



# **Diocese of the Rocky Mountains**

The Anglican Church in North America

## **Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children**

To the Clergy, Wardens, Parish Councils, Churches, and People of the Rocky Mountains Diocese,

I commend to you the Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children.

In a perfect world, we wouldn't need a document like this, but we live in a broken world where the world, the flesh, and the devil seek to corrupt what is beautiful, profane what is holy, destroy what is good, and prey on the vulnerable. The church is not immune to these forces.

One of the things we learned from Rwanda is the importance of "walking in the light" – that bringing things into the light is what banishes the darkness and brings healing and restoration. This document is a reflection of that and a reflection of the commitment of the diocese, that we have churches that are soaked in the gospel, bring restoration and life, and make disciples.

This means that there is no room in our churches for abuse (verbal, physical, sexual, spiritual, emotional, or neglect). We must do all that we can to prevent abuse and, when there is suspicion of abuse, or an allegation of abuse, take it seriously and deal with it with integrity. This policy applies not only to youth or the vulnerable, but to all members of our congregations.

This policy is necessary reading for all church leaders, including, but not limited to, all affiliated clergy, parish councils, church employees, non-paid staff, those seeking ordination, and all those who work with youth. Please read this policy carefully. It is vitally important that all congregations follow its requirements and recommendations.

Variances to specific provisions of the policy may be granted by the Bishop or the Diocesan Council with the advice and counsel of the Chancellor of the Diocese.

Grace and Peace,

The Rt. Rev. Ken Ross

*Collect prayer:*

*Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom to train them, that they may love all that is true, and pure and lovely, and of good report, following the example of their savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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## Diocesan Policy on Abuse

Everyone who serves the church through educational, pastoral, recreational, or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct. The Diocese will not tolerate any form of abuse involving clergy, staff members, volunteers, or other persons. No one who has a civil or criminal record of child maltreatment, including child abuse or child neglect, or who has admitted to prior sexual abuse of a child, will be permitted to serve with children or youth. See also [Appendix C](#) for policy on Known Offenders.

**This policy applies to everyone, not just children and vulnerable adults.  
All credible allegations of abuse will be investigated.**

Each Congregation is required to adopt either this Policy or a substantially equivalent policy statement in compliance with this policy, acceptable to the Chancellor. For more on using the Diocesan Safe Church Policy, especially for churches, see [Appendix A](#).

## Child Abuse Defined

Each state has its own definition of what constitutes child abuse under civil and criminal laws. Every church in the Diocese should know and follow the relevant laws and legal definitions in its jurisdiction. Summaries of legal and reporting regulations can be found at [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov). While reliable, each church should ensure that the information provided at this third-party website is up to date, and the Diocese of the Rocky Mountains makes no guarantees as to the accuracy of this site.

For the Diocese of the Rocky Mountains, child abuse refers to an action or failure to act by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. We use the term "child abuse" as a broad term that covers all of the following: See [Appendix B](#).

The Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children applies to anyone working in a staff or volunteer capacity with any child or youth under age 18. Any sexual contact with someone under the age of 18 is considered abuse regardless of the legal age of sexual consent in the state in which the church is located.

## Other Types of Abuse

In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable. That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

The Diocese of the Rocky Mountains stands against any and all types of abuse including child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, intimate partner violence, clergy abuse, sexual assault and harassment, and stalking and all forms of abuse: sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, etc.<sup>1</sup>. Further definitions of abuse can be found in [Appendix B](#).

The Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children applies to all persons, and especially to vulnerable adults. See [Appendix C](#) for definition of Vulnerable Adults.

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<sup>1</sup> GRACE Condensed Policy Draft, p. 1. Shared with GRACE's permission (2023).

## Safeguarding Team

Each church should establish a Safeguarding Team that is responsible for equipping the church community for effective prevention and response to violations of this policy and cases of misconduct. The Safeguarding Team should be composed of a minimum of 2-3 members for smaller churches and perhaps 4-7 (or more as needed) members for larger churches. Men and women should serve on this team, as opposed to an all-male or all-female team. **See Appendix D for Duties of the Safeguarding Team.**

## Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone in the church, especially those involved in church ministry and ministry to children and youth, has an important role in ensuring a safe and healthy church.

### **The Rector is responsible for:**

- The overall administration of this policy and any policy updates within your church. See also How to Use this Policy in Appendix A;
- Knowing the terms and conditions of your particular congregation's insurance coverage, ensuring that all conditions of your insurance coverage are met (the Diocese assumes no responsibility for a congregation's non-compliance with its insurance carrier's policy);
- Establishing and overseeing the congregation's Safeguarding Team;
- Devising a local implementation plan for this policy that takes into account the particulars of the church's ministry to children and youth;
- Providing all annual compliance reports requested by the Diocese (see also "Diocesan Documentation Requirements" on page 15), in conjunction with the Safeguarding Team;
- Reporting to the Bishop's office any allegation of misconduct (see DRM's Policy for Prevention and Reporting Sexual Misconduct);
- Reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law.

### **The Safeguarding Team is responsible for:** (for list of Safeguarding Team Duties, see Appendix D)

- Assisting the Rector to devise a local implementation plan for this diocesan policy and providing annual compliance reports as requested by the Diocese (see p. 15-17);
- Assisting the congregation to live out and abide by the church and diocesan policies.

### **Clergy are responsible for:**

- Knowing and abiding by the diocesan and church policies and disciplines;
- Reporting to the Rector (or the Bishop if the allegation involves the Rector) any allegation of misconduct;
- Reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law.

### **Church Governance Leadership (i.e., Vestry, Parish Council, etc.) are responsible for:**

- Knowing the terms and conditions of your particular congregation's insurance coverage, ensuring that all conditions of your insurance coverage are met and reconciling those conditions with this policy. (The Diocese assumes no responsibility for a congregation's non-compliance with its insurance carrier's policy. See Appendix A.)
- Reporting to the Rector (or the Bishop if the allegation involves the Rector) any allegation of misconduct.

### **Children & Youth Ministry Leaders are responsible for:**

- Overseeing local implementation of this policy;
- Reporting to the Rector any allegation of misconduct (or directly to the Bishop if the allegation involves the Rector);
- Reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law. Anyone who suspects a criminal act does not need to ask permission of the church or diocese before contacting law enforcement.

### **All Volunteers, Employees, and Church Members are responsible for:**

- Complying with all aspects and boundaries of this policy;
- Reporting to the Rector any allegation of misconduct (or directly to the Bishop if the allegation involves the rector);
- Reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law. All adults are ethically obligated to report abuse. Reporting to relevant law enforcement authorities in conformity with applicable law. Anyone who suspects a criminal act does not need to ask permission of the church or diocese before contacting law enforcement.

## **The Five-Step Child Protection Process**

The Diocese of the Rocky Mountains is committed to supporting congregations in creating a healthy and supportive environment for children and youth through a five-step approach. While this section is directed at youth ministry, the content provides a good guideline for best and safe church practice in general.

1. Screening
2. Training
3. Interacting
4. Monitoring
5. Responding and Reporting

### **Step One: Screening & Re-Screening**

Screening is an effective and essential way to protect children and youth from abuses. The following procedures apply to everyone involved with ministry to children and youth, including volunteers, staff, interns, and third-party contractors, even for special events and day camps.

#### **Screening Clergy**

The diocesan office is responsible for an initial screening of all DRM clergy. Careful screening of clergy is initially conducted during the ordination process.

An initial background check\* must include the following:

1. Inquiries of all bishops having past or present canonical authority over the individual during the past ten years;
2. Credit Bureau Record Check;
3. Motor Vehicle Record Check;
4. Employer and Education History Checks (all schools attended by the individual during the past five years, and all employers of the individual during the past five years. If the individual has had

one employer for over five years, then inquiries will be made of the two most recent employers. In the case of clergy, “employer” shall be the senior wardens of congregations served during the past five years);

5. National Sexual Offender/Criminal Record Check and Database;
6. State Police Criminal Record Check or the equivalent in the applicant’s states of residence;
7. National Criminal Database.

### **Rescreening Clergy**

The Diocese requires re-screening of all active DRM Clergy and clergy transfers\* every three (3) years at individual or congregational expense and submission of the rescreening report to the DRM office.

Rescreening clergy background checks must include the following:

1. Sexual Misconduct/Criminal Record Check and Database;
2. State Police Criminal Record Check or the equivalent in the applicant’s state of residence;
3. National Criminal Database.

The diocese strongly recommends Clergy use the services of MinistrySafe, though other companies may be used, so long as the diocese is able to view the report directly (not sent through a 3<sup>rd</sup> party), at congregational/individual expense, to conduct background checks, as long as the above requirements are met.

\*Documents may be provided by the sending diocese to the DRM, provided they have been completed within the past two (2) years and meet the specified requirements.

### **Screening Employees and Interns**

Each DRM congregation is required to conduct equivalent background checks of all non-clergy employees, interns, and non-paid staff at church expense, prior to the individual serving. Careful initial screening includes:

1. Conducting a basic background check that includes National Sexual Offender Registry and State and National Criminal Database; checks should be renewed every two years;
2. Conducting personal and professional or educational reference checks;
3. Conducting a face-to-face interview.
4. Signed agreement to comply with Child Protection Policy.

Each congregation should conduct re-screening of employees, interns, and non-paid staff every two to three years at church expense. Re-screening may include a basic background check or more, depending on involvement with children and youth.

### **Screening Volunteers**

All childcare workers must be at least 18 years of age. A teenager can help with childcare, but only if two trained, screened, and approved adults are present.

Each DRM congregation is responsible to screen all volunteers who work with children and youth at church expense, prior to the individual serving. Initial screening includes:

1. Requiring a six-month minimum church attendance rule for volunteers;
2. Signed volunteer applications;

3. Conducting a basic background check that includes National Sexual Offender Registry and State and National Criminal Database; checks should be renewed every two years;
4. Conducting personal and employment or educational reference checks;
5. Conduct a face-to-face interview;
6. Signed agreement to comply with Child Protection Policy.

Each congregation should conduct re-screening of volunteers who work with children and youth every three (3) years at church expense. Re-screening may include a basic background check or more, depending on the volunteer's involvement with children and youth.

Congregations must use the services of a background screening agency, such as Oxford Document Management Company, MinistrySafe, Protect My Ministry, or other equivalent agency, at congregational expense, to conduct background checks as long as the above requirements are met.

**Each DRM Congregation must also comply with its insurance carrier's requirements.**

## **Step Two: Training**

Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize the warning signs of predatory grooming behavior, potential abuse, and become familiar with safe practices and procedures for reporting suspected abuse. The DRM requires the following training:

### **Reading this Policy**

All members of the clergy, employees, and volunteers must certify that they have read, understood, and will abide by the Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children prior to any contact with children or youth. The Individual Acknowledgement Form is found on page 16.

### **Sexual Abuse Prevention Workshop Attendance**

- All active DRM clergy and staff, whether or not they have direct contact with children and youth, and all volunteers who have contact with children and youth must complete the online sexual abuse prevention course and follow-up test provided by Ministry Safe, or other equivalent training approved in advance by DRM. Training includes awareness of abuser characteristics, grooming behaviors, methods to reduce risk, and how to respond to allegations.
- In order to stay current, online training by all clergy and staff and all volunteers who work with children and youth must be completed every two years. Every DRM congregation must track and document the training and retraining of its clergy, staff, and volunteers at congregational expense. A certificate of completion from the training program will demonstrate compliance with this requirement and should be retained by each congregation for its clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- Every year, each congregation must submit to the DRM office evidence of completed initial training by new ministry workers and re-training by clergy, staff and continuing ministry volunteers. For diocesan purposes, the annual required Church Compliance Form will suffice (signifying that the congregation has enforced this policy's requirements, required the appropriate screening/ re-screening and (re)training, and collected Individual Acknowledgment Forms for all).
- The Individual Acknowledgement form on p. 16 should be completed annually and retained by each DRM congregation for all its clergy, staff, and volunteers.



## Step Three: Interaction

The following procedures will help children and youth feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

### Communication

- All verbal communication with children and youth should be encouraging and constructive.
- All communications regarding youth & family ministry events should be sent to the parents/guardians of children.
- No communication should be one-to-one in nature, i.e. phone calls, texting, emails. Except in an emergency, phone calls to students should not be initiated by a ministry team member. If a student calls the adult or ministry leader, staff, or volunteer, this should be communicated to the ministry supervisor and/or parent and share the content of any such communication. *See more in next section, One-to-One Interactions and Social Media.*
- Communication should not include provocative or sexual content; encourage a child to keep secrets; imply any sort of privileged relationship between adult and child; or otherwise call into question the adult's intentions toward the child.
- If you overhear or minors tell you directly about themselves or others sending nude pictures sexting, this should be immediately reported to the ministry supervisor or rector. The minors, including students, you are working with are still children and nude pictures of themselves constitutes child pornography. Sending and receiving nude or sexually provocative photographs of minors may subject those involved to criminal liability. The laws and enforcement of such laws vary from state to state but this should be taken very seriously. Students should be informed of the severe harm they could experience if they send or receive such photos. Students should understand that nude photos may not be kept between the sender and original recipient which can lead students being severely harmed.

### One-to-One Interactions

- Adult staff members and volunteers should conduct any one-to-one meetings at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. Any one-to-one interactions need to be shared with a ministry supervisor. Parents should also be notified if their student is meeting individually with a staff or adult leader.
- As students initiate conversations in one-to-one manners, respond in a manner that includes a third person and lets the student know that this is for their safety and to promote transparency.
- If having a third-party present is not possible, ministry leaders should employ the Open-door policy (see p.12, Step 4: Monitoring) and inform the ministry supervisor and/or the youth's parents/guardians immediately after the conversation. The adult or ministry leader should provide the name of the young person, confirm the date/time of the conversation, and the content of the communication or conversation.
- *See also sections, Social Media and Communication.*

### Social Media

- Social media interaction with youth can be an effective way to communicate information about ministry activities and develop positive and supportive relationships with youth. Yet, social media also carries risk of exposing youth to inappropriate material. Clergy, staff, and volunteers should not connect on social media with children younger than 13.

- Ask parents for permission before connecting with older children (13 or over) on social media. All social media interactions should be focused on the youth's general welfare and/or spiritual development. Always use age-appropriate language.
- Clergy, staff, and volunteers should use a dedicated/church social media account for youth ministry use, separate from personal accounts used to connect with other adult friends. This will avoid accidental exposure to inappropriate content.
- Adults should not utilize the private messaging or direct message functions of social media with minors. Should a minor send you a note in this format, the correct course of action is to respond in a group chat, in approved group messaging, or by email that includes a staff member, adult volunteer, or parent.
- If having a third-party present is not possible, ministry leaders should inform the ministry supervisor immediately after the conversation. The adult or ministry leader should provide the name of the young person, confirm the date/time of the conversation, and the content of the communication or conversation.

### **Photography**

Do not use photos of children and youth without written and signed permission from the parent or guardian.

### **Physical Interaction**

- Any physical contact is for the well-being and safety of the child and not based on the needs of the clergy, staff member, or volunteer.
- DRM policy prohibits physical discipline in any form for the behavioral management of children. This includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or other physical force to restrain or correct children.
- Appropriate discipline of children includes non-physical methods of behavior management. Staff members and volunteers may use physical restraint as a last resort to prevent self-injury by the child or harm to others or property.
- DRM policy prohibits inappropriate physical affection in children and youth ministry, such as: wrestling, tickling, full frontal hugs, kissing on the lips and sitting on laps, slapping the buttocks, or any other playful gesture in private areas of the body (except nursery-aged children may sit on laps and be hugged).
- Appropriate physical affection in youth and children's ministry includes handshakes, side hug, high-fives, thumbs-up and fist bumps. Only give physical contact and affection in situations where others are around. Never force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child or youth's preference not to be touched must be respected at all times.
- Staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by other adults, youth, or children.

### **Restroom Use**

- Only screened and trained nursery workers, or the child's parent or legal guardian, will undertake diapering. Diapers should be changed in the plain sight of other nursery workers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> If the parent wishes for a relative or family friend to assist with this, the church/youth & family ministry leader will need to have permission in writing from the child's parent or guardian.

- Only screened and trained nursery workers, or the child's parent or legal guardian, will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- When a pre-school child needs assistance to use the restroom, a volunteer should wait outside in the hallway or escort the child to the parent.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid being alone with one child in the restroom or in an enclosed stall.

### **First Aid and Medication**

- If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parents. Medication may be given as authorized in writing by the parent.
- First aid may be given to a child when medically necessary. Parents should be notified whenever first aid is given.

### **Illegal Drugs**

- Clergy, staff, and volunteers in children and youth ministries must not use, possess or be under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs while they are engaged in children or youth ministry activities. Anyone found or identified with illegal drugs will be excused from ministry. If you need help or struggle in this area, please discuss with your ministry supervisor and/or rector.
- Should a minor be found in possession or under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at church sponsored event, follow the reporting protocols for reporting abuse. Should it be learned that a minor is participating in drugs and alcohol away from church, conversations with the minor, their parents, or a known counselor is advised.

### **Media Sources**

Leaders should use good judgment regarding the selection of movies and other media. Discretion should be shown, and the rector and/or ministry supervisor should consider the overall redemptive value in selecting movies for students and young people. Communication prior to the showing of media to parents is required so that parents may make informed choices.

### **Virtual Environments**

In virtual environments (such as Zoom), all participants, adults and minors, should be fully clothed, including portions of the body that may be "off camera."

- Adults should not be in their bedrooms, on their bed, or have a bed in the background of their camera, promoting a sense of safety.
- Adults should not have suggestive, political, racist, or other similar materials or images on their screens or backgrounds (virtual or physical). Students should be invited into similar standards. If a student is sharing inappropriate, graphic, or other harmful material, the leader should use discretion to consider removing the individual from the virtual environment. The situation should be communicated to the parents and ministry supervisor.
- Virtual environments are not suitable or safe for one-to-one meetings and should follow the same standards as meeting in a room, social media, or transportation.
- Parents must have access to the information about the virtual gathering, and be able to observe, consistent with how they may do so for in-person gatherings.

## Release of Children

- Staff members and volunteers are responsible for all children in their care and must ensure their appropriate supervision and safety.
- At the close of services or activities, children should be released only to parents, legal guardians or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians.
- If a staff member or volunteer is uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact their immediate supervisor before releasing the child.

## Transportation

- Clergy, staff members, and volunteers may be asked to provide transportation to children or youth. Drivers must provide to the church copies of a valid driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. Only persons over 21 may be allowed to drive children/youth.
- Drivers and passengers must follow all state laws.
- A volunteer or staff member should never be alone in the vehicle with a child or youth, at least two other people, students or adults, not related to the ministry leader or to one another, must be present in the vehicle.
- Occasional transportation support may be provided if prior to the need the parent provides a written, signed request or notification for a staff or volunteer to provide transportation.
  - In emergency situations, for the health of the minor, an adult may transport a minor.
  - Driver should seek approval from parent/guardian of minor and report this to the ministry supervisor.
- A parent would need to provide a written and signed waiver for a regularly occurring transportation of their child in the vehicle of a staff volunteer leader.
- Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops should be avoided.

## Step Four: Monitoring

Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred.

- **Follow the Two-Adult rule:** All children's activities should be supervised by two or more screened and trained adults. Keep interactions with children/students in full view of others at all times.
- Never leave a child unattended during or following a church activity.
- Keep children in supervised areas.
- Extend an open invitation to parents to visit at any time unannounced.
- **Follow the Open-Door policy:** Conduct all meetings and interactions with children in a room with the door open at all times, or with an internal window that allows for constant observation of activities in the room at all times. Other people should be present in the building. If such a room isn't available, keep the door to the room open at all times so that all activities inside the room are visible from the hallway outside the room.
  - When disciplining, counseling, and/or mentoring young people, the same open-door policy described above applies.
  - See above sections in Step 3: Interaction, *Communication, One-to-One Interactions*

## Step Five: Responding and Reporting

Children and youth ministry leaders are in a position of authority and trust. If misconduct occurs, or there is reason to believe that it has occurred, follow the correct reporting protocols. All adults are ethically obligated to report abuse. These procedures are for all church allegations of abuse, not solely for the child protection process.

- The reporting requirements for each state vary. Each individual church in the DRM should be familiar with the specific laws in their jurisdiction and create a written response plan that is centered on the victim's well-being consistent with those laws. For more information, see [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov).
- Document all actions that the church takes in responding and reporting abuse allegation or policy violations. See the final pages of this policy for the DRM Notice of Concern for reporting.

### Responding to the Victim

- When there is a suspicion or report of abuse, respect the child's privacy by finding an appropriate non-threatening, yet still observable, place to talk. If possible, a staff member, other trained volunteer or responsible adult should join in to listen to the child's account.
- Keep calm. Listen and avoid expressing shock or outrage. Remember also that this child may disclose in other ways.
- Let the child know that he/she is believed.
- Assure the child that this was not his/her fault.
- Avoid questions that could make the child feel responsible or that might taint the child's recollection.
- Write down as accurately as possible what the child disclosed.
- Limit discussion about the information to the child's parents and appropriate church and legal authorities as discussed below. Do not discuss the information with, or in the presence of, other people who do not need to know what happened. Should a parent(s) be the stated or suspected perpetrator of abuse, it is permissible to not discuss with them.

### Reporting to Church Authorities

- Immediately notify the Rector (or the Bishop, if the allegation involves the Rector).
- All allegations of abuse will be investigated by a qualified investigator.
- The Rector or Bishop may suspend the person accused of abuse from duties. This should be done quickly: The details of an allegation do not need to be shared with everyone; the Bishop and Chancellor will have access to the details and, in consultation with the church leadership, will determine to what extent and how much detail church membership needs to be made aware.
- Notify the child's parents or guardian, unless the perpetrator is suspected to be in the child's household.
- Notify the Bishop. Once notified by the Rector, the Bishop will notify the Chancellor. The Bishop will follow the reporting and investigation procedures outlined in the DRM Policy for Prevention and Reporting of Sexual Misconduct.

### Reporting to Legal Authorities

- Follow your state's reporting laws regarding who and where to report. See [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov) at

this [link](#).

- Notify the church's liability insurance company. Depending on the type of liability coverage, insurance may pay for legal counsel or be a source of helpful advice.
- Cooperate with any investigation by the police or child protection agencies.

### **Release of Information**

- The Bishop and Chancellor will assist the church in preparing a statement to convey appropriate news to members of the church and to others, as appropriate. Identify a single person to respond to all inquiries.
- Maintain confidentiality of the allegation and investigation to protect the privacy of those involved.
- The Diocese will offer pastoral and other trauma care to the victim and his/her family.
- Treat the accused with dignity, but primary care should be offered to the victim.

## **Home Groups and Off-Site Church Events**

This policy is applicable to all church events, including church-organized home groups or off-site church events, as the local church should exercise control over all its events.

The care and protection of children in a home group setting is always the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child, but as a community of Christians, all share a collective responsibility to ensure safety for all members. In home groups where children are present, leaders must read this policy, take child abuse prevention training, and follow the provisions outlined in this policy.

It is important to have anyone who is supervising the children at a small group go through the church's screening process for volunteers. They should then be informed of the boundaries for supervising children at small groups/home groups. Please review [Appendix E \(GRACE Recommendations for Small Groups\)](#).

## **Trip Safety**

When planning a church or youth trip, including mission trips, it is important that the church ensure and remind all staff, clergy, and attendees that the diocesan and church safe church policy expectations are still applicable. See also [Appendix F \(GRACE General Recommendations for Safety on Student Trips\)](#).

# Diocesan Documentation Requirements

1. All clergy and staff employees and all volunteers working in children's and youth ministry must complete the Individual Acknowledgement of the Diocese Child Protection policy (p. 16) annually (by December 31 each year) and submit to their church. Clergy will also submit this form to the Diocesan Administrator.
2. All churches must retain the Individual Acknowledgments indefinitely. These can be stored electronically.
3. Each year (by December 31), all churches must certify to the Bishop that they are in compliance with all the provisions of this Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children and that they are in compliance with adequate insurance coverage. The annual Church Certification and Acknowledgement form should be submitted to the Diocesan Admin (p. 17). Each church will need to form a Safeguarding Team or designate an individual (rector, administrator, warden, children's minister, etc.) who will monitor and maintain the following for their clergy, staff, and volunteers: copies of the Individual Acknowledgement forms, child abuse prevention training certificates, and background checks.

Please note, the Diocese of the Rocky Mountains will maintain records for its clergy and compliance forms for its churches. Clergy rescreening and retraining documents should be sent electronically to the Diocesan Administrator ([admin@rockymountainanglican.org](mailto:admin@rockymountainanglican.org)) where they will be electronically stored indefinitely.

# Individual Acknowledgement of the Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children

Clergy only: This form should be submitted to the diocese digitally using [this link](#)

By December 31 each year, all church clergy, staff, and volunteers must certify to the church they are serving at that they are in compliance with all the provisions of this Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children. Send these forms to your Church, and Clergy will also send this form to the Diocesan Administrator: [admin@rockymountainanglican.org](mailto:admin@rockymountainanglican.org)

I certify that:

1. I have read the Diocese of the Rocky Mountains Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children.
2. I have read the Child Safety Guidelines of \_\_\_\_\_(name of church) and understand my role.
3. I have successfully completed the sexual abuse prevention training from Ministry Safe (or other training approved by the Diocese) within the past two years. My certificate of Completion is attached.
4. I have a current background check (within the past 2-3 years) that includes Sexual Misconduct/Criminal Record Check and Database, State Police Criminal Record Check or equivalent in state of residence, and National Criminal Database.
5. I will abide by the provisions of this policy while I am a volunteer or employee of the church.

I am (circle appropriate group):

Employee

Volunteer (Paid or unpaid)

\*Clergy\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\*Clergy Only: This form should be submitted to the diocese digitally using [this link](#)

Each congregation must retain these forms indefinitely. As noted above, each church will need to designate a Safeguarding Team or designate an individual who will monitor and maintain the submission of the following for their clergy, staff, and volunteers: copies of the Individual Acknowledgement forms, child abuse prevention training certificates, and background checks.

\*Please note, the Diocese of the Rocky Mountains will maintain records for its clergy. Clergy rescreening and retraining documents should be sent electronically to the Diocesan Administrator ([admin@rockymountainanglican.org](mailto:admin@rockymountainanglican.org)) where they will be electronically stored indefinitely.



# Church Certification and Acknowledgement of the Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children and Insurance Coverage

This form should be submitted digitally using [this link](#)

Each year (by December 31), all churches must certify to the Bishop that they are in compliance with all the provisions of this Diocese Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children and that they are in compliance with adequate insurance coverage. Send these forms to the Diocesan Administrator: [admin@rockymountainanglican.org](mailto:admin@rockymountainanglican.org)

I certify that:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (name of church) has been given a copy of the Diocese of the Rocky Mountains Policy Manual for a Safe Church and the Protection of Children and has read it, including any policy updates.
2. The clergy, staff, and volunteers of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of church) have read, understand, and have submitted Individual Acknowledge forms (p. 18) as described in this policy; will abide by the provisions of this policy; and that these records must be maintained indefinitely in the church office (these may be stored electronically).
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (name of church) has adequate insurance coverage and is in compliance with said insurance company.

Rector Signature

This form should be submitted digitally using [this link](#)

Printed Name of Rector

Date

# Resources & Appendix

## Table of Contents for Resources

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- A. How to Use this Policy
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  - F. Trips Safety (GRACE)
  - G. Policy on Known Offenders (GRACE)

Sample Church Safe Church Policy (GRACE)

*Please note that this is meant as a resource/reference and the diocesan policy and expectations are contained in the body and Appendix of this document.*

Resources

DRM Notice of Concern

## Sample Church Implementation Plan

Each church should devise specific implementation plans for all onsite and offsite programming that involves youth and children.

Here is an example of a church implementation plan for young elementary children meeting in a classroom:

### Nametags:

- Before children are to participate in this class, each child should have a nametag attached to their clothing that has a specific number; each parent should have a security tag with a matching number.

### Two Adults Rule:

- Volunteers must observe the two-adult rule at **all times**, so that no adult is ever alone with a child. It is preferable that the two adults in the room not be related.
- In the event of an emergency, or accompaniment to the restroom, the classroom door will remain open until the second adult arrives or a parent is enlisted to help.
- Rooms without clear visibility should leave a door open whenever children are present.

### Child/Adult Ratio:

- For this classroom, we abide by the ratio of **one adult per eight children**. With two adults present, we can accommodate sixteen students. If you have more than that, you need a third adult, or some children will need to sit in the sanctuary with parents during service.

### Restroom Policy:

- In this classroom, children who need to use the restroom during Children's Worship will either be sent to visit the restroom while a volunteer waits outside in the hallway, or a volunteer will escort the child to the parent.
- Children needing a diaper change will be taken to a parent.
- When in doubt, bring child to their parent, and later update their preferences on planning center.

### Dismissal:

- At the end of class, parents should pick up their children from an adult standing by the classroom door.
- In order to release a child, the Children's Ministry volunteer must match the code on his/her nametag to the code on the parents' security tag.
- By releasing the students, the volunteer is signing off that they have matched the parent and child security codes.

# SAMPLE Children's Ministry Volunteer Protocol

\_\_\_\_\_ Church values children and desires to reflect God's love to those in our care. We take very seriously our call to provide an environment where we can bring our children to the Savior and allow them to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Not only does this environment need to be nurturing, caring and loving, it also needs to be safe. The following preventative procedures and policies are designed to protect each child and adult involved. By implementing an effective prevention program within our church, we create a safe place for all who attend.

All volunteers in Children's Ministry at \_\_\_\_\_ Church must agree to the following:

1. *Six-Month Rule.* All volunteers must have consistently attended \_\_\_\_\_ church for six months prior to working with children.
2. *Written Application.* All volunteers must complete the Volunteer Application Form.
3. *Reference Checks.* All volunteers must provide three (3) references.
4. *Background Checks.* All volunteers must authorize permission for a criminal records check.
5. *Annual Recommitment to Child Safety Guidelines.* All volunteers must annually sign the Children's Ministry Volunteer Protocol saying that they have read and agree to abide by the standards outlined.

## Child Safety Guidelines

1. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age. Those under 18 years of age wanting to assist must be 5 years older than the oldest child being supervised and may not be the primary supervisor.
2. Volunteers must observe the two-adult rule at all times so that no adult is ever alone with one child. It is preferable that the adults not be related. In the event of an emergency, the classroom door will remain open until the second adult arrives or a parent is enlisted to help.
3. Rooms without clear visibility should leave a door open whenever children are present.
4. Child to adult ratios should be carefully considered. There should never be less than 2 adults or 1 adult and 1 assistant for any activity.

General rule:           1 adult per 3 children ages 0-2  
                              1 adult per 8 children ages 3-4  
                              1 adult per 10 children ages 5-8

5. A medical registration form should be filled out by a parent or guardian for each child at the beginning of each year.
6. According to parent preference (as documented on the Children's Ministry Family Registration form), children who need to use the restroom during Children's Worship will either be sent to visit the restroom while a volunteer waits outside in the hallway, or a volunteer will escort the child to the parent. Children needing a diaper change will be taken to a parent.

7. Parents give their consent to participate when they release their children, during the service, to attend Children's Worship. Parents should pick up their children either from the children's return processional or from the classroom during the passing of the peace. No child will be released from Children's Worship without a parent.

**I am in agreement with the Child Safety Guidelines and will abide by them.**

Printed Name / Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix

## A. How to Use this Policy

Each Congregation is required to adopt either this Policy or a substantially equivalent policy statement in compliance with this policy, acceptable to the Chancellor. Moreover, each rector has an obligation to obtain appropriate insurance coverage for his Congregation and ensure the conditions for such coverage are met.

**Every church must also comply with the terms and conditions of its own liability insurance policy.** The DRM assumes no responsibility for a Congregation's failure to comply with its own insurance carrier's policy.

## B. Definitions of Abuse

The Diocese of the Rocky Mountains uses the term "child abuse" as a broad term that covers all of the following:

- Physical abuse: intentional use of physical force against a child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the child's health, survival, development, or dignity<sup>3</sup>.
- Sexual abuse: any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the pleasure of the abuser. Acts of sexual abuse include contact-based abuse (such – but not limited to – penetrative intercourse, sexual kissing, sexualized touching, or forcing a child to kiss or sexually touch someone else) and non-contact based abuse (such as – but not limited to – asking sexual questions, exposing children to pornography or adult sexual behavior, making sexual or lewd comments toward the child, or taking photographs or film of a child for the purposes of sexual gratification by him/herself or others).
- Emotional abuse: Any nonphysical behavior or attitude that controls, intimidates, subjugates, demeans, punishes, or isolates another person by using degradation, humiliation, or fear.
- Exploitation: The act of using a minor child for profit, labor, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage.
- Neglect: the failure of a child's caregiver to provide basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, or supervision.

## C. Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult, or an adult at risk, is a person over the age of 18 who is unable to take care of themselves. It can also refer to one who is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

An adult at risk may therefore be a person who:

- Is elderly and physically disabled due to ill health or cognitive impairment;
- Has a Learning Disability<sup>4</sup>;
- Has a physical disability and / or a sensory impairment;

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<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization. "Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action and Generating Evidence," 2006. Geneva, Switzerland

<sup>4&4</sup> <https://www.proceduresonline.com/resources/glossary-cs/>

- Has mental health needs including Dementia<sup>5</sup>;
- Has a long-term illness / condition;
- Misuses substances or alcohol;
- Is unable to demonstrate the capacity to make a decision relating to their safety and is in need of care and support.

The above list is not exhaustive.<sup>6</sup>

## **D. Duties of the Safeguarding Team**

Each church should establish a Safeguarding Team that is responsible for equipping the church community for effective prevention and response to violations of this policy and cases of misconduct. The Safeguarding Team should be composed of a minimum of 2-3 members for smaller churches and perhaps 4-7 (or more as needed) members for larger churches, consisting of men and women (as opposed to an all-male or all-female team).

Duties of the Safeguarding Team:

- Implement and oversee compliance with the diocesan and congregation's policies, helping the church community embrace and live out the policy;
- Maintain rigorous familiarity with the local church policy: read, conduct reviews, and share with the community;
- Brief all staff, volunteers, and members on the application of the policy on a regular basis, encouraging the community to speak up when concerns, abuse, or policy violations are noted;
- Conduct or coordinate screening of church officers, staff, and volunteers, including background checks and reference checks;
- Complete continuing education from a qualified organization on an annual basis and help leaders with an ongoing education plan for the whole church;
- Assist with ensuring home groups are meeting under and following diocesan and church safeguarding policies;
- Be familiar, implement, and oversee compliance with the DRM Safe Church Policy (and updates) and diocesan annual requirements (background check re-screens, abuse prevention refresh trainings, Individual Acknowledgement forms).

Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE), The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673), or SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP).

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<sup>6</sup> Safeguarding Partnership Board: Adults . "Safeguarding Adults Definitions," November 2016.  
[https://www.proceduresonline.com/jersey/adults/chapters/p\\_sg\\_adults\\_def.html](https://www.proceduresonline.com/jersey/adults/chapters/p_sg_adults_def.html)

## E. Home Groups



### GRACE Recommendations for Small Groups

All prevention efforts depends on collective education and responsibility. Prevention can occur as long as everyone is working together to play their role. The first step is overcoming denial. A small group is typically a tight knit group and it is easy to assume “no one here would every do that.” However, this attitude of denial helps abusers. Abusers groom not only victims, but any community to view them in exactly that way: “Most offenders will deliberately establish themselves as the kind of person who wouldn’t do that kind of thing.”<sup>1</sup> So the attitude of the entire group must be to take the task of protecting children seriously, even and perhaps especially in an environment where there is a high level of trust.

A second major barrier to overcome is recognizing the risk inherent in a small group meeting in a home. Homes are comfortable and close. Isolation from others is usually just a step or two away. We need all in the group to recognize the risk is actually higher in a home than in a church building. By accepting this reality, we can then together work to put in place practices to overcome this risk through clear standards of who is supervising kids, how many are supervising kids, and what the boundaries are for interacting with kids. In an environment where everyone is educated and agrees on the importance of prevention then we can have a culture where everyone is accountable.

It is important to have anyone who is supervising the children at small group go through the church’s screening process for volunteers. They should then be informed of the boundaries for supervising children at small group (see below for specific suggestions). Those who supervise children ought not to be in denial about the reality of abuse, understand tactics abusers use, and have the strength to uphold the agreed upon boundaries for the group. The boundaries ought to be reviewed often with the group, the caregivers, and the children themselves. This does not take long to review, but it is valuable and communicates that it is ok to talk about these issues.

Here are some recommended boundaries for child supervision at your small group, but you will have to discuss your particular situation and contextualize them in some cases. It is usually better to restate the salient points of your church’s policy for your small group instead of multiplying further policies for the sake of consistency.

1. No one on one situations with an adult and child who is not their own. This applies to anyone attending the small group, not only the caregivers.
2. There will be at least two qualified caregivers for the children. They will be attentive to what is happening and not on their phone. As much as 40% of sexual abuse occurs at the hands of other kids and about 1 in 4 child sex offenders will molest with other adults present. We want the kids to play out in the open, not in areas where there is low or no visibility.
3. All touch should be welcome by the child and observable by others. Healthy respect for other’s bodies and consent in touch are critical to a safe environment. Caregivers must respect these boundaries and uphold them among the kids. You could even adopt further rules given the church’s policy and the age of the kids (e.g. no lap sitting, no tickling, no massages, and even specific areas beyond abusive touch that are off limits).<sup>2</sup>
4. Clarify the bathroom and diaper changing procedure. In a small group setting, GRACE recommends having parents involved with any diaper changing or children needing assistance in the restroom. No one who is not a parent should be allowed to take a child to the bathroom, period.



5. There should be no sexual language, jokes, videos, or other content, period.
6. There should be a monitor each week to check on things at random times to ensure the boundaries are being followed.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Anna Salter, *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, & Other Sex Offenders: Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children* (Basic Books, 2003).

<sup>2</sup>See GRACE's policy guide book for suggestions in this area - *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries* by Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovit

## F. Trip Safety

### GRACE General Recommendations for Safety on Student Trips

When taking students on a trip, the starting point is to uphold key boundaries from your policy that usually apply. This consistency will help you. You take the same approach as you do with other activities, you just apply key policy commitments in the trip context. So policy boundaries will still apply to issues of isolation, respect in touch, respect in words, and not sharing sexualized content. The key is to think about how the boundaries apply in the specific context of the trip and bring clarity to these expectations.

At the same time, there will be some new boundaries to implement as well in the context of the trip. Trips are higher risk situations because they involve sleeping arrangements, showering and changing, or other vulnerable situations. These exact boundaries will often be somewhat dependent on the set up and facilities of the trip. You may have more or less control over these details. It is good to assess the set up and facilities ahead of time and decide on what the boundaries will be for the group. Reach out to someone with more experience if you have specific questions and what might be the best application of key principles for safeguarding. Once you land on the specifics, communicate these decisions with clarity to the group.

#### Key Boundaries to Consider:

- Most church trips will separate sleeping arrangements by gender. Some setups (like a bunk room) will require adults and kids to sleep in the same area. If this is the case, think about boundaries such as: no sharing beds or bunks, even in non-sleeping times (this is often wise to extend to students as well - GRACE knows of situations where a student crossed boundaries with another student in this type of context).
- Changing areas should be private, there should be no adults observing minors changing.
- No leaving sleeping quarters after a certain time, and certainly no adult may meet with students after this time and especially not alone and/or in an isolated setting
- If it is not possible to separate showering areas for use by adults and kids, if possible, you can try to separate times for this, if practical.
- If there is a set up where students are sleeping and showering with little adult presence (like in a hotel room), it is good to make sure that they know that the boundaries apply to how they treat their peers. Some teens who test boundaries will use the lack of adult supervision in these types of vulnerable settings to test boundaries. It is good to try to reduce any power differential (by grouping students as much as possible with similar-aged students) and to give examples of expectations that include how they treat their peers.

The best set up is where showering and changing areas and restrooms allow for the privacy for each individual. There should be no phones allowed in the areas for showering, changing, or restroom use, period. No exceptions.

What makes a difference is setting a tone as leaders from the beginning of the trip. Give a safety talk before the group departs. Frame these issues positively in terms of God's heart that each person is valuable and worthy of respect. God cares that our community is a place of safety and respect. This is in part what it means to love our neighbor.

Use words that connect with your group and cover a few main points briefly:

- This is a priority to God and to your leaders.
- All of us need to be accountable and treat others with respect, including leaders.
- Share the key boundaries: isolation, sleeping arrangements, showering/changing, restrooms, touch, words, etc.
- Give some examples specific to the set up about how these boundaries will apply (e.g. having a one-on-one conversation out in an open, observable area is fine; but don't go off on your own to an isolated part of the camp without permission; hugs are acceptable as long as they are welcome by the other person, but even if the touch is otherwise appropriate, it is never appropriate if the person does not want any touch at that time or if it is in an isolated area and not observable).
- Tell them options if they need help or a friend needs help - call parents, talk to any leader, talk to a friend who can help support them in going to a leader, etc.
- It is good to say that all of us (leaders, adults, camp staff not from our church, students - ALL) need to be accountable and treat others with respect. Leaders will ensure any boundary crossing or something more egregious is followed up on and there is accountability.
- Answer any questions they have.

The key is to frame this in terms of our Christian commitments and frame it positively, rather than this being about fear and suspicion. The culture and tone you shape as leaders makes all the difference. Give some examples that involve how adults treat the students, but also how they as students treat each other. Then throughout the trip, take a few minutes every day or every other day to briefly remind the students of a couple of these key points about safety. You don't have to give another full talk, but a brief reminder can help keep these important issues on the front burner and help discourage and deter anyone who is inclined to test boundaries.

## **G. Policy on Known Sex Offenders<sup>7</sup> (GRACE)**

This policy on known offenders is shared with the DRM with GRACE's permission and can be adapted and edited to your congregation's needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Church is committed to holding admitted or convicted offenders we believe are repentant to a high standard of accountability. Known offenders who demonstrate evidence that they are not repentant are extremely dangerous and are not welcome in our church. Jesus welcomed sinners, but he did not command us to welcome wolves among the sheep. Known offenders who wish to have any connection to our church must be willing to undergo a process designed to assess their individual situation, ongoing repentance, and what safeguards are appropriate. Offenders must agree to accept whatever accountability and safeguards our leadership, in consultation with experts, deem appropriate. Offenders must be willing to agree to this before the process of assessment begins. No assessment will

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<sup>7</sup> GRACE Full Abuse Policy Draft, p. 11. Shared with GRACE's permission (2023).

begin if the victim(s) of the perpetrator are still in our church as any victim should be free to worship without their perpetrator present.

If a convicted offender asks to join our community, we will contact experts to assist with the assessment of the situation. Similarly, if an individual was in the past credibly accused of abuse, we will contact an outside expert on how to best proceed.

Leaders will use the following process:

1. Interview with the Known Offender
2. Interview with other Relevant Parties (e.g. family, treatment provider, counselor, parole officer, etc.)
3. Acquiring Records relating to the Offender
4. Assessing Repentance in Consultation with Experts
5. [If applicable]: Setting Level of Participation, Accountability, and Safeguarding Requirements (Including listening to any known survivors about the impact in their life, and accountability on and off church property).

Leaders will consult with experts as needed throughout this process to ask appropriate questions and assess them. The Rector needs to work with other leaders and inform necessary leaders of their attendance and presence at church or other events.

No one who is convicted of or who has admitted to abusing a child may work with children or vulnerable persons in the ministry of our church, have any access to children in our church (on or off church property), or hold any position of power or trust, even if it is not directly connected to ministry to children. Any offender who evidences deception, minimization, excuses, victim blaming, or other indicators they are not repentant shall not be allowed any connection to our church. Unrepentant offenders are not welcome.

Any adult who is a convicted or admitted sex offender who attends group activities shall agree to have their name known to the congregation and shall abide by all accountability and safeguards. Any adult offender who is known or believed to be attracted to children or fantasizes about children will not attend in any settings with children.

The safeguards shall address accountability on and off church property and will involve communication with appropriate persons such as family, friends, employers, counselors, and parole/probation officers. The safeguards shall be reviewed as needed, and at a minimum every year by leadership and the Safeguarding Team, and in consultation with child protection experts.

When a known offender is judged to be repentant and has some connection to the church, those who have responsibility to minister to him or her will have specific training.

# Sample Church Safe Church Policy (GRACE)

This sample church safe church policy is shared with the DRM with GRACE's permission is meant to serve as a reference and resource, and can be used and adapted by your congregation, if desired.

Please note that what is contained and referenced in the body of this DRM Safe Church policy is the Diocese of the Rocky Mountain's Safe Church Policy. Each Congregation is required to adopt either this Policy or a substantially equivalent policy statement in compliance with this Policy, acceptable to the Chancellor (Appendix A).

## Condensed Abuse Policy Draft - \_\_\_\_\_ Church<sup>8</sup>

As a community, \_\_\_\_\_ Church is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody God's priority of justice for the vulnerable that comes with his Kingdom.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime), when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is sadly a common reality in this world. As Christians we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about the reality of abuse. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents." (Matthew 10:16) We all must take responsibility to become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice and one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Sadly, predatory individuals often seek environments with vulnerable people. Abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community, and keep the abuse secret. This policy only states what we all must take ownership of in our community as we together walk with God who loves justice and hates oppression.

**Definitions** [For more thorough definitions see our full policy: WEBSITE ]

In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable. That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Church stands against any and all types of abuse including child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, intimate partner violence, clergy abuse, sexual assault and harassment, and stalking.

\_\_\_\_\_ Church stands against any and all forms of abuse: sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, etc.

## Administrative Policy

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<sup>8</sup> GRACE Condensed Policy Draft. Shared with GRACE's permission (2023).

The Safeguarding Team is responsible for equipping the community of \_\_\_\_\_ Church for effective prevention and response. Currently, our Safeguarding Team is comprised of a group of 2-7 members and includes women and men. Our current Safeguarding Team is \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

*For details about the role of the Safeguarding Team and how we screen and train at \_\_\_\_\_ Church, see our full policy at [www.\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](http://www._____).*

## **Healthy Boundaries**

At all times our community upholds the following standards of respect and safety.

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- Appropriate touch, whether an adult or child, needs to be welcomed by the person (If you are not sure, just ask - e.g. Can I give you a hug?).
- Touch within a significant power difference should be observable to others (e.g. between an adult and a child), or in visibility of others.
- Children who need assistance in the restroom outside of the children's ministry must be helped by their own parent or guardian. Within the children's ministry, all diapering or assistance must be observable by two screened adults.
- Be considerate of others and give them appropriate space: Notice the body language of others and be aware of your impact on others
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own child (including giving rides)

Show respect in your words:

- Determine to use words that convey the respect always due to others.
- Avoid any language that belittles or objectifies (e.g. commenting on a person's body or sexual attractiveness).
- Avoid sexualized comments including inappropriate jokes or stories (or sharing media).

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries:

- Healthy people do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life (e.g. making decisions for someone or taking control of an aspect of their life such as directing their finances or career or social life).
- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so.
- Give agency to others (e.g. "Where would you be comfortable meeting up?").
- Always respect the "no" of others in setting personal boundaries.

It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. The following behaviors are unacceptable by any pastors, elders, deacons, or staff at \_\_\_\_\_ Church:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy.
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments, or unwanted physical touch.
- Behavior or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.
- Any words that belittle or threaten.

Abusers often use charm or other tactics to manipulate others. Targets of abuse often report feeling flattered and then later confused, upset, guilty, ashamed, and like it is all their fault. Victims should know that although it is normal to feel this way, abuse is never their fault. Those in positions of power and trust are responsible and able to respect appropriate boundaries.

Abusers are often skilled at explaining away concerning behavior. Anyone who experiences or has information regarding concerning behavior or a policy violation should document it and speak up as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Team. All of us should be mindful of what is happening around us and speak up to the Safeguarding Team if anyone is demonstrating concerning behavior, crossing boundaries, or violating this policy in any way.

### **Responding to Boundary Violations**

\_\_\_\_\_ Church takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. Any person who witnesses or learns of a violation of this policy is encouraged to inform a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. Furthermore, any concerns related to vulnerable persons should be brought to the attention of a member of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability.

### **Responding to Abuse and Harassment**

\_\_\_\_\_ Church is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within our church. We will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse. In responding to abuse, \_\_\_\_\_ Church will always prioritize the safety and needs of the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons. It is hard for victims to come forward in most circumstances. \_\_\_\_\_ Church will do its best never to blame victims for struggling to come forward, delaying disclosure, or other common disclosure behavior.

#### *Immediate Response Protocols*

1. When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g. an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911.
2. If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger) or vulnerable adult (e.g. elder abuse, or abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities), all adults within \_\_\_\_\_ Church must immediately report to [state specific reporting information for children and vulnerable adults]. Child abuse may also be reported to a local police department. DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law, and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. After the report, contact a member of the Safeguarding Team. If the victim is now an adult, but the abuse was against them as a minor, we will support them and respect their agency in reporting. The only exceptions are if the abuse occurred within our church community or the name of the perpetrator is known.
3. If there is a disclosure, any evidence or knowledge, or any reasonable belief of abuse or harassment against an adult, all persons within \_\_\_\_\_ Church are encouraged to report as soon as possible to a member of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team member shall immediately document the information and then inform the entire team (except a member or partner of a member involved in any allegation). If the misconduct allegations involve the Safeguarding Team, the report may go to any member of the [Board or Leadership Team].

4. The Safeguarding Team shall respect the agency of the adult victim(s) in reporting any and all suspected crimes to the appropriate authorities. The decision to report adult abuse is ultimately up to the adult victim(s). However, the Safeguarding Team should work to encourage and support the victim(s) in every possible way and there may be situations where the Safeguarding Team feels conscious bound to report information pertaining to a potential crime against an adult. When reporting seems in the best interest of the safety of the community, the Safeguarding Team shall also consult with national or local experts and the victim to make a safety plan when there is any potential reason to believe the victim or others at \_\_\_\_\_ Church may still be in danger (e.g. in cases involving domestic violence, stalking, assault, or threats). The Safeguarding Team will also seek to communicate as sensitively as possible the reason for reporting to the victim.

5. If the alleged perpetrator is within \_\_\_\_\_ Church, upon recommendation from the Safeguarding Team, the [Board or Leadership Team] shall immediately place the alleged offender on administrative leave until the completion of any investigations and/or \_\_\_\_\_ Church has sufficient information to make a determination concerning any personnel decisions and/or other accountability. The Safeguarding Team shall coordinate any immediate steps required for the protection of the vulnerable and the community and inform the [Board or Leadership Team]. Any person connected to an allegation, including a family member or mentor must recuse themselves from response, whether a member of the Safeguarding Team or [Board or Leadership Team].

#### *Further Response Protocols*

Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE), The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673), or SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP).

Any victim has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as possible. At times, it may be necessary for \_\_\_\_\_ Church to share certain information in order to safeguard other vulnerable persons and allow for any other potential victims to come forward.

The Safeguarding Team shall coordinate further appropriate response including but not limited to:

- Ensuring all potential crimes against children have been reported to appropriate authorities according to the policy above
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons
- Facilitating cooperation with any investigations including helping investigators assess the possibility of other victims and communicating in appropriate ways within the church or with others
- Ongoing, appropriate care for the victim(s) including helping them connect with professional trauma informed care if desired
- When appropriate, with careful attention to protecting the privacy of any victims, offering public support and/or opposing harmful narratives toward victims
- Maintaining contact with the alleged offender during any investigations or administrative leave to ensure proper boundaries and accountability, especially with regard to controlling the narrative, retaliation, and access to other vulnerable people
- Caring for others in the church and coordinating with outside resources as needed
- Documenting relevant actions and information related to the case
- Reaching out to qualified experts with questions or when an Independent Consultation or Investigation is appropriate

*For information pertaining to how our church may utilize independent consultation or investigation in certain circumstances, please see our full policy at [www.\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](http://www._____).*

Those who use any position of power to abuse as defined by this policy shall never again serve in any formal role within \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

### *Retaliation*

\_\_\_\_\_ Church prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who are involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or potential evidence, or cooperating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats, or intimidation that would discourage some persons from engaging in activity required or encouraged by this policy. Actions in response to a good faith report or response under this policy are considered retaliatory if they could reasonably have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of an individual or if they impact their ability to fully participate in church activities, including compliance with this policy. Reports, concerns, or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Team or a member of the [Board or Leadership Team]. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation and will be held accountable under this policy.

*For information pertaining to Caring for Survivors, Known Sex Offenders, and Potential Indicators of Child Abuse, please see our full policy at [www.\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](http://www._____).*

## **Resources**

- For reporting abuse and information and resources by state: <https://www.childwelfare.gov>
- Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as
  - The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE [7233] or <https://www.thehotline.org> )
  - The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673)
    - [hotline.rainn.org](http://hotline.rainn.org) and [rainn.org/es](http://rainn.org/es)
  - SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP)
    - *\*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*
- DRM Policy for Prevention and Reporting of Abuse and Sexual Misconduct
  - <https://rockymountainanglican.org/founding-documents-policies/>



# Diocese of the Rocky Mountains Notice of Concern

***Confidential: Keep completed form in a locked file***

Please complete as thoroughly as you are able.

*\*Once completed, please email directly to Bishop Ken Ross and Diocesan Chancellor  
ken@rockymountainanglican.org, chancellor@rockymountainanglican.org*

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

## Information Regarding Victim

Name of child/victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_ Male/Female: \_\_\_\_ Birthdate (if child): \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' / Guardians' Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings' Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Information about Suspected Abuse

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

Type of Concern:

- Nature of suspected abuse: \_\_\_\_ physical \_\_\_\_ sexual \_\_\_\_ emotional \_\_\_\_ neglect
- Policy violation with a child or youth
- Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth
- Other concern: \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the situation:** What happened, indications of abuse (facts, physical signs), 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? (*Attach additional sheets if needed*).

## If a child is reporting:

What did the child say? (Give quotes where possible)

What was your response?

To your knowledge has this situation ever occurred previously? Please state how you know/suspect. (*Attach additional sheets if needed*).

**Confidential: Keep completed form in a locked file**

**What action was taken?** How was the situation handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were police called? (*Attach additional sheets if needed.*)

**Information of Individual(s) of Concern/Person Suspected of Abuse:**

Name of suspected abuser: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/relationship to the church (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Location and address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Any Other Suspected Victim(s):**

Name of child/victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_ Male/Female: \_\_\_\_ Birthdate (if child): \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' / Guardians' Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings' Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Person Making the Initial Report: \_\_\_\_\_**

Title/Role at church: \_\_\_\_\_ (congregant, member, vestry, ministry leader, etc)

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date that initial report was made: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Print: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name Rector receiving report: \_\_\_\_\_**

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

Print: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Once completed, please email directly to Bishop Ken Ross and Diocesan Chancellor  
ken@rockymountainanglican.org, chancellor@rockymountainanglican.org*