

A Guide to
Safeguarding God's Children
at
Saint James Episcopal Church

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What is Safeguarding God's Children?

Safeguarding God's Children is a training program for the prevention of sexual abuse of children and youth. The program provides participants with information they need to protect the children they know and care for in their personal lives and in the ministries in which they serve. If every adult can protect just one child, they will forever change one life. If we can all change one life, together we will make a difference in this generation of children.

Ministry with children and youth, like much of the work Jesus Christ has given us to do, is a ministry of relationship. Children, youth and adult supervisors, parents, clergy and other volunteers come into contact with one another to share their lives, worship, have fun and explore how their spiritual beliefs shape their lives.

Jesus Christ calls us to loving relationships that are healthy and helpful to each other. We are to avoid taking advantage of those who are weaker or putting people in situations that are inappropriate for their age or maturity. In our ministry with children and youth, every child, youth and adult, deserves to be treated as Jesus would treat them, that is, with love, respect, and kindness. We are to seek God's purposes for one another and not our own selfish ends.

All participants in ministry to children and youth deserve to be in a safe environment, including, but not limited to, an environment that is free from harassment, abuse, and misconduct. Our Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse are meant to help provide such an environment.

Diocesan Requirements

The Diocese of Central PA requires all who are employed by the congregation, all who serve on vestry, all who work in children and youth ministry, all who volunteer with children and youth, and those who have keys to any of the church grounds to take this training from a diocesan-certified trainer. Diocesan certificates will be issued upon completion of the course. In addition, every Episcopal congregation is required to adopt Safeguarding God's Children model policies.

Why? The 2003 General Convention Resolution B008 requires that each diocese adopt policies for the protection of children and youth from abuse that address the following areas:

- The screening and selection of leaders and volunteers;
- The creation of behavioral standards for leaders and volunteers and the congregation at large;
- The monitoring of programs and interactions with children and youth;
- The education and training of leaders and volunteers; and
- The creation of guidelines for responding to concerns;

Every congregation must be in compliance in these areas, as well. In addition, our insurance company requires that each congregation in the Diocese of Central PA adopt policies for the protection of children and youth from abuse.

Who Needs the Training?

- All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church;
- All paid personnel, whether employed in areas of children and youth ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies;
- Those who contract their services to the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies;
- Volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers himself or herself for a church related service to and with children and youth (18 and under) or who actually assists with or performs a service with the children and/or youth of the congregation or is part of any function that is under the auspices the Diocese of Central PA and/or each congregation, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so;
- All church school teachers;
- All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities infrequently, generally no more than three times a year or for one program or activity during a year that lasts less than a month (i.e. assisting with preparation for the Christmas pageant, or teaching one "unit" of Church School for a month);

- All persons who provide transportation to children or youth (transportation with parent permission still requires Safeguarding God's Children training);
- All persons who work or assist in the nursery, whether on an emergency basis or otherwise;
- All vestry members or other members of similar decision-making groups who have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs or activities for children or youth. (They are invited to take the one hour training session); and
- Anyone who has a key to the church grounds and buildings.

How Saint James Maintains Compliance

Here at Saint James we are implementing the following procedures to ensure compliance.

The screening and selection of leaders and volunteers and the education and training of leaders and volunteers:

- All leaders and volunteers, as described above, will attend and complete Safeguarding God's Children Training, to be renewed every three years;
- All leaders and volunteers, as described above, will be subject to regularly updated criminal background check and child abuse clearance;
- Applicants and new leaders and volunteers will complete an application and code of conduct form, in which they agree to periodic background checks and to adhere to all relevant policies and procedures. All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not the person is appropriate to work with children or youth.

The monitoring of programs and interactions with children and youth:

Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations with Children or Youth:

When leaders and volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors that are inconsistent with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection or any provisions of these Policies and Procedures, they must immediately report their observations.

Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in at least one of the following ways:

1. All leaders and volunteers are required by this policy to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities;
2. A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor;
3. A telephone call or meeting with the rector

Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth is a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously.

The creation of behavioral standards for leaders and volunteers and the congregation at large along with the creation of guidelines for responding to concerns:

All leaders, volunteers, and applicable members of the congregation shall pledge to follow the following Child Protection Procedures, the Code of Conduct, and the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection.

Child Protection Procedures

- Transportation of a child or children by any single person or by a single married couple (other than the parents) will never occur. There must always be two unrelated Safeguarding trained adults in the vehicle.
- Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before leaders or volunteers from Saint James transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity.
- Home visitations in the absence of a parent or guardian will never occur.
- Any gathering of young people in a person's home in the absence of other authorized adults will never occur.
- One-to-one counseling with children will be done in an open or public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
- Leaders and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
- Leaders over the age of 21 must directly supervise leaders and volunteers under the age of 20 and be physically present during all activities.
- Leaders and volunteers are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. Physical force

may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth, or others.

- Leaders and volunteers are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint for behavior management.

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth

- We agree to do our best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- We agree not to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- We agree to comply with the policies of Safeguarding God's Children.
- We agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
- In the event that we observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, we agree to immediately report our observations.
- We acknowledge our obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with the policies of Safeguarding God's Children.
- We understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and we agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

Guidelines for Appropriate Affection

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some POSITIVE and APPROPRIATE forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High-fives and fist bumps
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, shoulders and arms of children or youth

- Arm around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during prayer

The following forms of affection are considered INAPPROPRIATE with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear, whether or not it is covered by other clothing.

- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

Every Child Matters

Dear Lord, we pray that we respect the dignity of every human being, we make that promise every time there is a baptism; help us Lord to remember that to respect the dignity of children we believe that,

Every child has the right to feel safe and secure

Every child has the right to be treated as an individual

Every child has the right to remain healthy

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting his or her needs

Every child has the right to information and support that will enable him or her to make informed and appropriate choices

Every child has the right to be accepted for who they are, without regard to age, gender, ability, race, culture or beliefs

Every child has the right to information and procedures for any complaint or queries he or she may have regarding intimate care.

Bless us in our mission and ministry work with children, give us the strength to put all children in the center of our sacred circle, as Jesus did when he blessed them, and called them to him and told the disciples theirs is the way to the Kingdom. All this we pray in Jesus name, Amen.