



★ The Episcopal Diocese *of Texas*

Safeguarding God's People

Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults

[epicenter.org/for-leaders/ministry-integrity-and-wellness/
safeguarding](https://epicenter.org/for-leaders/ministry-integrity-and-wellness/safeguarding)

2025



★ The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Office of the Bishop

Dear People of the Diocese of Texas,

The Church is called to be the body of Christ in the world, so our relationships in the Church should always strive to manifest God's grace. Our ministry together calls for deeply respecting one another and uniting to prevent abuse, exploitation, and neglect, particularly of the most vulnerable among us. Toward this end, policies draw healthy boundaries around our interactions and teach us how to respond when those boundaries have been crossed.

It's a changing world, and we continue to grow as a diocese in our understanding of what it means to provide nurturing and respectful environments for people in all their diversity, whether we gather in person or virtually. One thing is certain; we are called to love as Christ loved us. Through our daily awareness and practice of Safeguarding, we offer communities where people of all ages can know that they are valued and loved. In a world too frequently marred by hatred and division, I can't imagine a more precious gift. I am deeply grateful for your partnership in this holy work.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Andrew Doyle".

The Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle
IX Bishop of Texas

Why We Have These Policies

The final promise of our Baptismal Covenant asks us to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.” Diocesan Safeguarding policies give life to that baptismal promise. The Episcopal Diocese of Texas is committed to maintaining an environment free of abuse, exploitation, and harassment in its congregations, schools, and other organizations.

Application of These Policies

These policies apply to all congregations, schools, and other organizations that operate under the authority of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

If ministry involves both a Pastoral Relationship and involvement with a Vulnerable Adult, the rules for both situations will apply.

These policies address ministry with adults. Ministry with children and youth are covered by *Safeguarding God’s Children: Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth (2025)*. These policies are in addition to *Safeguarding God’s People in the Workplace: Policies Prohibiting Sexual Harassment (2025)*.

Responsibility for Implementation

The heads of congregations, the heads of schools, executive directors, and any other persons serving in equivalent roles in diocesan organizations are directly responsible to the Bishop for the implementation and administration of the policies and procedures outlined in *Safeguarding God’s People: Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults*.

The implementation and administration of these policies and procedures may be delegated to other staff members or volunteers, but *the ultimate responsibility may not be delegated*. Supervision of these administrative processes by the heads of congregations, schools, and other organizations are required to ensure appropriate compliance and confidentiality. Further instructions on the administration of these policies can be found on the EDOT website.

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I. Definitions

A. Pastoral Relationships

A Pastoral Relationship is any relationship:

- Between a member of the clergy and any individual 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
- 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.

B. Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable Adults are adults who are infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness, or disability, including:

- Adults who are ministered to in their homes by lay or ordained ministers.
- Adults who are wholly or partially dependent upon one or more 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.
- Adults who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lacks agency in a Pastoral Relationship, as in the wake of a death or job loss. Such dependency may be temporary.

C. Supervisors

Persons who have oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or personnel in a ministry program. Examples include Heads of Organizations, choir directors, directors of religious education, and the directors of commissioned ministries like the Daughters of the King and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew.

D. Decision-Makers

All members of decision-making bodies who have the authority to (i) approve the creation of ministries, programs, congregational activities, or policies involving Pastoral Relationships or ministry to Vulnerable Adults; (ii) appoint or approve persons in a Pastoral Relationship or persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults; or (iii) influence the salary or benefits of employees.

E. Terms

Abuse: Abuse includes **physical abuse** (non-accidental injury intentionally inflicted upon a child, youth, or vulnerable adult), **sexual abuse** (any sexual contact, indecency, or activity of a sexual nature with a minor, or vulnerable adult), and **emotional abuse** (mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's, youth's, or vulnerable adults growth, development, or psychological functioning).

Adult: Anyone who is 18 years or older, not in high school, and not a Vulnerable Adult.

Bullying: Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbally, psychologically, or physically.

Clergy in Charge: A member of the clergy who is in charge of a program involving Persons in a Pastoral Relationship or a ministry to Vulnerable Adults. In a congregation, this is the head of the congregation unless the head has appointed another clergy staff member as the clergy in charge of a program.

Diocese: The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Elder Abuse: An intentional or negligent act by any person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to an older adult. It includes physical abuse; financial fraud, scams and exploitation; caregiver neglect or abandonment; psychological abuse; and sexual abuse (involuntary or nonconsensual sexual conduct that would constitute an offense under Texas law).

Head of Organization: The canonical head of a congregation or the chief executive officer of an organization, such as a head of school or executive director. In the case of a ministry directly overseen by the diocese, the Head of Organization is the Bishop Diocesan.

Intake Officer: The person(s) designated by the 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*.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to people whose sexual orientation differs from the heterosexual majority or whose gender identity or expression varies from their sex assigned at birth. The "+" is an effort to include gender non-binary and other gender identities that do not conform to traditional gender categories. This is an evolving term.

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. Under Texas law, all adults are mandatory reporters of suspected abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of adults with disabilities under Texas law or of adults who are over 65.

Missional Communities: Spiritual and relational outposts for those that cannot, or will not, participate in a traditional expression of church.

Neglect: The failure to provide for a Vulnerable Adult's basic needs and/or medical needs or to take action to protect a Vulnerable Adult from harm.

Off-Site: Any location other than the facility of the diocese or diocesan organization in which the ministry is based.

Organizations: All institutions authorized by the diocese or its congregations, including fellowships, missional communities, college ministries, schools, camps, retreat centers, and social service organizations. The term may also include the diocese when the reference is to a ministry directly overseen by the diocese.

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

Programs: Official activities and programs sponsored or chartered by the diocese and its organizations.

Qualified Adult: A Qualified Adult is an adult who is (i) screened and trained in Safeguarding to work with children and youth, (ii) not a Vulnerable Adult, and (iii) at least two years older than the oldest participant in the program.

Responsible Person: The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program. Such person must be (i) a qualified adult who has been trained and screened under these policies and (ii) physically present during the event.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual misconduct includes sexual exploitation, which is the development or attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a person in a ministerial position, lay or ordained, and an individual with whom he or she has a pastoral relationship. (See *Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults.*)

Sexual Harassment: Includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. (See *Policies Prohibiting Sexual Harassment.*)

Sexual Misconduct: Is defined as any sexual or sexualized activity toward another person in a pastoral relationship, irrespective of age or marital status. This definition includes sexual abuse of a minor (under 18 years of age) as set forth more specifically in these policies.

Title IV: A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability, and ecclesiastical discipline. *Canons 3 and 4 of Title IV* set out the standards for members of the clergy and can be found in the *Appendix*.

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

Travel: An event for Vulnerable Adults that involves spending the night in multiple locations over more than two calendar days

Warden: Includes the senior warden, junior warden, or bishop's warden of a congregation.

II. Standards of Behavior

In addition to the policies for creating a safe environment found in *Section IV*, the following policies govern behavior in Pastoral Relationships and in ministry to Vulnerable Adults.

A. Conduct in Pastoral Relationships and/or Ministry to Vulnerable Adults

1. Examples of **inappropriate conduct** in Pastoral Relationships or when ministering to a Vulnerable Adult include:

a. Physical Contact

- Any form of unwanted affection
- Surprise or sudden touching, or touching or hugging from behind
- Full frontal hugs, bear hugs, or lengthy embraces
- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas
- Lying down or sleeping beside another
- Massages
- Patting others on their thigh, knee, or leg
- Tickling or wrestling
- Kisses on the mouth
- Showing affection while in isolated areas

b. Verbal/Electronic Communications

- Comments/compliments that relate to a person's body or appearance, or that could be viewed as sexually suggestive.
- Repeated nonessential communications, e-mails, or texts, especially those that contain personal disclosures or solicitations of an intimate or secret relationship.
- Providing personal access, such as a personal e-mail address or cell phone number, that is not generally available to others.
- Possessing, using, sharing, or referring to any sexually oriented materials, such as magazines or videos, whether it occurs on or off the property of the organization.
- Discussing sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing the use of sexually oriented or explicit material.
- Inappropriate interaction on social media.

c. Giving or Receiving Gifts

- Giving gifts other than token gifts that are integral to the ministry.

- Giving money other than money distributed from a monitored discretionary fund or emergency assistance fund.
- Requesting money, personal loans, or gifts.
- Receiving gifts other than token gifts.

d. **Other Interactions**

- Using the Pastoral Relationship or relationship with a Vulnerable Adult to meet one's own needs.
- Any attempt to influence unduly the person who is receiving ministry.
- Agreeing to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of the person who is receiving ministry.
- Agreeing to be given a Power of Attorney or Healthcare Power of Attorney by someone who is receiving ministry.
- Frequent or private meetings after hours or away from church property.
- Seeking excessive private time.
- Unwillingness to cease otherwise appropriate physical conduct after learning it is unwelcome.

2. Examples of **Appropriate Physical Contact** in Pastoral Relationships or by persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults **when they are welcomed by the recipient** include:

- Handshakes
- Brief hugs
- Holding hands during prayer
- "Laying on of hands" and/or anointing in appropriate pastoral contexts
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Touching hands, arms, shoulders
- Holding hands when a person is ill or upset

If a Person in a Pastoral Relationship or a person ministering to Vulnerable Adults is unsure about whether any type of appropriate touch is welcome, the person should ask permission and wait for a response before making physical contact.

B. Sexual Exploitation Prohibited

1. A **member of the clergy** is prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved or having sexual contact with
 - an employee, volunteer, student, or counselee of the member of the clergy or of the same congregation as the member of the clergy,
 - any person in the same congregation as the member of the clergy, or
 - a person with whom the member of the clergy has a Pastoral Relationship.

This prohibition does not include a relationship that was established before the member of the clergy was associated with the congregation attended by such person.

2. A **lay person** is prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved or having sexual contact with anyone with whom that person has a Pastoral Relationship.
3. **Any person who ministers to a Vulnerable Adult** is prohibited from dating, becoming romantically involved or having sexual contact with such Vulnerable Adult.
4. **No person may enter into or attempt to enter into a dating, romantic, or sexual relationship** with anyone who is **supervised** by them or **whose salary and/or benefits such person** (individually or as a member of a decision-making board or vestry) **has the power to influence** for so long as such person remains in the supervisory or decision-making relationship.
5. **No person employed as a staff member in a college ministry** of the diocese **may enter into or attempt to enter into a dating, romantic, or sexual relationship with a student** who participates in the college ministry.
6. The prohibitions against romantic and sexual relationships in this section include attempting to develop any such relationship, even when the attempt is unsuccessful.
7. Members of the clergy are also subject to the provisions regarding dating and sexual relationships in the diocesan [Clergy Manual](#) and in Title IV of The Episcopal Church.

C. Other Restrictions Regarding Vulnerable Adults

Persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults shall not:

- Provide Vulnerable Adults with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography.
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a Vulnerable Adult.
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse of legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a Vulnerable Adult.
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit others to engage in illegal behavior.
- Engage in any illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with a Vulnerable Adult.
- Any gifts, including token gifts, received from a Vulnerable Adult to a person ministering to the Vulnerable Adult must be reported to the Supervisor, or in the case of a head of a congregation, to a Warden.

III. General Policies for Creating Safe Environments

A. Discrimination and Harassment

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas prohibits discrimination or harassment toward any person based on race,

color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, or disability. Violations of this policy must be reported under the provisions of *Section VII*.

B. Inclusiveness

The diocese promotes communities where all persons feel fully welcome and included.

1. In planning programs and activities, care should be given **not to exclude** persons without a purpose that is closely tied to the program or activity.
2. All spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be **physically accessible** to everyone to the extent possible.
3. Reasonable **alternative arrangements** shall be made to address the safety and comfort of persons who express the need or desire for additional privacy in restroom use or other private activities.
 - a. Such persons shall be offered reasonable alternative arrangements such as use of a single-stall restroom, a private area for changing clothes, or a separate changing schedule.
 - b. To the extent possible, any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the ability to keep confidential the need for privacy, if so desired.
 - c. This provision expressly includes requests made by persons whose gender identity does not conform to traditional gender categories. Such persons should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.
 - d. Safe bathroom/shower facilities are to be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned for the use of a single facility). Violations of this policy must be reported under the provisions of *Section VII*.

C. Violence and Bullying

1. **Violence.** No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time at activities.
2. **Bullying.** Bullying is manifested in various ways: abusive language, offensive name calling, acts or threats of physical abuse, vandalism, theft, or destruction of property. Bullying of any kind, including bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identification or expression, inhibits a person's ability to feel safe in our organizations. Bullying in any form violates a person's sense of worth and immeasurable value to God and will not be tolerated in organizations of the diocese. Personnel must report incidents of bullying under the provisions of *Section VII*.

D. Weapons

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas does not permit any person, including members of the clergy, staff, students, volunteers, and visitors, to carry a weapon in our churches, congregations, schools, or

organizations. This prohibition applies even if the person is licensed to carry a concealed weapon under Texas laws. Law enforcement officers are the only exception to this policy. There are three ways to give legal notice that the property is a gun free zone: (1) signs posted at entrances, (2) a printed card or other written communication and (3) oral communications. Notification details can be found here: [Gun Law and Policy](#). Personnel must report violations of this policy under the provisions of *Section IX*.

E. Virtual Ministry, Social Media, and other Digital Communications

All digital communications must comply with Safeguarding policies. Ministry use of virtual platforms (such as Zoom) and social media is evolving, and protocols should be revisited as technology and platforms change. When questions arise about applying Safeguarding policies to a particular technology or platform, consult with the Safeguarding Minister.

1. **Implement consistent privacy settings** that respect personal boundaries with all participants across all platforms.
 - a. Remember that privacy settings do not ensure confidentiality.
 - b. Each organization should develop and publish agreed upon privacy settings that staff and volunteers will use and make that information available to members of the community.
 - c. For virtual meetings or classroom forums, utilize passwords and/or waiting rooms that require the facilitator to admit each participant.
2. **Be accountable.**
 - a. Ministry presence on social media platforms should have more than one adult administrator.
 - b. The Head of Organization and Supervisor should know how social media and virtual platforms are used in ministry. If the ministry involves children or youth, parents must also be informed of the way that social media and virtual platforms are used in the ministry.
 - c. All virtual meetings or classes involving children, youth, or Vulnerable Adults should be scheduled in advance on a calendar that is shared, together with log-in information and passwords, with the Supervisor and, when applicable, with parents or caregivers.
 - d. Consider recording all events that are held on virtual platforms. Before recording children or minors, obtain parental approval (*See Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth, Section IV.A.2*)
 - e. Any digital communications or posted material on online groups that raise pastoral concerns or are of a potentially harmful nature (such as bullying, abuse, etc.) must be removed but should be saved and disclosed to the Supervisor and Head of Organization and, as appropriate, with parents or caregivers.
 - f. Obtain parental approval before posting images or recordings of children or youth on social media or websites. (*See Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth, Section IV.A.2*)
 - g. Any inappropriate material posted in online groups must be removed but should be saved

- by the administrator and reported to the Supervisor to be addressed.
- h. Frequently review the content and photos posted on social media platforms and websites.
3. **Social media is rarely appropriate for a sensitive matter** that requires pastoral care and attention. In those instances, a face-to-face meeting or phone call is preferable as it allows for an assessment of tone and demeanor to help evaluate the situation and determine both urgency and appropriateness of a response.
4. In group communication and on virtual meeting platforms, **create covenants** that address:
- Appropriate and inappropriate language and behavior (sexual, profane, or derogatory language, and any sort of bullying are forbidden)
 - Who may join and/or view a group activity
 - Content that may be posted/published on the site or page
 - How images will be taken and shared
 - Consequences for breaking the covenant, which may include removal from group
 - Mandatory rules for reporting misconduct
5. Consider **disabling private chat features** on virtual platforms when private conversations are not necessary to the purpose of the gathering.
6. **When video chatting or meeting on virtual platforms involving video:**
- Be mindful of appropriate attire and surroundings that are visible to the viewer.
 - One-on-one video chatting or meetings should follow the same Safeguarding guidelines as when meeting in person.
7. **Use prudent judgment in the timing of digital communications** to maintain appropriate boundaries and avoid the appearance of impropriety.
8. Laws regarding **mandated reporting of suspected abuse, exploitation, or neglect** of children, youth, elders, and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world just as they do in the physical world. Report suspected abuse to the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sections/default.aspx?id=1&id2=10&id3=100): 800-252-5400. The rules of reporting found in Section VIII of these policies also apply.

IV. Monitoring and Supervising Pastoral Relationships and Ministry to Vulnerable Adults

A. Prior Approval and List of Activities or Programs

Approval of all new activities or programs that involve Pastoral Relationships or ministry to Vulnerable Adults must be obtained from the head of the organization before the activity is to begin. Requests to

develop new activities or programs should be submitted in writing. An **up-to-date list of persons** who have Pastoral Relationships or who are appointed to minister to Vulnerable Adults must be maintained by the organization.

B. Appointing a Responsible Person

For any program or event designed for Vulnerable Adults, whether held in person or on a virtual platform, a **Responsible Person (as defined in Section I.E.) shall be appointed** by the Supervisor. The “on site” requirement is met in an online gathering by being present on the virtual platform.

C. Creating Safe Space for Pastoral Relationships and/or Ministry to Vulnerable Adults

Ministry involving Pastoral Relationships or Vulnerable Adults must, whenever possible, take place in **visible spaces with appropriate furnishings where casual monitoring by others is convenient**, such as in areas where other persons are visible or work nearby.

- If the ministry setting is not out in the open, there must be windows or open doors that are unobstructed by blinds, furniture, curtains, or posters so that the space is always subject to casual monitoring.
- It is preferable that the location conveys safety and comfort without the use of couches, loveseats, or other furniture that encourages close seating. For example, chairs positioned at a 45-degree angle from each other create a good area for conversation.
- A sense of privacy can be maintained by arranging the furniture so that persons who provide ministry are always visible, but the person receiving ministry does not feel exposed.
- Artwork should be tasteful and inoffensive.
- If the space has a private entrance, the staff should be informed when it is being used for ministry involving Pastoral Relationships or Vulnerable Adults.
- If meeting virtually using an online platform, any virtual background or any artwork or other materials visible in the background should be tasteful and inoffensive.

D. Avoiding Appearance of Impropriety

Persons in Pastoral Relationships and persons who minister to Vulnerable Adults are required to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries and to **avoid even the appearance of impropriety**.

- Whenever possible, one-on-one meetings should occur during regularly scheduled hours, by appointment, on the organization’s premises, or in other appropriate professional settings when others are present in the building.
- When it is not possible, care should be taken to notify the appropriate person or persons of the time and place of the meeting.
- When meeting virtually using an online platform, the meeting should take place during normal hours of social interaction, and the appropriate person or persons should be notified of the time of the meeting.

E. Visiting Vulnerable Adults

Ministry to Vulnerable Adults often involves visits to hospitals, private homes, and residential facilities, which calls for particular care and supervision.

1. When visiting a Vulnerable Adult outside of the guidelines described in *IV.D* above, **avoid situations that may compromise the Vulnerable Adult's privacy or appear inappropriate**, including:
 - Visiting behind closed bedroom doors
 - Sitting on the bed of the Vulnerable Adult
 - Visiting a Vulnerable Adult while they are not fully clothed
2. **Private Residence:** When visiting a Vulnerable Adult in a private residence, it is recommended to visit in teams of two or more. When only one minister is present, it is recommended that a member of the Vulnerable Adult's household be present (which may include a paid caregiver). If that is impractical or impossible, the minister should notify the Supervisor of such visit in advance and document the time, duration of visit, and the general matters discussed. In the case of a visit from the Head of Organization, it is recommended that a Warden or staff member be notified of the visit in advance.
3. **Residential Facility:** When visiting a Vulnerable Adult in a residential facility, the visitor should inform the facility staff of the visitor's presence. If the visit takes place out of sight of staff, staff should be notified in advance and informed when the meeting is concluded. The door to the Vulnerable Adult's room must remain open during the visit. Visitors should be mindful that LGBTQ+ residents may not feel comfortable expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity in the facility.

F. First Aid and Medications

- a. Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with Vulnerable Adults.
- b. A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location for all onsite or offsite events for Vulnerable Adults.
- c. If a Vulnerable Adult requires assistance with medications of any type, then 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.
- d. All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to Vulnerable Adults requiring assistance with medications shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon.

- e. Only the Responsible Person, or the Responsible Person's adult designee, shall administer medications.

G. Off-Site Visits, Events, and Programs for Vulnerable Adults

Off-site programs, trips, and events may present additional challenges for safe and healthy ministry with Vulnerable Adults. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site. In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the Responsible Person should contact the Supervisor for guidance. Permission and documentation must be obtained as described below.

1. Prior Approval

Prior approval of any offsite event must be given by the Head of Organization and one of the following: (i) the governing body of the organization, (ii) the executive committee of the governing body, or (iii) in the case of a congregation, a Warden of the congregation. If the Head of Organization is directly supervising the event, then prior approval must also be given by the [Safeguarding Minister](#).

These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, and the event is a cook-out, progressive dinner, etc.

2. Registration, Waivers, Release Forms, and Permission Slips

All signatures required below are to be made by the Vulnerable Adults, or if the Vulnerable Adult is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then the signature of that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required. Digital signatures are acceptable if noted on the form.

- a. All participants shall complete and sign a registration, waiver, and release before participating in any program (these may cover a program year). Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical information.
- b. Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site.
- c. Permission slips shall be provided and signed for each event.
- d. Prior permission is required for an individual to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media.

3. Transportation

- a. For events that originate and/or terminate at the organization's facility, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license. The organization must keep this information on file, along with contact information for each driver. It is recommended but not required that each driver also have satisfactory DMV records' check on file with the organization.

- b. A list of those approved to provide transportation to Vulnerable Adults shall be maintained in the office of the organization.
- c. Anyone being transported must consent to such transportation beforehand. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then prior approval by that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required.
- d. All drivers and riders must comply with state and local laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.

V. Safeguarding Screening and Training

A. Safeguarding Qualifications

1. The **Safeguarding Record Systems (SRS) of the diocese will be used to obtain, track, and retain all required documentation** for screening and training, except for clergy screening (which follows a different process outside of SRS) and except as provided in *Section V.B.*
 - Screening and training for **lay persons** are managed by the Safeguarding Records Administrator (SRA) of the organization in which they serve.
 - **Clergy** screening is managed by the Bishop's Office, and clergy training is managed by the Safeguarding Office.

For an Overview of Safeguarding Screening and Training, see Appendix ii.

2. The **screening and training** for persons who volunteer or are employed in an organization **depend upon the position** or positions in which they serve. See *Appendix iii, Safeguarding Requirements by Position*. For more information about training, see *Appendix ii: Overview of Safeguarding Screening and Training*.
3. The **Safeguarding thresholds for lay persons** to work to serve in a ministry with Vulnerable Adults, or minister in a Pastoral Relationship are described below. Any exceptions to these requirements must be approved by the Safeguarding Office.
 - a. **No volunteer or employee will be allowed to engage in a ministry with Vulnerable Adults or minister in a Pastoral Relationship until all screening requirements for the person's position(s) have been completed and approved** in SRS or under an Independent Screening Agreement.
 - b. For the volunteer or employee to be allowed **to continue working** in the above capacity, the **screening and training requirements must be completed within 45 days** from when they were initiated.
4. **Safeguarding thresholds for members of the clergy** are found in *Appendix ii, Overview of Safeguarding Screening and Training*.

B. Screening and Training Exceptions

1. **Independent Screening Agreement.** When an organization partners with a vendor or non-Episcopal entity partners to provide services for Vulnerable Adults or involving Pastoral Relationships, the vendor/non-Episcopal partner must comply with the Safeguarding policies and requirements of the diocese, including screening and training. A vendor or non-Episcopal partner may enter into an annual Independent Screening Agreement for Vendor with the Safeguarding Office that allows employees and volunteers to be screened outside of SRS, provided that their screening requirements meet or exceed diocesan requirements. **Anyone screened under an Independent Screening Agreement must still satisfy all Safeguarding training requirements through SRS.**
2. **Safeguarding Office Approved.** In special circumstances, the Safeguarding Minister may approve in writing specific screening and/or training requirements for individuals, including professionals or student interns who partner with an organization to provide supervised medical or counseling services.

VI. Reporting

A. Suspected Sexual Exploitation or the Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult

1. Anyone who has reason to suspect that **Sexual Exploitation** or any **abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult has taken place within a facility or program of the diocese or an organization** should immediately inform:
 - In the case of the **diocese**, the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary (see *Section VI.C* below).
 - In the case of an organization, the Responsible Person, Supervisor, and Head of Organization. In the case of a parish day school, a report must be made to both the head of school and the head of congregation. A report does not need to be made to anyone who is the subject of the complaint. **If the Head of Organization is the subject of the complaint, then the report must be made directly to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary** (see *Section VI.C* below).
 - Anytime that a **member of the clergy is suspected** of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation, an **Intake Officer** (see *Section VI.C* below).
2. In addition, any adult who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult with disabilities under Texas law or of an adult who is over 65 has taken place is required to contact the police or the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (1-800-252-5400, or online at [texasabusehotline.org](https://www.texasabusehotline.org)). TDFPS does not accept emailed reports. Under Texas law, all persons are Mandated Reporters. In case of an emergency, call 911.
3. The **Head of Organization** who has received a report under this section **shall immediately inform**

the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary (see *Section VI. C. & D.* below) so that immediate and proper steps may be taken, including providing appropriate pastoral care for affected persons.

4. In the case of a safeguarding violation in the context of campus ministry, there may be additional reporting requirements to the University. Contact the Safeguarding Minister in this case.

B. Behaviors Inconsistent with Policies

1. Policy violations that do not rise to the level of Sexual Exploitation or the abuse, neglect or exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult, as defined in these policies, **must first be reported to the Head of Organization**) or, in the case of the diocese, to the Safeguarding Minister. If the Head of Organization is the subject of the complaint, the policy violation must be reported to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary. (See *Section VI.C* below)
2. **If the policy violation continues after a report has been made to the head**, the person must also report such policy violations to the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary.
3. The **Head of Organization** who has knowledge of a policy violation **must inform the Safeguarding Minister or Canon to the Ordinary**.

C. Diocesan Contacts/Intake Officers

The Rev. Canon Sarah Gaventa, Canon for Wellness and Care/Safeguarding Minister
sgaventa@epicenter.org or report@epicenter.org, 510 Rathervue PL, Austin, TX 78705
512.609.1876 or 800.947.0580 Secure Fax: 866.241.7050

The Rev. Canon Christine Faulstich, Canon to the Ordinary
cfaulstich@epicenter.org or report@epicenter.org, 1225 Texas Ave. Houston, TX 77002
713.520.6444 or 800.318.4452 Secure Fax: 713.521.2218

D. Methods for Reporting

Reports (other than in *Section A.2.* above) may be made by telephone, email, fax, letter or in person. Reporting misconducting may also be submitted at report@epicenter.org (For assistance regarding what information to include in the report, see [Confidential Notice of Concern.](#))

E. Reporting Protection

No one who reports a violation of these policies will be retaliated against or adversely treated because he or she made a complaint.

F. Investigation and Enforcement

All complaints and reports will be investigated. The diocese may remove from ministry or put on administrative leave any individual who is the subject of a complaint of Sexual Exploitation or of the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult while an investigation is pending. If the investigation substantiates that the complaint is valid, immediate corrective action designed to stop the misconduct and prevent its recurrence will be taken. Such corrective action may include discipline, up to and including discharge or dismissal of the offending person.

G. Local Resources for Response

The diocese and each congregation and other organization shall provide a copy of these policies to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate these policies, along with contact information for:

- any Responsible Person, Program Supervisor, Clergy in Charge, Head of Organization
- the Safeguarding Minister, Canon to the Ordinary, and Intake Officers, and
- the Texas Department of Family Protective Services.

Appendix i

Title IV Accountability and Standards of Conduct for Clergy

Title IV, CANON 3: Of Accountability

Sec. 1. A Member of the Clergy shall be subject to proceedings under this Title for:

- (a) knowingly violating or attempting to violate, directly or through the acts of another person, the Constitution or Canons of the Church or of any Diocese;
- (b) failing without good cause to cooperate with any investigation or proceeding conducted under authority of this Title;
- (c) intentionally and maliciously bringing a false accusation or knowingly providing false testimony or false evidence in any investigation or proceeding under this Title (*added in 2018*);
- (d) intentionally misrepresenting or omitting any material fact in applying for ordination, reception from another church, or nomination as a bishop (*added in 2018*); or
- (e) discharging, demoting or retaliating against anyone who opposes misconduct or reports information regarding an Offense or participates in any Title IV proceeding (*IV.3.1*),

Sec. 2. A Member of the Clergy shall be accountable for any breach of the Standards of Conduct set forth in Canon IV.4.

Sec. 3. In order for any conduct or condition to be the subject of the provisions of this Title, the Offense complained of must violate applicable provisions of *Canon IV.3* or *IV.4* and must be material and substantial or of clear and weighty importance to the ministry of the Church.

Title IV, CANON 4: Of Standards of Conduct

Sec. 1. In exercising his or her ministry, a Member of the Clergy shall:

- (a) respect and preserve confidences of others except that pastoral, legal or moral obligations of

ministry may require disclosure of those confidences other than Privileged Communications;

(b) conform to the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer;

(c) abide by the promises and vows made when ordained;

(d) abide by the requirements of any applicable Accord or Order, or any applicable Pastoral Direction, restriction on ministry, or placement on Administrative Leave issued under Canon IV.7;

(e) safeguard the property and funds of the Church and Community;

(f) report to the Intake Officer all matters which may constitute an Offense as defined in *Canon IV.2* meeting the standards of *Canon IV.3.3*, except for matters disclosed to the Member of Clergy as confessor within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent;

(g) exercise his or her ministry in accordance with applicable provisions of the Constitution and Canons of the Church and of the Diocese, ecclesiastical licensure or commission and Community rule or bylaws;

(h) refrain from:

(1) any act of Sexual Misconduct;

(2) holding and teaching publicly or privately, and advisedly, any Doctrine contrary to that held by the Church;

(3) engaging in any secular employment, calling or business without the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident;

(4) being absent from the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident, except as provided in *Canon III.9.3(e)* for more than two years without the consent of the Bishop Diocesan;

(5) any criminal act that reflects adversely on the Member of the Clergy's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a minister of the Church;

(6) conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation; or

(7) habitual neglect of the exercise of the ministerial office without cause; or habitual neglect of public worship, and of the Holy Communion, according to the order and use of the Church; and

(8) any Conduct Unbecoming a Member of the Clergy.

“Sexual Behavior” Any physical contact, speech or other activity sexual in nature or intended to arouse or gratify sexual desires.

“Sexual Misconduct” Sexual abuse (i.e., sexual behavior with a minor),
Sexual behavior with a person for whom it is unwelcome or does not consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation (*added in 2018*), or
Sexual behavior with an employee, volunteer, student, or counselee of the Clergy Member or in the same congregation as the Clergy Member or a person with whom the Clergy Member has a pastoral relationship.

Appendix ii

Overview of Screening and Training

General Information

- The Safeguarding Record Systems (SRS) of the diocese must be used to obtain, track, and retain all required documentation for screening and training, except as provided in the policies.
- Screening and training of lay persons are managed by the Safeguarding Records Administrator (SRA) of the organization in which they serve.
- Members of the clergy are screened by a separate process outside of SRS and managed by the Bishop's office in Houston. Clergy training is managed by the Safeguarding Office in Austin.
- The diocese no longer "certifies" people separately in Safeguarding God's Children or Safeguarding God's People. When someone has met the screening and training requirements set out in the policies, such person is "qualified" in Safeguarding.

Who Needs Screening and Training

- Volunteers and employees are screened and trained according to the position or positions in which they serve. See *Safeguarding Requirements by Position*.
- Anyone current in screening and training for a position in one organization of the diocese is generally qualified to serve in the same position in another organization of the diocese without further screening or training.
- Anyone screened and trained in "Safe Church, Safe Communities" in another Episcopal diocese will be evaluated by the Safeguarding Office to determine what screening and additional training will be required.

What Is Involved In Screening?

- Unless an organization has an Independent Screening agreement with the Safeguarding Office, adult screening is performed and tracked through SRS.
- Generally, adult screening initially requires:
 - A personal interview
 - An online application and reference checks
 - A Social Security verification and a nationwide sex offender and criminal history background check in any state where the applicant has resided in the past seven years.
- An initial screening is good for five (5) years. Thereafter, a background check must be performed every five (5) years in order for screening to remain current. Generally, personal interviews, applications, and reference checks do not need to be repeated.
- Background checks ordered through SRS are paid for by the diocese.
- Persons under the age of 18 have a separate screening process.

What is Involved in Training?

- At a minimum, training involves watching recorded video courses assigned by the Safeguarding Office and accessed online at Praesidium Academy. See *Help Sheet: Safeguarding Training by Position* Help Sheet.
- In addition, a three (3) hour Live Engagement Training is required for persons who
 - work with or around children,
 - minister to Vulnerable Adults,
 - minister in a Pastoral Relationship,
 - are the Head of Organization,
 - supervise others, OR
 - serve as a Warden in a congregation.

Live Engagement training may be taken either in person or on Zoom. Persons must complete all assigned video courses before taking Live Engagement training.

- Training must be renewed every five (5) years, but not all video courses initially assigned will be required for renewal. Live Engagement training, when required, must be taken every five (5) years.
- Screening requirements are tracked separately from training requirements. Thus, a person whose screening is current in SRS does not need rescreening simply because additional training is required to meet Safeguarding qualifications.

Safeguarding Thresholds

- **No person who has admitted to the sexual abuse of a child or youth or who is known to have a criminal conviction or civil record of child abuse, may be employed or permitted to volunteer to work with or around children or youth in the diocese.**
- A lay volunteer must be known by the leadership of the diocese or organization for at least six (6) months before applying for a position that involves working with or around children and youth, ministry with Vulnerable Adults, or Pastoral Relationships. Any exception must be approved by the [Safeguarding Minister](#).
- Before a lay employee or volunteer is allowed to work with or around children or youth, minister to Vulnerable Adults, or minister in a Pastoral Relationship, such person must have completed the Safeguarding screening requirements. They may continue in their work or ministry only if they complete their training requirements within forty-five (45) days. Any exceptions must be approved by the Safeguarding Office.
- In order to serve as a Qualified Adult under the *Safeguarding God's Children: Policies Protecting Children and Youth*, a lay person must be current in all screening and training requirements.

No member of the clergy (other than a Parent Volunteer under *SGC VII.C.1*) will be allowed to work regularly with or around children or youth until provisionally licensed to work as a member of the clergy in the diocese. For a member of the clergy to continue working with or around children, all screening and training requirements must be completed with 90 days from the start or hire date of the member of the clergy. Persons preparing for ordination are treated as clergy persons for purposes of *Section VI.A.4*.

Appendix iii

Safeguarding by Position

The level of screening and training required of volunteer or employee in an organization depends on the position held by such person in the organization and the ministry or work performed by such person. For details on the training assigned to the categories of positions described below, see *Help Sheet: Safeguarding Training by Position*. Screening and training requires renewal every 5 years.

The categories of positions are:

The level of Safeguarding screening and training required of volunteers and employees in an organization depend upon the positions they occupy and the nature of their ministry or work. These positions are organized by category in the Safeguarding Records System (SRS). Below is a brief description of the requirements for each category, including the level of screening required and whether the training required involves only online modules or both online modules and live Universal Engagement training. A person who moves from one position to another position may require additional screening and/or training. For detailed information on the training assigned to each position, see *Help Sheet: Safeguarding Training by Position*.

The diocese requires that screening and training be renewed every 5 years.

1. Lay Head of/Supervisor/SRA/Coordinator/Trainer

- Includes all lay Heads of Organizations, anyone who supervises another adult, and lay members of a Safeguarding Team (Safeguarding Record Administrators, Safeguarding Coordinators, and Safeguarding Trainers)
- Requires full screening in SRS or under an Independent Screening Agreement
- Training includes both online modules and live Universal Engagement training

2. Administrator/Facilities/Security (Non-Supervisory)

- Includes people who do administrative work or who work as facilities staff or security staff but do not either supervise another adult or directly interact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults
- Requires full screening in SRS or under an Independent Screening Agreement
- Training includes only online modules

3. Lay Minister/Teacher/Coach/Counselor

- Anyone whose ministry or job involves directly interacting with children, youth, or vulnerable adults but who do not supervise other adults
- Includes vendors who provide programs for children, youth, or vulnerable adults on behalf of the organization
- Includes people whose job description may fall under category 2, but who, in practice, are often called upon to interact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults
- Requires full screening in SRS or under an Independent Screening Agreement
- Training includes both online modules and live Universal Engagement training

4. Governance—Vestry, Bishop's Committee, Board

- Includes all decision-makers (as defined in *Safeguarding God's People: Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults*, Section I.D.), other than the Wardens of a congregation
- Requires no screening
- Training includes only online modules

5. Warden

- Includes Senior Wardens, Junior Wardens, and Bishop's Wardens
- Requires full screening in SRS
- Training includes both online modules and live Universal Engagement Training

6. Treasurer

- Requires full screening in SRS or under an Independent Screening Agreement
- Training includes only online modules

7. Vendor/Contractor (Recurrent, No Direct Interaction)

- Includes people contracted to perform services that do not involve working with children and youth or vulnerable adults but who have a regular presence at the organization that may bring them into contact with children or youth
- Screening as needed (depends upon nature and duration of work)
- Requires only an online module (a review of EDOT policies) or, with approval of the Safeguarding Office, a specialized policy review appropriate to the position

8. Key Holder (Note to SRA: When starting the SRS process, select "Yes" for "Is this screening for recertification?" to avoid full process.)

- Includes people who have keys to buildings or spaces where children or youth may be present and under-supervised
- Requires a background check
- Training requires only online modules

9. Clergy, Clergy Student, Lay Chaplain, Lay Area Missioner

- Safeguarding Office acts as SRA for this category
- Includes members of the clergy, people who are preparing for ordination, lay persons endorsed by the diocese as lay chaplains, and lay Area Missioners
- Requires special screening under an Independent Screening Agreement with the diocese
- Training requires both online modules and live Clergy Universal Engagement training

10. Camp Allen Summer Staff

- For adults, requires full screening under an Independent Screening Agreement
- Training requires both online modules and live Universal Engagement training

11. Safeguarding Office Assigned

- Reserved for special situations
- Screening requirements will vary
- Training requirements will vary

In addition to the above categories, there are “add-ons,” the most important of which are:

1. All lay employees and volunteers who serve in staff positions must take a video course on Preventing Sexual Harassment, in addition to the video courses otherwise assigned to their position
2. All lay volunteers or employees who work with vulnerable adults must take a video course on Pastoral Relationships, in addition to the other video courses assigned to their category
3. All Safeguarding Trainers must take a video course on Pastoral Relationships, in addition to the video courses assigned to their category

A person who moves from one position into another position may require additional screening and/or training.