

# DIOCESE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE SAFER CHURCH POLICY & PROCEDURES

The sacred care of our youngest members

## PREAMBLE

The aim of this policy is to make our Church a safe place, safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children and safe for all who seek or serve Christ. We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

## SCREENING AND SELECTION FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH

The Bishop's Office will perform background checks on all clergy who are deployed or licensed to officiate within the Diocese. The Diocese will also do background checks on any diocesan employees or volunteers who regularly work with children or youth at diocesan events. These checks will include but are not limited to: a written application, reference checks, interviews and criminal, motor vehicle, credit, and job history/educational background checks.

**Congregations are mandated to perform background checks on all employees, any volunteers who regularly work with children or youth, and all wardens.**

Congregational background checks MUST include a criminal background check (<http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/nhsp/ssb/crimrecords/documents/dssp256.pdf>) and motor vehicle background check (<http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/dmv/forms/dsmv505.pdf>) through the State of NH. Background checks for volunteers who work with youth in churches may receive a reduced fee for each criminal background check (<http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/nhsp/ssb/crimrecords/documents/crfeform.pdf>).

Congregational background checks may also include the following:

- a. a written application
- b. an interview
- c. reference checks

**Background checks should be completed *within 30 days of hire or beginning of service to the church/Diocese*. Employment will be contingent upon the volunteer and/or employee complying with the completion of these background checks and satisfactory results. Background check reports are retained in the parish in secure files viewed only by the Rector/Vicar.**

**Volunteers should not be permitted to work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months.**

### **BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH**

Adults shall never, under any circumstances:

provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs or pornography, consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children's or youth event, be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any children's or youth 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, discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with children or youth. Firearms and concealed weapons are prohibited at any church activity. Rectors may make special exceptions for off-duty police officers or others required to carry firearms.

### **MONITORING PROGRAMS & INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH**

**Plans for all events and ministries for children and youth should include at least two, unrelated adults present at all times.** If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youths, that adult shall immediately report those circumstances to the Bishop's Office, Rector, or Senior Warden, as appropriate. It may be appropriate for a Sunday School class to have only one teacher so long as at least one other adult can maintain visual contact with the teacher and/or there is an adult who is in charge of "floating" amongst the classrooms as a monitor.

**The vestry should be informed of any new programs, trips or events that involve children or youth after approval by the Rector.**

**No event for children or youth shall take place in a private residence without prior notice to the vestry and/or the Rector.**

Adults who work with children or youth within a congregation should be **discouraged** from having a **separate and private relationship** with any unrelated child from the church away from sanctioned church youth activities.

Each parish is encouraged to have a Safe Church Minister who is current on safe church issues and training. The Safe Church Minister should be consulted by the Rector, Vestry members or others on safe church matters, and he/she should report all questionable or non-standard arrangements to the Rector or a Warden.

**It is required that the Safe Church Minister and the Vestry annually conduct a "safe church audit" to review practices and policies within the**

**congregation with the assistance of a Safe Church Minister from another parish.**

**Parishes MUST adopt all Diocesan safe church policies and may require additional policy requirements as they see fit for their parish.** Each parish must register any additional requirements to this safe church policy with the Bishop's Office. The policies should be clear and posted in areas where activities for children and youth take place and should be given to all adults who regularly work with children or youth and to parents. Parish policies should include the names and phone numbers of the Rector or priest, senior warden, parish safe church minister, and contact person in the Bishop's office.

**Parishes should have clear guidelines and adequate supervision (by parish staff or authorized persons) of anyone using a parish computer to access the Internet.** Be advised that any activity on a parish computer is not considered private and may be accessed by authorized persons. Parish computers should have adequate password protection.

## **SAFE CHURCH TRAINING**

**It is the responsibility of each vestry/Bishop's Committee to ensure that wardens, lay employees, Eucharistic visitors, pastoral visitors, Stephen ministers, EFM mentors and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth attend the Diocesan Safe Church training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings.** Each parish shall maintain a record of those who have attended such training.

The Bishop's Office shall ensure that all clergy and employees and volunteers who work with children or youth at diocesan events attend safe church training and will maintain records of those who have attended the training.

***As of September 2006, all regular Sunday school teachers and nursery workers will be required to attend safe church training.***

**Those REQUIRED to attend Safe Church Training shall do so within 6 months of beginning their duties at the church/Diocese.**

The Bishop's Office will offer the requisite trainings and approve curriculum and trainers for these trainings.

**Lay persons required to attend safe church training shall attend a lay refresher training once every 5 years from the date of completion of the original training.** The Diocese will provide lay refresher trainings twice each year.

**Clergy are required to attend clergy refresher training every 5 years. Clergy refresher trainings will occur on a 5 year schedule beginning in December**

**2005 then 2010, 2015, and so on. Clergy members must ensure that they attend the requisite refresher training within this 5 year guideline.**

## **RESPONDING TO CONCERNS**

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a parish environment shall immediately report the violation to the Rector or priest, senior warden and the Safe Church Officer for the Diocese. Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a diocesan environment or by a clergy person shall immediately report the violation to the Bishop's office.

Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse involving a member(s) of the church shall report it to the appropriate civil authority. He/she is strongly encouraged to inform the parish priest or another member of ordained clergy, who will then inform the Bishop or appropriate Diocesan representative.

Clergy hearing reports of violations 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 volunteer ministry with the church.

The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by adults at diocesan events, shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Specific details about how to do background checks, norms for various types of youth events and how to supervise compliance with this policy can be obtained at training events offered by the Diocese, your parish safe church minister or the Diocesan Safe Church Officer.

**The Safe Church Officer for the Diocese is:** Canon Tim Rich – 1-800-995-1914.

**The phone number for the Division of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) in NH is:** 1-800-894-5533 (M-F 8AM-4:30PM). Outside of those hours contact your local police department.

**DIOCESE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**SAFE CHURCH POLICY & PROCEDURES**

Respecting the Dignity of Every Human Being

**PREAMBLE**

The Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire affirms the principle that its employees, members and those who avail themselves of its ministries have a right to be free from sexual harassment by any minister or employee. The diocese shall not tolerate sexual harassment in any form and does not condone any conduct which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive worship or work environment. Any conduct which is determined to be sexual harassment is a violation of our baptismal vow “to respect the dignity of every human being” and will result in appropriate disciplinary action which may include termination of employment and the presentment of clerics.

**UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT & EXPLOITATION**

- ❖ Sexual *ABUSE*: sexual conduct by a cleric or other church employee or volunteer with a person who is a minor or volunteer with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent.
  
- ❖ Sexual *HARASSMENT*: unwelcome or undesired sexually oriented language, humor, behaviors, requests or contact in a situation where there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between persons involved.
  
- ❖ Sexual *EXPLOITATION*: a betrayal of trust in a pastoral relationship by the development or attempted development of a sexual or romantic relationship between cleric or other church worker and a person with whom there is a pastoral or fiduciary relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent.
  
- ❖ *Pastoral relationship*: a relationship between a cleric, lay church worker, employee or volunteer and ANY person to whom such a cleric or lay worker provides counseling, pastoral care, spiritual guidance, etc. or from whom a cleric or worker

has received confession, confidential or privileged information, or to whom this role connotes trust.

- ❖ *Fiduciary responsibility*: exists in a pastoral relationship where there is an implied contract/covenant between cleric/employee/volunteer in a leadership position and the person seeking assistance/guidance, and charges the cleric/employee/worker with the responsibility of placing the needs of the person being served above his/her own needs.

## **DIOCESAN PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

- I. All allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse by those placed in positions of trust by the church shall be reported immediately to the Bishop. In all cases the relevant state statutes are to be followed.
- II. In the case of a verbal allegation the Bishop may invite the party making the allegation to bring forth a written, signed complaint.
- III. Until a formal charge is made or Title IV is otherwise invoked, the diocesan response shall be in accordance with this policy. When title IV is applicable, it shall direct the process and this policy shall be considered supplemental.
- IV. Upon receipt of a complaint:
  1. Upon receiving allegations of Sexual Misconduct the Bishop or the Bishop's designee will personally assure the person making the allegations of the Church's concern and that the allegations will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. At the earliest opportunity, the Bishop or the Bishop's designee may ask the person making the allegations to sign a written statement which includes the name, address, and telephone number of that person. The written statement shall also include the date, location, time and a description of the alleged Sexual Misconduct as well as the name and title of the Respondent and the name, addresses and telephone numbers of any witnesses if known.(\*1) If no written statement is made, the Bishop may decide to follow any or all of the procedures outlined in these Policies, as seems appropriate.

(\*1) If the complainant alleges sexual misconduct by the Bishop, the

Standing Committee will perform the functions assigned to the Bishop by this policy.

2. The Bishop will assign the matter to an Investigator for investigation, and to a Response Team for the pastoral care of the persons affected. The Bishop's office will immediately notify the Complainant, the alleged Victim (if not the Complainant) and the Respondent, that the matter has been assigned to an Investigator for investigation. Simultaneously, the Bishop also will make available to the Complainant, the alleged Victim (if not the complainant) and to the Respondent pastoral care resources. The Bishop will personally assure the Complainant, the alleged Victim (if not the Complainant) and the Respondent of the Church's concern regarding the allegations and of the investigation and response that the allegations will receive. The Bishop will also immediately direct that the Respondent have no further contact with the Complainant or engage in advocacy efforts in the community until the investigation has been completed.

3. In the case of allegations against a member of the clergy, the Bishop shall make a determination of the degree to which the clergy member should continue to fulfill his or her professional responsibilities during the course of the investigation. The Bishop shall make this determination in accordance with the appropriate church canons, and the Bishop's judgment as to the best interests of all persons affected, and may draw upon the advice of such persons, as the Bishop deems appropriate.

In the case of allegations against lay employees and volunteers, the Bishop will make a recommendation to the leaders of the Parish, Mission or Institution in which the individual is involved regarding the degree to which the individual should continue with his or her current work for the church during the course of the investigation. The leaders of the Parish, Mission, or Institution shall then make a determination, taking into consideration the nature of the allegations, the interests of the congregation, and the degree to which the investigation may hinder the individual's ability to carry on his or her work during the investigation.

V. It is the pastoral direction of the Bishop that any clergy person licensed to minister in the Diocese of New Hampshire must report any allegation against her or him to the Bishop immediately upon discovering it.

VI. It is the responsibility of the clergy person and wardens to make sure these materials are posted in plain view for the entire congregation.

**DIOCESE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
SAFE CHURCH POLICY  
ADAPTED FROM THE PROVINCE ONE POLICY DATED MARCH 7, 2005**

**PARISH CONTACTS FOR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(NAME OF PARISH/MISSION)*

**OUR RECTOR/PRIEST IS**

\_\_\_\_\_

**HOME PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **WORK PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CELL PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OUR SENIOR WARDEN IS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**HOME PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **WORK PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CELL PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OUR SAFE CHURCH MINISTER IS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**HOME PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **WORK PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CELL PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**IF ADDITIONS ARE MADE TO THIS DIOCESAN SAFE CHURCH POLICY AND ADOPTED BY YOUR PARISH, PLEASE LIST THOSE ADDITIONS BELOW AND SUBMIT THEM TO THE BISHOP'S OFFICE.**