

# Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth

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## I. General Information

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Williamsville, NY, (hereafter “St. Paul’s”) hereby adopts this Statement of Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth. The purpose of this statement is to put into place a consistent plan that will provide general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with children and youth. The purpose of these policies is to create safe and welcoming space for all children and youth in our communities and those engaged in ministry with children and youth and to prevent sexual abuse.

This policy applies to all activities wherever youth or children are present.

## II. Definitions

**Abuse of a child or youth:** Includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

- Mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment to a child or youth’s growth, development, or psychological functioning;
- Causing or permitting the child or youth to be in a situation in which they sustain a mental or emotional injury that results in observable and material impairment in growth, development, or psychological functioning;
- Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or youth or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to them, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator that does not expose the individual to a substantial risk of harm;
- Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or youth;
- Sexual conduct harmful to a child or youth’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offences of indecency with a child, sexual assault, or aggravated sexual assault under New York State Law;

- Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual contact with a child or youth, as defined in this policy;
- Compelling or encouraging the child or youth to engage in sexual conduct;
- Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child or youth if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photography, film, or depiction of the child or youth is obscene or pornographic;
- The use by a person of a controlled substance in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child or youth;
- Causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a youth to use a controlled substance; or
- Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child or youth.

**Adult:** Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school (see footnote to youth on page 5).

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

**Chaperone:** Any adult assisting at a youth event under the direction and authority of a Supervisor or Leader. See also Leader.

**Child:** Anyone who has not yet entered 6<sup>th</sup> grade or is under the age of 12 years (see footnote to youth on page 5).

**Child Protective Services:** A social services program provided by state and local governments serving children and their families who need assistance. Child Protective Services receives and investigates reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

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

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

**Immediate Family Member:** The spouse, partner, child, parent, sibling, stepchild, stepparent, stepsibling, grandparent of the person, or a co-habitant with the person.

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

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

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

**Mandated Reporter:** A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. Generally, New York State law mandates that adults in certain professions report suspected abuse of children and/or youth. Individuals who are not mandated to report suspicion of abuse may make a report to the appropriate state agency, even though not legally required to do so.

**Neglect of a child or youth:** Includes:

- The leaving of a child or youth in a situation where they would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for them, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator of them;
- The following acts or omissions by a person:
  - Placing a child or youth in or failing to remove them from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond their level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to them;
  - Failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a youth, with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the youth;
  - The failure to provide a child or youth with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain their life or health;
  - Placing a child or youth in or failing to remove them from a situation in which they would be exposed to a substantial risk of sexual conduct harmful to them; or
- The failure by the person responsible for a child or youth’s care, custody, or welfare to permit them to return to their home without arranging for the necessary care for them after they have been absent from the home for any reason, including having been in residential placement or having run away.

**Off-Site:** Any location other than St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Supervisor:** An adult of at least 21 years of age who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or Leaders in a ministry program.

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

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

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

- **Universal Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all people that includes a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. This training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant.
- **Specialized Training:** A standard of additional training that equips people who participate in or have oversight responsibility for ministries. In addition to Universal Training, a person will have access to training that is specialized and tailored to their role and ministry function.

**Youth:** Anyone who has either entered 6<sup>th</sup> grade or is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, and still in high school.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ages established in accordance with generally accepted definitions in the United States. These ages may vary across the wider Episcopal Church.

### III. Application and Screening

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is required to screen all persons according to the standards in Appendix A – Screening and Training Protocols. For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

#### A. Public Records Checks

- St. Paul's shall use a provider to conduct public records checks and will track these checks utilizing the current church management software. Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children and youth.
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries.
- A Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records check is needed if transporting children and youth as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the church or for a church-sponsored event.
- A credit check is required with check signing authority.
- Public records checks must be updated at least every five years.

#### B. Additional Screening Requirements

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

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

#### C. Universal Training

Training as established by the Diocese of Western New York in the prevention of sexual misconduct is required. A copy of the certificate issued at the end of the training will be placed on file in the Diocesan office. Training must be repeated a minimum of once every three (3) years.

The underlying philosophy of the Safe Church policy applies to all adult leaders:

- Adults and children or youth are not equals – the adult holds a position of power due to both their age and position and is therefore responsible for the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of the young person in any interaction.
- The adult is ultimately responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries in relation to children and youth.

- All adult leaders must act as mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect. Any adult leader who suspects a violation of this policy shall take steps as outlined in Responding to Concerns (Section VI below.)

## D. Additional Requirements for Supervisors

Potential Supervisors must be known and active in the congregation for at least twelve months before engaging in ministry with children and youth, unless they are able to provide written documentation showing successful clearance pursuant to Appendix A – Screening and Training Protocols for a professional role. In addition, they must have completed both the diocesan Safe Church (Universal and Specialized) training and anti-racism training or the equivalent with written documentation. Potential Supervisors must have NO history of sexual misconduct or abuse.

## E. Additional Requirements for Leaders

Potential Leaders must be known and active in the congregation for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth, unless they are able to provide written documentation showing successful clearance pursuant to Appendix A – Screening and Training Protocols for a professional role. In addition, they must have completed the diocesan Safe Church (Universal) training or the equivalent with written documentation. Potential Leaders must have NO history of sexual misconduct or abuse.

## F. Application and Screening Records

St. Paul’s must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the congregation’s office. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy.

# IV. Education and Training

Training shall be appropriate to each person’s function according to Appendix A – Screening and Training Protocols. Standardized training will be provided by the diocese, but it is the responsibility of the congregation to ensure that training is made available to all who need it.

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

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

Depending on role and responsibility, Specialized Training should include:

- Prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect;
- Vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;
- An introduction to gender non-binary;

- The needs of LGBTQ+ children and youth;
- The ways that children and youth can engage in self-advocacy; and
- The needs of differently-abled children and youth.

Certification of training shall be renewed every three years. St. Paul's will keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

## V. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

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

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

St. Paul's shall ensure that all people who minister to children and youth receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry. In addition, St. Paul's shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister to children and youth. This list shall be kept in the organization's office or other place where records are kept.

### A. Unrelated Adults Required

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

Only one adult may be sufficient in well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the church grounds, such as a Sunday School classroom, provided that another adult can maintain visual contact with the adult program leader. This can be accomplished by designating a vestry member weekly to conduct frequent random checks of classrooms and unlocked spaces throughout the building(s). See also sections on Overnight Programs (Section V.J) and Transportation (Section V.K).

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

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

- **Alcoholic beverages, marijuana, and illegal drugs.** Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings. No alcohol,



marijuana, or illegal drugs may be in the possession, or used by, any adults or youth and programs. An exception is made for the use of wine as part of sacramental celebrations.

- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices. Devices belonging to the congregation shall have adequate password protection. Each user shall have their own account and password. See Appendix B – Guidelines for Digital Communications.
- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** Anyone with keys or electronic access to church buildings shall meet all the requirements according to Appendix A – Screening and Training Protocols.
- **Tobacco.** Children and youth shall not be allowed to use tobacco or other smoking devices, including vape pens. All adults are encouraged to refrain from smoking as much as possible during programs. Any smoking by adults must be done discreetly at a designated location.
- **Unused spaces.** Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible.

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

When one-on-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth who is not an immediate family member, another adult who is not an immediate family member is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

Examples include:

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

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

Impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, may foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided. See Appendix B – Guidelines for Digital Communications.

## D. Basic Needs

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

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

## E. Inclusiveness

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

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

Any children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's privacy. No child or youth should be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.

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

Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on Overnight Programs (Section V.J).

## F. Violence and Weapons

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

## G. Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children or Youth

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

### **DOs**

Adults are encouraged to:

- Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;

- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:
  - high fives, handshakes, and fist bumps;
  - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer;
  - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;
  - “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision;
  - brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.

### **DON'Ts**

Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs or consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs or consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth;
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with other adult partners when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth; or
- Offer inappropriate physical expressions of affection, which may include, but are not limited to:
  - inappropriate or lengthy embraces;
  - kisses on the mouth;
  - holding children over three years old on the lap;
  - touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas;
  - showing affection in isolated areas;
  - occupying beds with children or youth;
  - touching knees or legs;
  - wrestling or tickling;
  - piggyback rides;
  - any type of massage, whether given by the adult or by the child or youth;
  - any form of unwanted affection;
  - comments or compliments that relate to physique or physical development;
  - snapping bras, giving wedgies, or similar touching of underwear;

- giving gifts or money to individual youth outside of the context of a specific program; or
- private meals with individual children or youth without the knowledge of another adult.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in Responding to Concerns (Section VI).

## H. Late Arrival or Early Departure

Events are structured to provide a period during which the participants ease into the activities and get to know one another; it is important for the participants to be present for as much of the event as possible to allow them to form relationships with other participants. Late arrivals or early departures outside of emergencies should be negotiated with the Supervisor in charge of the event prior to the event.

## I. Special Considerations

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

### 1. Prior Approvals

- Written approval of a parent/guardian is required prior to viewing any movie rated “PG-13” or above, or participating in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.
- Off-site events require a parent/guardian’s approval specific to the event.

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

- All children, youth, and adults shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any programs. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year.
  - There must be a parent/guardian’s signature on all release and waiver forms for minors.
  - Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online. These forms should be saved for a period of seven (7) years.
  - Permission slips shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by the parent/guardian.
  - Prior permission for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.

### 3. First Aid and Medications

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with children and youth.

- A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person.
- Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

#### 4. Supervision

- At any gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two adults who are not immediate family members, with one being age 21 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants.
- Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:
  - 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
  - 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
  - 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
  - 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day
- Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy. These additional adults may be referred to as chaperones.
- When there are new leaders-in-training, the leadership teams should also have a reasonable number of experienced adult leaders to provide support.

#### 5. Insurance

All trips to off-site destinations must have adequate insurance in case of emergency.

### J. Overnight Programs

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires consideration of numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
  - No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
  - Supervision by two adults who are not immediate family members is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping.
  - It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water.

- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

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

## K. Transportation

For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed:

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

## L. Travel

Travel with children and youth presents amazing opportunities for participants to experience the church and the world on a larger scale with vastly different perspectives of faith communities and their contexts. It also presents challenges to normal safety protocols and opportunities for creativity if managed well. For domestic and international travel, all policies in this document should be followed unless exceptions are approved by the vestry. Additional policies regarding supervision may be enacted by the vestry. The following policies will help groups prepare for a variety of potential scenarios, as well as for domestic and international travel.

A best practice is to designate an adult to serve as back-up to the travel administrator, and as back-up for simple first aid and administration of prescriptions. These could be the same person.

A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at St. Paul's office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

### 1. Insurance for Travel

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most church and organization's policies as an added rider, must be secured at least one month prior to travel.

- It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

## 2. International Considerations

- Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
- Determine whether vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.
- A more thorough list of international travel considerations with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in the Youth in Mission Manual at [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling\\_7.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling_7.pdf)

## M. Open Door Policy

No children or youth event is to function with a closed-door policy. Clergy, parents, church, and staff members have a right to observe any event at any time. Such a request to view an event should take into consideration the needs of the event and be as respectful of those needs as possible.

## N. Disciplinary Guidelines

These guidelines are provided to ensure fairness and consistency, and to provide Supervisors and Leaders a procedural foundation when required. We respect the need for these leaders to be given latitude to deal with disciplinary problems as is best. These guidelines are intended to offer a structure within which discipline of the most serious offenses can take place.

Certain behaviors have been historically defined as unacceptable at any child or youth event and should result in the expulsion of the person(s) involved. They include, but are not restricted to:

- The possession or use of illegal drugs
- The possession or use of weapons
- The possession or use of alcohol or marijuana

Other behaviors that require additional concern include, but are not restricted to:

- Inappropriate sexual behavior
- Violence (physical, verbal)
- Theft

If a Leader believes that a disciplinary problem rises beyond the level of the routine, they are advised to notify the Supervisor, who should do the following:

1. Determine the facts.

2. Determine whether the investigation warrants escalation.
3. Speak with all those involved.
4. Follow up with the individual and their parent/guardian.
5. Share the response (not the incident details, but the disciplinary response) with the group, if needed.

## VI. Responding to Concerns

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

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

Any adult who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place, is strongly encouraged, and all mandated reporters are required, to contact the state's Child Abuse Hotline. The number in New York State is **800.342.3720**.

You should also inform the person in charge of the event of what suspicions you have and what actions you have taken. If you are the person in charge the event you should convey this information to the Clergy in Charge.

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

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

Reports of suspected child abuse or maltreatment should be made immediately – at any time of the day and on any day of the week – by telephone to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (sometimes referred to as the State Central Register or SCR).

The Child Protective Specialist who answers your call will ask you for as much information as you can provide about both the suspected abuse or maltreatment and the family about which you are calling. Below are examples of some questions the Child Protective Specialist might ask you when you call. Even if you have very little information available to you, call the SCR. The specialists will analyze the information you do have and determine if it is sufficient to register a report.

- What is the nature and extent of the child's injuries, or the risk of harm to the child?
- Have there been any prior suspicious injuries to this child or his/ her siblings?
- What is the child's name, home address, and age?
- What is the name and address of the parent or other person legally responsible who caused the injury, or created the risk of harm to the child?
- What are the names and addresses of the child's siblings and parents if different from the information provided above?



- Do you have any information regarding treatment of the child, or the child's current whereabouts?

You can report anonymously, but if you choose to give your name and contact information you may be contacted by the investigator assigned to the case for additional information.

## B. Suspected Violations of this Policy

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

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

## C. Local Resources for Response

The following is a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate this policy. Because this information changes on at least a yearly basis, the contact information is provided on a separate sheet.

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

## VII. Policy Audit

Congregations must adopt a Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth.

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

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

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

- Public records checks, application forms, records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;
- Records of compliance with Appendix A – Screening and Training Protocols;

- Procedures for responding to concerns and incidents; and
- Evidence of compliance with “safe space” requirements.

## **VIII. Amendments**

This policy may be amended by a majority vote of the vestry.

**Adopted by the vestry October 28, 2024.**

## Appendix A – Screening and Training Protocols

Role	Ministry Function	Public Records	Application, Interview, and References	Universal Training	Leader Training	Supervisor Training	Anti-Racism/Diversity Training
<b>Staff &amp; Contracted Ministers (not covered below)</b>	Clergy	X	X	X		X	X
	Church Employees	X	X	X		X	Recommended
	Church Contractors (1099)	Role-specific		X			
<b>Program Supervisors</b>	Child and Youth Program Director	X	X	X		X	X
	Child/Youth Choir Director	X	X	X		X	Recommended
	Choir Director	X	X	X		X	Recommended
	Director of Religious Education	X	X	X		X	Recommended
	Organist	X	X	X	X		
<b>Program Participants (non-supervisory)</b>	Acolyte Mentor	X		X	X		
	Church School Teacher	X		X	X		
	Unpaid Nursery Worker	X		X	X		
	Teenage assistants			X	X		
	Pastoral Care Team	X	X	X	X		
	Overnight Youth Group Leaders	X	X	X		X	
<b>Drivers</b>		DMV		X			
<b>Governance</b>	Church Elected			X	X		
	Finance Chair	Criminal & Credit		X	X		
	Treasurer	Criminal & Credit		X	X		
	Vestry			X	X		
	Wardens	Criminal		X		X	
<b>Key Access</b>				X			
<b>Key Access with a Recurring Building Use Agreement</b>	Recovery Ministries, Community Groups, Youth Organizations, etc.			X or Adherence to the organization's written policies			

## Appendix B – Guidelines for Digital Communications

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

### A. General Information about Digital Communications

- All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, posts, etc.) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL and can be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- In the digital world, healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- In the digital world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality, and expectations for relationship.
- Adults and children or youth are not equals. The adult holds a position of power due to both their age and position, and is therefore responsible for the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of the child or youth in all interactions.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.
- All communications with youth and children should be undertaken in a group format and include two unrelated adults.

More guidelines will be forthcoming.

# Local Resources for Response

Updated August 28, 2024

The following is a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate St. Paul's Policy for Protection of Children and Youth.

## Responsible Person(s) for Programs and Ministries with Children and Youth

Priest in Charge – Jason Miller

[jason@stpaulsharrishill.org](mailto:jason@stpaulsharrishill.org)

716.632.8221

Youth Group Leader – Aaron Macke

716.207.9885

## Clergy in Charge of St. Paul's

The Rev. Jason Miller

[jason@stpaulsharrishill.org](mailto:jason@stpaulsharrishill.org)

716.632.8221

## Wardens

Andrea Brown

[andrealtbrown@gmail.com](mailto:andrealtbrown@gmail.com)

716.238.5237

Kate Macke

[ka5966m@msn.com](mailto:ka5966m@msn.com)

716.207.1848

## Bishop

The Rt. Rev. Sean W. Rowe

[bishop@episcopalpartnership.org](mailto:bishop@episcopalpartnership.org)

716.881.0660 x113

## Diocesan Intake Officer(s)

The Rev. Sarah M. Rieth

[intake@episcopalpartnership.org](mailto:intake@episcopalpartnership.org)

716.881.0660 x112

The Rev. Jim Clement

[rector@trinitychurchwny.org](mailto:rector@trinitychurchwny.org)

716.467.7827

## Child Protective Services / Child Abuse Hotline

800.342.3720