



Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

Policies for Parish Ministries with Children or Youth

“Safeguarding God’s Children”

Supplemental Material & Recommended Forms

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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We your bishops are steadfastly committed to seeing that the Episcopal Church is a community of safety and health for all people. The Body of Christ, the Church, must be a place where adults, children, and young people find the love and blessing of God, and where no one might be hurt and where their hurts may be healed.

We are all aware of the reports in the media, during the past year and more, of incidents of sexual misconduct in churches. Many of these tragedies have involved children and young people. While the Roman Catholic Church has most often been mentioned in news reports and accusations, the rest of the Church and many secular agencies have also been caught up in trying to address the damage done to our children by sexual predators. The Episcopal Church is not immune to this scourge in our society and we must respond to it honestly and forthrightly.

Our Church has repeatedly upheld our mandate to be a haven of safety for all. The Scriptures teach us that every human being is made in the image of God; and our Lord enjoins us to receive and serve the least among us as we would receive and serve him. The mandates of our baptismal covenant include seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, striving for justice and peace for all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

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

While we were in conference together at Kanuga, North Carolina in the spring, many of us had the opportunity to learn more about pedophilia, a form of predatory sexual behavior that has caused untold harm in our society and in the Body of Christ. It is especially important that we as a church focus on understanding and preventing pedophilia.

While we need to be aware that pedophilia is a reality in our society, which can be manifest in the church, we must be very clear about the nature of this tragic problem. Pedophilia is pervasive; one in eight males and one in four females will be molested before they reach the age of eighteen. Of reported cases in the general population, sixty percent (60%) of abusers are known to their victims, thirty percent (30%) are family members or relatives, and ten percent (10%) are strangers. We must be aware that the Church is a community which offers predators the opportunity to become known and trusted by parents and their children.

We also know that offenders are predominantly male and heterosexual. We must take great care not to equate pedophilia with homosexuality in

out minds or our conversation, and we must never assume that only men molest children in this way.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some helpful materials will be available through your diocesan office by the first of November. We ask that as you make use of them you will remember the challenge our Lord provided to his followers, “unless you become as children you cannot enter the kingdom of God.” We renew our commitment to ensure that our church is a community of love and care for every person. We ask that you join us in doing all in our power to see that all our members find among us a safe place where they can be open and trusting and able to know the reconciling love of God in Christ that makes all things new.

A Collect for the Care of Children

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (BCP 829)

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

Resolution B008, Protection of Children and Youth From Abuse, 74th General Convention (2003)

Topic/Title: Children: Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse

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

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

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

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

1. A screening and selection process for all clergy, lay employees and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
 - a. A written application
 - b. A public records check
 - c. An interview
 - d. Reference checks
 - e. A general provision that volunteers not work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months
2. The articulation of behavioral standards for clergy, lay employees, and volunteers working with children or youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
 - a. Respect for the privacy and dignity of children and youth by not putting them in inappropriate unmonitored one-to-one situations
 - b. Age-appropriate arrangements for sleeping, bathing, dressing, or showering
 - c. The prohibition of dating, romantic involvements, or sexual contact with a child or youth
 - d. The prohibition of any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program
 - e. Guidelines for physical contact and expressions of affection that define appropriate and inappropriate behaviors
 - f. The prohibition of discussing their own sexual activities and fantasies with children or youth

g. The prohibition of the non-sacramental use, possession, distribution or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs

3. The monitoring of programs and interaction with children and youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Regular Church Worker Application – Sample

This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position that will regularly (as defined by the *Policies for Ministry with Children or Youth*) be responsible for the supervision of children or youth, and will herein be referred to as an “applicant”. This screening form is being used to help ____ (*Church name*) ____ provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. At the same time, we feel a need to protect our workers as well as the church itself.

Please complete all of the questions accurately and fully. Please write legibly. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Personal Data

Today’s Date: _____

Name _____ Date of Birth: _____

Mailing address: _____

Physical address: _____

How long at current address: _____

Home phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Cell phone: _____ email: _____

Best time to contact you: _____

Name on Driver’s License _____

Driver’s License #: _____ State of Issue: _____

Social Security #: _____

For what position are you applying: _____

Volunteer Experience

Please include any prior volunteer experience that involved working with children or youth.

Organization: _____ Dates: _____

Contact person: _____ Phone number: _____

Duties: _____

Organization: _____ Dates: _____

Contact person: _____ Phone number: _____

Duties: _____

References

Please provide three (3) references, two of which are not members of ____ (Church name) _____. Please include at least one each of the following: professional/civic reference, personal reference, church/non-profit reference. It is preferable that you include reference(s) that have observed you working with children or youth.

Name: _____ Relationship to you: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

How long have you known this person: _____

Name: _____ Relationship to you: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

How long have you known this person: _____

Name: _____ Relationship to you: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

How long have you known this person: _____

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

_____ Yes _____ No

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth

Please initial each item to signify your compliance with the statement.

_____ I agree to observe all church policies regarding working with children and youth

_____ I have read and agree to abide by the *Guidelines for Appropriate Affection in Ministry With Children or Youth* (see attached).

_____ I have not been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse

_____ I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church sponsored activities and in the event that I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth I agree to immediately report my observations.

_____ I agree not to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.

_____ I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse or children or youth and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

Acknowledgment, Release, and Signature

To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application is complete and accurate. I understand that providing false information is grounds for not hiring me or choosing me for a volunteer position or for my discharge if I have already been hired or chosen.

I authorize any person or organization, whether or not identified in this application, to provide any information concerning my previous employment, education, credit history, driving record, criminal conviction record, sexual offender registry or other qualifications for my employment or volunteering. I also authorize _____(Church name) _____ to request and receive such information.

If hired or chosen, I agree to be bound by _____(Church name) _____ policies and procedures, including but not limited to its Policies for Ministries with Children or Youth and Guidelines for Appropriate Affection in Ministry With Children or Youth. I understand that these may be changed, withdrawn, added to or interpreted at any time at the _____(Church name) _____ sole discretion and without prior notice to me.

I also understand that my employment or volunteering may be terminated, or any offer or acceptance of my employment or volunteering withdrawn, at any time, with or without cause, and with or without prior notice at the option of ____(*Church name*) ____ or myself.

Nothing contained in this application or in any pre-employment or pre-volunteering communication is intended to or creates a contract between ____(*Church name*) ____ and me for either employment, volunteering or the providing of any benefit.

I have read and understand the above provisions.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (please print) _____ Phone number: _____

Occasional Church Worker Application

Name of Event or Activity _____ Date _____

This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position who will occasionally (as defined by the *Policies for Ministry with Children or Youth*) be responsible for the supervision of children or youth, and will herein be referred to as an "applicant". This screening form is being used to help ___(Church name)___ provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. At the same time, we feel a need to protect our workers as well as the church itself.

Please note the following:

1. Any applicant who has been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse is not permitted to work in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. All applicants working with youth or children are required to be members and regular attendees of ___(Church name)___ for a minimum of six (6) months and be at least 21 years old.
3. All applicants must observe all the policies and guidelines of ___(Church name)___ regarding work with children and youth.
4. All applicants should immediately report any behaviors, which seem abusive or inappropriate to the rector, or the rector's designee.

Please initial each item to signify your compliance with the statement.

- ____ I agree to observe all church policies regarding working with children and youth
- ____ I have read and agree to abide by the *Guidelines for Appropriate Affection in Ministry With Children or Youth* (see attached).
- ____ I have not been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse
- ____ I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church sponsored activities and in the event that I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth I agree to immediately report my observations.
- ____ I agree not to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- ____ I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse or children or youth and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

I have read the above and agree to observe the policies as listed and acknowledge that the answers above are accurate.

Signature

Telephone Number

Please print name

Date

(office use: Reviewed and approved by: _____ Date: _____)

Medical Authorization

Event _____ Dates _____
Event Location _____

Participant's name _____ Birth Date _____
Address _____

Parent's or Guardian's Name: _____ Home phone _____
Father's work phone _____ Mother's work phone _____
Father's cell phone _____ Mother's cell phone _____

Alternate contact _____ Phone _____

Medical Information:

Doctor name _____
Allergies _____

Medications _____

Other Information _____

Insurance Information:

I have medical insurance coverage for the above named participant.

Company _____ Policy number _____
Address _____

Policy in Name of _____
Insurance Policy I. D. _____
Social Security Number of Policy Holder: _____ - _____ - _____

I acknowledge that I do not have "medical insurance" for the above named participant and understand that we are financially responsible for all costs.

In the event of an emergency, I hereby authorize an adult leader of this activity to act as agent for me to consent to any medical, dental, or surgical treatment and care deemed necessary by a licensed medical professional. I expect to be notified as soon as possible. I acknowledge that I am financially responsible for any emergency medical or dental costs.

Parent/Guardian name (please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

**Consent for excursion or extended trip,
Release waiver and indemnification Form**

Event _____ Date(s) _____
Event Location _____
Name _____ Age _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Parents work/cell phone _____
Where parents will be during event: _____
Notify in case of emergency _____ Phone _____

PARENTS:

I/we understand that certain rules of conduct have been established for all participants during the trip/event and I/we assume responsibility for the youth's actions during the trip/event and the youth's compliance with the rules. I/we agree that, in the event the youth violates the established rules for youth during the trip/event:

I/we assume all liability for and agree to save, indemnify, defend and hold ____(*Church name*)____, its agents, servants, volunteers, and employees, harmless from any and all claims or demands of any sort or nature for damage or injury to persons or property caused by the acts or neglect of the youth; and

- (1) In the event of repeated violations or a serious violation of the established rules by the youth, I/we will accept a collect telephone call concerning the youth's actions and behavior and I/we further understand, agree and consent to the youth being returned home immediately by public transportation at my/our expense.

I/we further understand and agree that the youth may, during part or all of the trip/event, travel by private vehicle, and I/we hereby agree consent to thereto and specifically: (1) waive any and all claims of any sort or nature I/we may have against the owner and/or driver of any such private transportation for any personal injury, bodily injury or death and for any property damage, regardless of the cause thereof, and (2) agree to hold harmless and indemnify the owner and/or driver of any such private transportation from any and all claims or demands of any sort or nature which may be asserted by or on behalf of the youth for any personal injury, bodily injury, death or property damage, regardless of the cause thereof.

I/we waive any claim against the ____(*Church name*)____, sponsors, agents, servants, volunteers and employees and hereby release them from any responsibility and liability for any personal or bodily injury, death or property damage that my child may sustain during the above listed activity. I/we agree to indemnify, save and hold the church, its agents, servants volunteers, and employees, harmless from any claim, demand or cause of action of whatsoever nature or kind asserted by or on behalf of the youth for any personal or bodily injury, death or property damage sustained by the youth during the trip/event and the youth's participation therein.

By our signatures here on we affirm that we have read and fully understand the terms, conditions, releases, and waivers above set forth.

Date: _____ Parent or guardian _____

Reference contact form

Record of contact with a reference, employer, or volunteer organization
Identified by an applicant for regular work with children or youth.

Name of Applicant: _____

Person from ____ (Church name) ____ making the contact: _____

Method of contact (e.g. telephone, letter, personal conversation): _____

Date and time of contact: _____

Name and telephone number of reference contacted (if someone other than the reference, give reason why state reference was unavailable): _____

“In what ways have you seen the applicant work with children or youth?”

“Did the applicant follow the rules?”

“In your opinion, is the applicant suitable for work with children or youth, and why?”

“Did anyone ever complain about the applicant’s interactions with children?”

“Do you have a particular concern about the applicant working with children and/or youth? Or, is there a particular weakness which you think will affect his/her working with children and/or youth?”

“Does the applicant hold any other jobs or do any other volunteer work with children?”

“Is there anyone else we should contact?”

Summary of conversation – summarize the remarks concerning the applicant’s fitness and suitability for children or youth work:

Note: If the reference has reservations about the applicant’s suitability, be sure to note the facts that support the reference’s reservations. Facts are of much more relevance than unsubstantiated opinions. Ask for names of other persons who could verify the facts identified by the reference. For example, if the reference is aware of an incident of inappropriate contact with a child, were any witnesses present? Who were they?

Some references may hesitate to provide information, particularly if it is negative. If so, read the applicant’s statement/release at the end of the screening form. This authorizes the reference to comment on the applicant and releases the reference from liability for statements that are made. If necessary, offer to mail or fax a copy of the release to the reference.

Signature

Date

Position

Notice of Concern

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

Confidential Notice of Concern

(Please print form and be as specific as possible)

Individual(s) of Concern:

Date of occurrence:

Time of occurrence:

Type of occurrence:

Type of Concern: *(Check applicable concerns)*

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

Describe the situation: What happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, who was present, who was notified? If reported to the State, what was their recommendation about investigating? *Attach additional sheets if needed.*

Has this situation ever occurred previously? *Attach additional sheets if needed.*

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

What is the follow-up plan? Does anyone need to be notified: Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation? *Attach additional sheets if needed.*

Submitted by: (Please print)

Telephone Number:

Location and address:

Signature:

Reviewed by:

Once completed, submit the original completed report to The Rev. Canon José A. McLoughlin, Canon to the Ordinary, Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, 924 N. Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK 73102. No copies of the report may be made.

Trak-1

Introduction

The Diocese of Oklahoma has negotiated a contract with Trak-1 to perform background checks for our congregations. Trak-1 is a full service personal background research company specializing in the accumulation and distribution of public records via state-of-the-art internet technology. We believe Trak-1 to be an excellent choice for Episcopal churches in Oklahoma to perform background checks on all non-ordained staff and volunteers who work with children and youth because of the breadth of coverage in their checks, ease of use, affordability, and great customer service.

Signing on with Trak-1 will make it easy for Episcopal churches in Oklahoma to begin doing background checks on current and potential volunteers and non-ordained staff who work with children and youth. Trak-1 is not a substitute for backgrounds for clergy.

Using Trak-1 will serve the churches in the diocese by assisting them in complying with policy and helping them to make their churches a safe place for people of all ages to worship.

It is the role of the parish to acquire the background checks, pay for them, review the information they contain, decide whether to allow the individual to work with children or youth, and to maintain the records in a secure manner. The diocese will monitor compliance with the policy and ensure that required screenings are being done.

Policy

Section 3.1 of the *Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma: Policies for Parish Ministries with Children and Youth (Safeguarding God's Children)* states "Church Workers who regularly work with or around children or youth must be appropriately screened. Screening must include at least the following:

- A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks.
- Reference checks of persons who know the applicant; preferably who knows the applicant works with children or youth. A minimum of two references must be from outside the congregation.
- Criminal records check of all applicants, except Sunday school teachers, in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church.
- Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years.
- Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be regularly transporting children or youth.

An account with Trak-1 may be set up by going on-line to their website, www.new.trak-1.com or by calling them at 877-779-7003.

If you have any questions, contact the Canon to the Ordinary's Office at 202-232-4820.