



**POLICIES**

**AND**

**PROCEDURES**

**FOR**

**GRACE CHILDREN**

## Grace Anglican Community Safety Policies & Procedures

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## Letter from the Bishop Of The Diocese the Western Gulf Coast

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

To clergy, lay leadership, and our whole diocesan family,  
Grace and Peace in our Lord Jesus.

The Holy Scriptures speak of the Church as the Body of Christ and His bride. God calls His Church and all Her members to a life of holiness, service, and love of neighbor. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, calls us to be ministers of His gospel for a broken world.

We are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to participate in God’s redemption of the whole of creation. As a community of faith, the Church stands for truth, justice, mercy, compassion, reconciliation, service, and sacrifice. The Church serves as a field hospital, where the broken may enter and encounter the love, grace,

peace, and healing power of Christ’s redemption. This is central to our vocation.

To this end, the parishes of The Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast must be safe. Our responsibility to shepherd the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of each person is essential. In our broken world, the vulnerable are often exploited. Statistics demonstrate that approximately one in four girls and one in six boys suffer abuse in their lifetime.

This means that it is highly likely that our congregations are made up of men and women who have either experienced abuse or know a survivor/victim of abuse.

Unfortunately, this is true for every denomination. In order to be light in a dark world, the Church must be different. The Church must take action in order to equip leaders to safeguard those in its care.

The congregations of the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast join the College of Bishops and leaders across the Anglican Church in North America in affirming the following:

- God’s CREATION is a good gift

- Humanity is PART OF creation yet UNIQUE
  - IMAGE OF GOD: Every human being is created in the image of God and has inherent worth and dignity.
- Humanity is uniquely CALLED to stewardship/care in love
  - STEWARD: The Church is called to steward God's creation [including humanity/Church] and His bride, the Church.
  - RESPECT: This understanding of sexuality calls for equal respect for all men, women, and children as persons made in God's image, and for everyone's right to sexual and physical integrity.
- Humanity is embodied and communal and has received the good gift of sex to be enjoyed within covenant
  - SEX IS A GIFT: Sexuality is good, blessed, and purposeful; sexuality is understood to be a gift that is celebrated by sexual union within the bond of love found within the covenant of a man and a woman in marriage.
- Humanity is Broken
  - VULNERABLE: Children, adolescents, the infirmed, and elderly are particularly vulnerable to the tragic consequences of broken covenants and abusive treatment, and special care must be taken to protect their individual rights and personal integrity.
- Church is About the Restoration of Humanity

◦ JUSTICE: All types of abuse (verbal, physical, neglect, and sexual misconduct) will be taken seriously by the Diocese and, when required by law, will be reported to the appropriate local, state, and/or federal agency.

◦ PROTECTION: The protection of the vulnerable shall be of utmost concern.

◦ RESPONSIBILITY: The Church has always recognized that those chosen for ordained ministry bear a particular responsibility to pattern their lives according to Jesus' teaching. Bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders are called to be faithful examples of the Christian life. Any moral offense by clergy or laity entrusted with pastoral and educational ministries is especially hurtful because it betrays the trust committed to each by the Church to nurture and care for every member.

"If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

(John 10:9b-11)

As the Body of Christ, we are called to be children of light, uncovering what is done in

the darkness, and to protect and care for the vulnerable in our midst. I am grateful for your ministry and commitment to this policy .

Bishop Clark W. P. Lowenfield



Dear Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Grace Anglican Community!

At Grace, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Grace volunteers, nursery workers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

***Karen Henson***  
***Grace Anglican Children's Minister***

# Grace Anglican Community Policies & Procedures for Children's Ministries

## Overview of Grace Anglican Community Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Grace requires all staff members, nursery workers and volunteers working with children to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Grace policies and procedures require that staff member, nursery workers and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their characteristics.

To equip Grace staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Grace requires all staff members and volunteers to complete Ministry Safe's Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (live or online) The online link will be sent to you and must be completed before employment starts. This training will be renewed every two years. All completed training must be kept on file at Grace.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff members, nursery workers and volunteers are required to complete Grace's Screening Process, which requires

- complete an Employment or volunteer application
  - complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
  - complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
  - provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)
- \*a volunteer must attend Grace for **six months** before being eligible to serve in volunteer positions providing access to children. All applications must be kept on file at Grace

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members, nursery workers and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

### **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

Grace requires that all staff members, nursery workers and volunteers working in children's programming **must** undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required. **Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors.** In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

## **Child Safety Policy**

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

Grace has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Grace to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their supervisor Karen Henson, Children's Minister or the Lead Pastor, Bob Henson.

In the absence, of the Children's minister or Lead Pastor, Concerns maybe reported to Henry Covert, Youth Minister or Bill Russell, Executive Pastor.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Grace is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the leadership of Grace first, then the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or staff member. Grooming behavior will be covered in The Abuse Awareness Training Video.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Grace policies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will not be allowed to future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Grace. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct will result in termination of employment at Grace .

Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at Grace.

## **Safety Committee**

### **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Grace will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each quarter.

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Grace's Children's Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

- Lead Pastor – Bob Henson
- Executive Pastor – Bill Russell
- Children's Minister – Karen Henson
- Youth Minister – Henry Covert



## **Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan**

### **BUILDING SAFETY**

Every ministry supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the ministry program area is monitored during programming serving children. This includes unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children. **No child will ever be left unattended in a ministry area, classes or activities.**

### **SUPERVISION**

Only parents (dropping off children), screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children is occurring. All other adults should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, a ministry supervisor or security team member should be notified immediately.

**Grace has a security team in place during service hours**

**Two trained, screened adults should supervise children at all times.**

Avoid being alone with an individual child in any room or during any ministry program. If one supervising adult must leave a group of children, another volunteer or employee must be notified so that the **Two Adult Rule** can be followed.

If two individuals serving in a room are related to one another, a third unrelated volunteer or staff member must be present.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

If you need to talk with a child alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you.

After every ministry event, ensure that every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

## **Child Safety Measures**

### **WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS**

My Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child ratios will be observed:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Workers</b>	<b>Children</b>
Nursery	2	10
Preschool, 2 & 3 years old	2	10
Preschool, 4 & 5 years old	2	12
Elementary	2	10

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

### **RELEASE OF CHILDREN**

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event, that staff members or volunteers are uncertain about releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the children's minister before releasing the child.

## **Home Group Procedures**

Grace does not exercise, control over home groups. The care and protection of children in such settings is always the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child.

A Home group is defined as a small group meeting in a home for Bible study, Worship and fellowship.

### **First Aid & Medication**

Grace Nursery workers must be certified in CPR training for children

No medication is given to any children

A parent must administer any needed medication

If there is any concern about the welfare of a child, parents must be notified immediately

### **Photography**

Photos may not be taken of children without permission from the parents or guardian. Names must not be posted on any media including Grace Anglican face book and/or website

### **Intoxicants and Tobacco Use**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Grace facility,

Grace requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during activities or programs. Grace is a tobacco-free facility.

## **Restroom Policies**

Adults or Youth DO NOT USE OR OCCUPY a bathroom in use by children. Adults should use a restroom separate and apart from restrooms used by children during weekend services or when there are children present. **Children should use the bathroom in the nursery area or be accompanied by parent to general bathroom.** If the general bathroom must be used, staff or volunteer must check bathroom and then stand outside the door. If child needs your assistance, ask for another adult to be with you or leave the outside door to bathroom open

### **NURSERY CHILDREN**

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

#### **Diapering**

- Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers. A changing table is located in the main nursery area
- Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. .

#### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of individuals with special needs. **After the age of 4,** parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all individuals with special needs. If someone with special needs requires assistance using the restroom their parent or guardian may assist them in the restroom.

## **Disciplinary Policies**

### **DISCIPLINE**

It is Grace's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. When a child is misbehaving, follow these steps:

1. Go to the child and calmly ask him or her to stop the behavior and redirect. (Most children respond immediately and correct the behavior.)
2. If the child repeats the action, guide them to a quiet place – separate from the other children – for a short but designated period of time. Stay within sight of others and avoid being alone with the child.  
Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the separation, and a clear explanation of your expectations.
3. After a 3rd time, refer to a staff member. A staff member may inform a parent or guardian, who may be asked to become involved in redirecting misbehavior.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to ministry supervisor.

### **NEVER...**

- Never yell at a child.
- Never grab a child.
- Never threaten a child. Always follow through with your word.
- Never hit a child.
- Never confront a parent in front of others.
- Never openly humiliate a child in front of the class.

### **BULLYING**

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable at Grace. At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, and inform your ministry supervisor. There is no "harmless put-down" where bullying is concerned.

## **Verbal Interactions with Children**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Grace staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

## **One-to-One Interactions with Children**

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to – one conversations with Grace’s Children’s. Another adult who has completed the Ministry Safe training should be present. If necessary speak with child in open area where other adults are located

## **Physical Contact**

Grace is committed to protecting children in its care. Grace promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children’s Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children’s Ministries programs:

- 
- Hugging, pats on the back, high fives and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children’s development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to the children’s minister (Karen Henson) or the Lead Pastor (Bob Henson). If they are not available inform the Youth minister, Henry Covert.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children’s staff members and volunteers.
- Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child’s preference not to be touched must be respected.

## **Parental Involvement**

### **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a child in the care of Grace staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Grace. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs **will be required** to complete the Grace volunteer application and screening process.

### **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.

Monitoring procedures should include, but are not limited to:

- Two-Adult Rule: All child and youth activities shall be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals, preferably not related to each other.
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a parish activity.
- Clergy, staff members, and/or volunteers should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children.
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should take place in a public place or where other persons are present.
- All leaders are expected to watch for policy violations and report them.
- An open invitation should be extended to parents, caregivers, or legal guardians to visit at any time unannounced.
- A careful review of new programs and significant changes to program structure.
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times.
- Keeping unused rooms locked whenever possible.
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the parish building

## **Internet/Electronic Media**

Almost without exception, sexual abusers are skilled at communicating with children and teens within the abuser's age and gender of preference. Creating a connection with a targeted child forms a critical element in the abuser's grooming process: the process whereby an abuser wins the child's trust, pushes back boundaries and engages in inappropriate touch or talk. Ministry leaders, staff members and volunteers should understand this process, completing Awareness Training prior to service. The policy excerpt below should be considered through the lens of the offender's grooming process: how the abuser uses electronic communication and social media to establish a connection, win trust, push back boundaries, introduce nudity and sexual content and, eventually, incorporate sexual touch.

Staff, nursery workers and volunteers should only be in contact with the parent or guardian through social media, not with the children. This is for your protections also. This includes instant gram, face book, texting or verbally calling except with permission of parents for special occasions.

If a child mentions someone reaching out through media from the church, this should be immediately addressed.



## **Should you suspect abuse or neglect – DON'T WAIT OR HESITATE**

One of several ways in which the clergy, staff member, or volunteer may come to suspect child abuse or neglect is from information that a child himself or herself shares. If a child discloses abuse or neglect, the clergy, staff member, or volunteer receiving such a communication should attempt to:

- Respect the child's privacy by finding an appropriate non-threatening place to talk.
- If possible, ask a staff member, trained volunteer, or other responsible adult to join in listening to the child's/youth's account.
- Keep calm, listen, and avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- Let the child know that he/she is understood.
- Assure the child that any abuse was not his/her fault.
- If helpful, tell the child that he/she was brave to disclose the abuse.
- Child survivors/victims are often vague in their initial disclosure— avoid questions that could make the child feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint the child's recollection and account. A safe question is always, "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?"
- Write down as accurately as possible what the child disclosed. This information can be used in filing the Report of Suspected Abuse Form and helps capture all the information needed to make a Child Protective Services report.
- Be careful afterwards not to discuss the information with, or in front of, other people who do not need to know what happened. Discussion about the information should be limited to appropriate parish and legal authorities,

## **REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT**

We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS)

Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

Because many adults are unfamiliar with Texas reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, Grace utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model. A 'dual report' occurs when a Grace employer or supervisor reports the suspicion or allegation together with the individual who saw, heard or received information causing him or her to suspect abuse or neglect.

Please report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect (or any inappropriate or 'grooming' behaviors of a colleague or coworker) to an immediate supervisor or a member of Grace staff. This request is intended to assist the church in properly protecting children involved in Grace programs.

**When in doubt, report.**

**Communication with the Congregation.**

The Congregation should not first hear about an instance of abuse in your parish from a news report or through the rumor mill. Consequently, it is important to have early and transparent communication of essential and non-confidential facts with the congregation. The communication should be succinct, factual, non-speculative and survivor sensitive and send a clear message that the survivors/victims are being cared for and that the parish is a safe place.

**The Diocese provides a hotline for confidential reporting (832-422-8199). The phone number is published on the DWGC's website**

**Information and Laws on reporting suspected abuse**

In both the Nursery and Children's area, a notebook containing the procedures of the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast

## Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to the Ministry Supervisor.

I have received and read a copy of Grace's Children's Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Grace.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at Grace at any time (**If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor**).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and My Church. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of Grace policies and procedures manual.

I am (check appropriate group):

- Clergy
- Vestry or equivalent
- Employee, non-clergy
- Lay minister
- Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

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



# **Policies and Procedures for Grace Youth Ministry**

## **Sexual Ethics in the Context of Youth Ministry**

We recognize that contemporary cultural trends and attitudes about gender and sexual ethics are complex and rapidly changing. You may find students wrestling with issues around gender fluidity, gender dysphoria, same-sex attraction or other situations which may challenge the existing policies. These situations may require specific knowledge or understanding so we can care for individual students, in a loving and caring community setting. In consultation with the Bishop, the Rector/Senior Pastor is responsible for local adaptation around specific ministry situations and with regards to suitable protection practices that embody the Diocese's guiding values.

## **Social Media Policy**

The term "social media" refers to social networking services, blogs, short-message services, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image- and video-sharing sites, and other methods for real-time information sharing among users. Because this is a constantly evolving area, these principles below apply to all new social media platforms whether they are specifically mentioned here. Social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. A student's world is often constructed around social media. Having personal interactions in this venue allows adults to model appropriate behavior in social media, and it forms valuable connections with students.

**Be smart.** A blog or community post is often visible to the entire world and can be shared by others in ways that you cannot control. Remember that what you write is public and will remain public for a very long time.

**Be selective.** There are a variety of communication methods available, and not all communications are well-suited to social media platforms. Consider whether your communication is better suited to face-to-face conversation, a phone call, email, or other method.

**Be respectful.** Your parish is a thoughtful and prayerful community that encourages free expression and values civil debate. If you disagree with others, do so with civility. Respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, and be respectful of the Church and its teachings.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (usually 13). For those students younger than 13 years old, get parent or legal guardian permission for any communication and welcome the parents or legal guardian into that environment. All screening procedures should be followed and up to date for all staff and volunteers. Sending sexually explicit or offensive communications (e.g., text messages, emails, social media messages or posts) is included in the definition of sexual harassment and will not be tolerated regardless of age.

Virtual spaces are to be treated the same as in-person spaces. This means two adults must be online with any youth (known as the two-adult rule), participants must be appropriately clothed, and conversation should not be held in the adult's bedroom. The parents or legal guardians should be aware that the student is in conversation with the leaders.

Use group apps rather than private messages for ongoing communication. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present.

Remember that all social media parish accounts or groups must model appropriate behavior and language. Student pictures should not be shared without parent or legal guardian permission in public groups, and membership into private groups should be monitored by both the parish and the parent(s) or legal guardians closely. Use personal interactions on social media avenues to model appropriate behavior and language, both on and off social media.

## **Spiritual Direction & Pastoral Counseling with Youth**

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek discipleship opportunities. This frequently manifests in ongoing 1:1, 1:2, or 1:3 relationships where participants meet regularly for a long-term partnership. This is not the same situation as pastoral counseling, which is intended for a singular focus and therefore is limited in scope. Pastoral counseling typically covers singular issues or questions, conflict management, confession, crisis counseling and relationship counseling. If

pastoral counseling requires more than three sessions, refer the youth to a professional.

If long-term spiritual direction with a youth is agreed upon, consider these safeguards:

- Ensure this relationship is brought into the light among the leadership team of the parish by informing multiple people of this partnership; this includes obtaining parental/guardian consent and knowledge of discipleship meetings.
- If there are multiple people offering long-term spiritual direction to youth in your parish, consider meeting every quarter to discuss the process and its benefits to the parish, as well as accountability.
- Meet in a public place, not in one another's private living quarters.
- It is recommended that it be conducted by same biological sex participants.
- Follow guidelines regarding interaction and physical contact.
- Define the parameters of the relationship at the first meeting, articulating how one might discontinue the relationship without further explanation at any time.
- Communicate to whom the participant should report if they have any concerns (including the names and numbers of senior leadership, the Bishop, and a reporting hotline).
- Include prayer and the study of Scripture in your regular time together

## **Transportation**

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children and youth. The following guidelines should be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children or youth whenever possible:

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the parish copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- Adult volunteer drivers must undergo an insurance approved background check including a DMV record check. Use of child safety seats that meet federal standards is required. Drivers and passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines. Parishes are advised to consult with their insurance provider regarding the minimum age for adult drivers. Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 18 be allowed to drive children/youth as part of an event.
- At no time shall there be one adult and one child traveling in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). Automobiles will contain either one driver and two or more participants or two adults and any number of children (within the seat belt limitations of the vehicle; seatbelts are ALWAYS required). If there is an extenuating circumstance causing only one adult and one child to travel together in an automobile, permission must be obtained by a parent or legal guardian of the

child. This permission should be written and signed by the parent/guardian or documented by the volunteer if only verbal consent is obtainable. The child or youth should be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.

- No cell phones, including hands-free devices, may be utilized by the driver while driving parish-owned vehicles, unless in an emergency, with the exception of GPS navigation.
- Transport children directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks should be done as a group. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No one under age 25 may drive vehicles rented by a parish unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement; no drivers under age 25 may drive parish-owned vehicles unless explicitly covered by the parish's auto insurance policy.
- In special circumstances these may be altered for emergencies. In these cases, the children/youth pastor (or her/his supervisor) should be notified immediately.
- If a family situation necessitates a special circumstance, the family may sign a waiver stating the deviance from the diocesan or parish policy; this policy should note the family's acceptance of responsibility.

### **Peer-on-Peer Abuse**

It is imperative for parents, caregivers, legal guardians, and supervising adults to recognize peer-on-peer abuse and not dismiss what they see as "kids being kids". Peer-on-peer abuse is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between children. It includes bullying, cyberbullying, sexual violence, harassment, and sexting. The behavior in question is harmful to both the perpetrator and the survivor/victim. And the prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse is alarming. According to the U.S. Department of Justice National Sex Offender Website, 30-50 percent of youth are sexually abused by other juveniles.

### **Preventing Peer-On-Peer Abuse**

Following are some helpful suggestions to prevent peer-on-peer abuse from the Redwoods Group (a Crumb and Forster Company) that provides insurance to youth-serving organizations.

- Comprehensive, Engaged Supervision: Peer-to-peer abuse tends to be opportunistic and happens when there is a lack of supervision. Be sure that youth are always in the presence of staff. That means maintaining ratios and being actively engaged with all youth. Bathrooms, cabins, and locker rooms require enhanced supervision, as these high-risk locations can be seen as a more private area that the instigator believes will make it easier to go undetected.

- **Be Aware of Blind Spots and Unstructured Time:** Peer-to-peer abuse also tends to occur in “easy-to-cover” locations and during unstructured times. Be aware of blind spots such as, play structures, seats on the bus, and even items of clothing that can all provide cover for acts of abuse. Because of the potential for distraction, relatively unstructured transition times at the beginning or end of programming or during transportation also present added dangers.
- **Watch for Red Flag Behaviors:** Peer-to-peer abuse often escalates from bullying, so having a robust anti-bullying culture is key. Address physical aggression or verbal teasing early, especially when repeatedly targeting a specific individual—and intentionally follow-up with the survivor/victim to make sure they are feeling safe. It’s also important to watch for any form of inappropriate sexual behavior or language, which may be a sign of abuse.
- **Plan for Power Imbalances:** Abuse often occurs when one youth holds some form of physical or social power over another. Whether it’s through planning seating arrangements, how we organize group work, or how we supervise bathroom breaks, we can avoid such imbalances turning into potentially abusive situations. In general, seat youth of similar ages and sizes together, and be sure to break up groups where red flag behaviors have been observed or are suspected.

### **Overnight Events**

Certain youth ministry activities may require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for youth, staff and volunteers. As part of the Supervisory Plan required for all youth and children’s ministry (including lock-ins, mission trips, retreats and other ministry that involves overnight stays), the following procedures must be considered and monitored.

- As always, the two-adult rule should be adhered to; a single student should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer. If a situation arises where only one adult is present, a minimum of two students must also be present.
- Overnight sleeping arrangements must be detailed in the Supervisory Plan and shared with those responsible for providing the supervision. An individual student should not be housed alone with another student or adult (in overnight cases, a minimum of three is required).
- As long as any students are actively awake, two trip leaders must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
- Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn by all.
- Staff members and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically



conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.

- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these

instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

- In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by leaders of the same biological sex.

- Staff and volunteers in youth ministry should never be nude in the presence of

students in their care. Showering considerations and private areas for changing clothes must be thought through with rotation schedules.

- Leaders should check with parents or legal guardians and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. R-rated movies require Rector/Senior Pastor and parental/guardian approval.

- Cell phones should be collected at the beginning of the overnight event and returned prior to leaving for home.

- Identification and communication of areas of the home, parish or camp that are off limits to guests.

- Communication of emergency exit plans, and location of fire extinguishers an