Criminal Records Check**

Background Checks for Criminal Records and Sexual Offenders can also be completed through the State of Michigan for free with churches.

You can do this on-line by going to [www.michigan.gov/ichat](http://www.michigan.gov/ichat)

Please read the information on the website to see which records these check.

### **State of Michigan Sex Offender Registry**

The Sex Offender Registry hotline is (517) 322-4939.

The online Sex Offender Registry is available at [www.mipsor.state.mi.us](http://www.mipsor.state.mi.us).

# Reporting Child Abuse or Suspect Child Abuse in the State of Michigan

The state website for the Department of Human Services

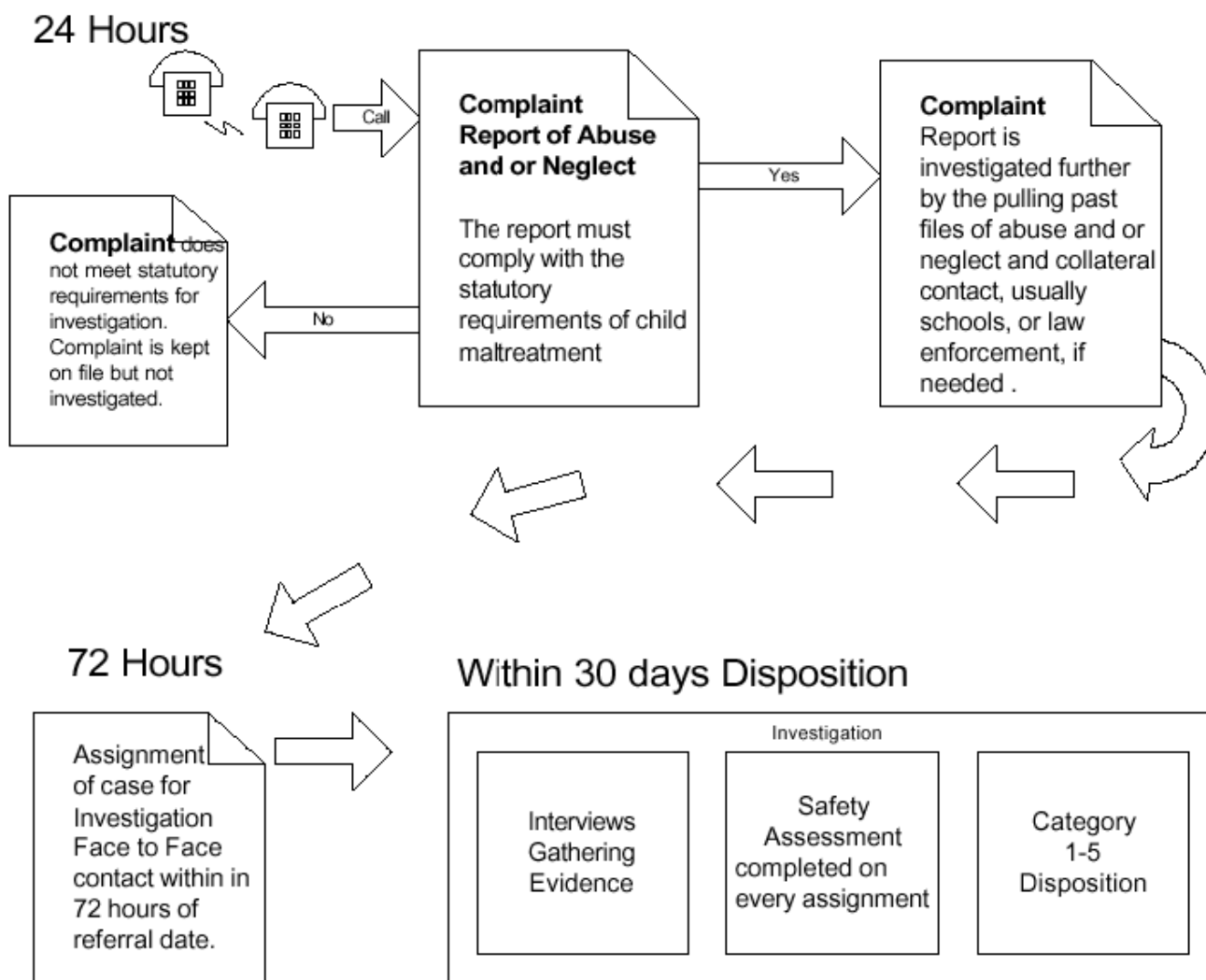
<http://www.michigan.gov/dhs>

On this site you can find

- the Mandate Reporter’s Resource Guide
- the form to Report Actual or Suspect Child Abuse or Neglect
- information on Child Services and Child Welfare Services
- Youth Programs
- and much, much more

The following is taken from the Department of Human Services website

## Children's Protective Services Investigation Process Flowchart



## Department of Human Service Contact information

County Name	Phone Number	Fax Number
Allegan	(269) 673-7700	(269) 673-7795
Antrim	(231) 533-8664	(231) 533-8740
Barry	(269) 948-3200	(269) 948-9069
Benzie	(231) 882-1330	(231) 882-9078
Berrien	(269) 934-2000	(269) 934-2115
Branch	(517) 279-4200	(517) 278-5346
Calhoun	(269) 966-1284	(269) 966-2835
Cass	(269) 445-0200	(269) 445-0299
Charlevoix	(231) 348-1600	(231) 347-6211
Clare	(989) 539-4260	(989) 539-5302
Clinton	(989) 224-5500	(989) 224-8717
Eaton	(517) 543-0860	(517) 543-5726
Emmet	(231) 348-1600	(231) 347-6211
Grand Traverse	(231) 941-3900	(231) 941-0037
Gratiot	(989) 875-5181	(989) 875-2811
Hillsdale	(517) 439-2200	(517) 439-2272
Ingham	(517) 887-9400	(517) 887-9500
Ionia	(616) 527-5200	(616) 527-1849
Isabella	(989) 772-8400	(989) 772-8460
Jackson	(517) 780-7400	(517) 780-7160
Kalamazoo	(269) 337-4900	(269) 337-5179
Kalkaska	(231) 258-1200	(231) 258-4482
Kent	(616) 247-6000	(616) 247-6293
Lake	(231) 745-8159	(231) 745-2930
Leelanau	(231) 941-3900	(231) 941-0037
Manistee	(231) 723-8375	(231) 398-2106
Mason	(231) 845-7391	(231) 843-1430
Mecosta	(231) 796-4300	(231) 796-0799
Missaukee	(231) 779-4500	(231) 779-4507
Montcalm	(989) 831-8400	(989) 831-8496
Muskegon	(231) 733-3700	(231) 733-3872
Newaygo	(231) 689-5500	(231) 689-5586
Oceana	(231) 873-7251	(231) 873-3803
Osceola	(231) 796-4300	(231) 796-0799
Ottawa	(616) 394-7200	(616) 395-5526
Roscommon	(989) 275-5107	(989) 275-5545
St. Joseph	(269) 467-1200	(269) 467-1229
VanBuren	(269) 621-2800	(269) 621-2927
Wexford	(231) 779-4500	(231) 779-4507

**DIOCESE OF WESTERN MICHIGAN  
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: POLICIES AND PREVENTION**

**FORM 8**

**Certificate of Parish Compliance with Warranty for Sexual Misconduct**

Parish or Congregation (name and town) \_\_\_\_\_

The following steps have been taken to comply with the provisions of The Church Insurance Company Warranty for Sexual Misconduct: (Check all that apply.)

\_\_\_\_\_ At its meeting of (date) \_\_\_\_\_, the Vestry affirmed the diocesan policy manual, "Sexual Misconduct: Policies and Prevention," as the policy of this [parish] [congregation].

The diocesan policy manual has been distributed to the following persons. Each of these persons has signed a statement that he or she has read and understands the policy. The signed statements are on file in the parish for the following persons:

- \_\_\_\_\_ all members of the Vestry
- \_\_\_\_\_ all clergy serving the parish
- \_\_\_\_\_ all employees of the parish
- \_\_\_\_\_ all volunteers who supervise or chaperone children/youth activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ all lay pastoral and spiritual care givers

\_\_\_\_\_ Background checks have been made of all clergy, all employees, volunteers who regularly supervise children/youth activities, and those Church School teachers for whom a check is required by the policy. Records of these background checks have been placed in a secure file in the parish.

\_\_\_\_\_ Within 6 months, all employees, volunteers who supervise children/youth activities, and those Church School teachers for whom training is required by the policy have attended a minimum of three hours of training on issues of child sexual abuse in church settings; or have received an equivalent level of training elsewhere that has been accepted by the Diocese.

Signature of Rector \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print or Type Name and Title

RETURN FORM TO THE BISHOP'S OFFICE BY MARCH 1 OF EACH YEAR.  
5220 Lover's Lane, LL 100  
Portage, MI 49002

F8

# General Convention Resolutions on Child Sexual Abuse

## Resolution X031, House of Bishops Letter on Child Sexual Abuse 2003

Topic/Title: Procedural: Pastoral Letter

Proposer: Ken Price

### *A Pastoral Letter From the Bishops of the Episcopal Church*

*To be read or cause to be distributed in every parish, mission, preaching station, and church-related institution which works with children and youth.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We your bishops are steadfastly committed to seeing that the Episcopal Church is a community of safety and health for all people. The Body of Christ, the Church, must be a place where adults, children, and young people find the love and blessing of God, and where no one might be hurt and where their hurts may be healed. We are all aware of the reports in the media, during the past year and more, of incidents of sexual misconduct in churches. Many of these tragedies have involved children and young people. While the Roman Catholic Church has most often been mentioned in news reports and accusations, the rest of the Church and many secular agencies have also been caught up in trying to address the damage done to our children by sexual predators. The Episcopal Church is not immune to this scourge in our society and we must respond to it honestly and forthrightly. Our Church has repeatedly upheld our mandate to be a haven of safety for all. The Scriptures teach us that every human being is made in the image of God; and our Lord enjoins us to receive and serve the least among us as we would receive and serve him. The mandates of our baptismal covenant include seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, striving for justice and peace for all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

Because of these mandates of love, respect, service, and justice, we have acknowledged our obligation to articulate clear standards about sexual harassment and misconduct, and to ensure that all our work and ministry is guided by them. We have been committed to sexual conduct training and abuse prevention for all our clergy and lay leaders. We have been clear that exploitation and abusiveness are always unacceptable in our common life. We have made efforts to become aware of the spiritual and emotional damage that is done by sexual misconduct, and to do our best to guarantee that none who come to us will suffer such harm. In spite of our best efforts, it is sad when we discover that we have not done enough.

While we were in conference together at Kanuga, North Carolina in the spring, many of us had the opportunity to learn more about pedophilia, a form of predatory sexual behavior that has caused untold harm in our society and in the Body of Christ. It is especially important that we as a church focus on understanding and preventing pedophilia. While we need to be aware that pedophilia is a reality in our society, which can be manifest in the church, we must be very clear about the nature of this tragic problem. Pedophilia is pervasive; one in eight males and one in four females will be molested before they reach the age of eighteen. Of reported cases in the general population, sixty percent (60%) of abusers are known to their victims, thirty percent (30%) are family members or relatives, and ten percent (10%) are strangers. We must be aware that the Church is a community which offers predators the opportunity to become known and trusted by parents and their children. We also know that offenders are predominantly male and heterosexual.

We must take great care not to equate pedophilia with homosexuality in our minds or our conversation, and we must never assume that only men molest children in this way.

What we have learned most recently about the repetitive nature of pedophilia makes it imperative that we take very clear steps together to do the screening necessary to ensure that our children encounter God's love among us, and that we do all in our power to protect them from the distorted perceptions of love offered by predators.

In a Mind of The House resolution passed at Kanuga in March of 2003, we committed ourselves to support the development of church-wide policies to safeguard our children; and until such time as these policies are adopted, to revisit and revise our diocesan policies to ensure that ministries provided to the children among us will be life-giving and free from abusiveness of any kind.

*Among the basic provisions we have committed to implement, delineated in Resolution B008 on the "Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse" adopted at the 74th General Convention in 2003, are:*

- 1. Thorough screening and selection of clergy, lay employees and volunteers who work with children and youth;**
- 2. Articulation of clear behavioral standards for interactions between clergy, lay employees, volunteers and children and youth**
- 3. Careful, continuous monitoring of all programs and interactions involving children and youth;**
- 4. Provision for education and training of clergy, lay employees and volunteers for work with children and youth; and**
- 5. Guidelines for responding to concerns about behavior or allegations of abuse.**

In addition we asked the Presiding Bishop to create a working group from among our members to partner with the Church Pension Group, the Church Insurance Corporation and other agencies and appropriate organizations to develop the materials necessary to provide the Church with consistent expectations and standards.

We realize that in many of our congregations, persons who offer to take on ministries with children and youth are a blessing to an understaffed education or formation program for children or youth. The overwhelming majority are trustworthy and caring persons whose ministry will bear great good fruit.

But we must acknowledge that there are times when predators use the church as an opportunity for sexual abuse of children and adolescents who can suffer severe spiritual, emotional, and sometimes physical damage as a result. In response to such times we are called to acknowledge two truths: that human sin and failure are very real, and that God's grace, mercy and power are always strong enough to heal and transform our pain.

We have no intention to call our members to suspicion and mistrust. We do recognize the need to call our members beyond the naiveté of unquestioning confidence and into the care and discipline which must characterize our choices where children are concerned. Jesus called us to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves. In the case of pedophilia, our consistency in carefully screening, choosing and training all who work with children and youth will serve to allay any concerns about favoritism or carelessness, prohibiting those who have harmed children from ministries involving children, while providing the ability to firmly guide those who might harm children into other areas of ministry which serve the Church and contribute to our mission.

Some helpful materials will be available through your diocesan office by the first of November. We ask that as you make use of them you will remember the challenge our Lord provided to his followers, "unless you become as children you cannot enter the kingdom of God." We renew our commitment to ensure that our church is a community of love and care for every person. We ask that



you join us in doing all in our power to see that all our members find among us a safe place where they can be open and trusting and able to know the reconciling love of God in Christ that makes all things new.

## A Collect 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 Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (BCP 829)*

Bishops of the Episcopal Church  
Gathered at General Convention, Minneapolis, MN  
August 6, 2003, The Feast of the Transfiguration

**G: Resolution B008, Protection of Children and Youth From Abuse, 74th General Convention (2003)**  
**Topic/Title: Children: Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse**  
Proposer: The Rt. Rev. Thomas Clark Ely (Vermont)

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church *recommit itself to the vision of the role of children in the church as articulated in A Children's Charter for the Church* as adopted by the 72nd General Convention in 1997. The Charter, among other things, calls the church to:

- Receive, nurture and treasure each child as a gift from God;
- Love, shelter, protect and defend children within its own community and in the world, especially those who are abused, neglected or in danger; and
- Advocate for the integrity of childhood and the dignity of all children at every level of our religious, civic and political structures;

and be it further

Resolved, That this Church acknowledges that the times and circumstances demand that the church articulate a clear and firm commitment to the safety of all, especially children; that we support this commitment with clear and firm policies and procedures for the well being of all; and that we commit this Church to being and becoming a place where children and youth are safe, especially from abuse and neglect;

and be it further

Resolved, That each diocese develop and adopt policies for the protection of children and youth from abuse that address the following:

1. A screening and selection process for all clergy, lay employees and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
  - a. A written application
  - b. A public records check
  - c. An interview
  - d. Reference checks
  - e. A general provision that volunteers not work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months

2. The articulation of behavioral standards for clergy, lay employees, and volunteers working with children or youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
- a. Respect for the privacy and dignity of children and youth by not putting them in inappropriate unmonitored one-to-one situations
  - b. Age-appropriate arrangements for sleeping, bathing, dressing, or showering
  - c. The prohibition of dating, romantic involvements, or sexual contact with a child or youth
  - d. The prohibition of any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program
  - e. Guidelines for physical contact and expressions of affection that define appropriate and inappropriate behaviors
  - f. The prohibition of discussing their own sexual activities and fantasies with children or youth
  - g. The prohibition of the non-sacramental use, possession, distribution or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs

3. The monitoring of programs and interaction with children and youth.

Dioceses are encouraged to consider:

- a. The prohibition of the development or initiation of new activities for children or youth without prior approval from the appropriate decision-maker(s)
- b. The recognition that the ordinary standard is the presence of two unrelated adults for any activities involving children or youth

4. Education and training. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:

- a. Child abuse prevention for clergy, lay employees and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth
- b. Specialized training for those who recruit, screen or select persons to work with children or youth

5. Guidelines for responding to concerns. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:

- a. Inappropriate behavior with children or youth
- b. Violation of policies for the protection of children or youth
- c. Suspected abuse of children or youth; and be it further

Resolved, That each diocese shall report to the House of Bishops Committee on Pastoral Development prior to the Spring 2006 meeting of the House of Bishops with a copy of its adopted and implemented policy and an evaluation of the history of its use. A summary report shall be made to the House of Bishops Spring 2006 meeting and a full report made to the 75th General Convention.

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