



# **Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta**

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## **Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse**

*Revised May 2013*

**Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta  
2744 Peachtree Road NW  
Atlanta, GA 30305  
[www.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.episcopalatlanta.org)  
404-601-5320 or 800-537-6743  
Fax: 404-601-5330**

## **Obtaining Copies**

The following policy statements are based on the Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, with some adaptations for the Diocese of Atlanta. The Model Policies were developed by The Church Pension Group, in partnership with The Nathan Network. Copies of the Model Policies may be downloaded from the Church Pension Group website, [www.cpg.org](http://www.cpg.org).

Copies of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse may be downloaded at [www.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.episcopalatlanta.org) (click on *Resources*, then *Safe Church Practices*.)

## **Disclaimer**

The diocesan policies are provided as a guide for Episcopal institutions in the Diocese of Atlanta. Parishes and other institutions in the Diocese of Atlanta may develop their own policies for the prevention of child sexual abuse in ministries and church activities for children and youth, using these as foundational guidelines. They do not cover every issue. They are intended to adhere to the laws of the State of Georgia, however if there is any discrepancy between the policies and any state or federal law, the civil law will prevail. In addition, there may be certain instances, in particular with Episcopal schools, where the schools rules and regulations will take precedence.

## **Our Thanks!**

The work of adapting the Model Policies for the Diocese of Atlanta was done by Safeguarding God's Children diocesan trainers, the Rev. Dr. Deborah Silver, the Rev. Christopher Hannum, the Rev. Dr. William Harkins and the Rev. Mary Erickson with Bishop's staff person, Ms. Linda Scott, Resource Center & Safe Church Coordinator.

## **Questions?**

Questions or comments on the policies may be directed to the Rev. Deborah Silver, [dsilver@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:dsilver@episcopalatlanta.org), 404-601-5358 and 800-537-6743, ext. 202.

## ***From your Bishop***

*"It has pleased God, our Heavenly Father, to answer our earnest prayers for the gift of children..." BCP pg. 440*

Children were important to Jesus as he traveled around and taught. And, children and their safety are important to me as Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta.

Thousands of children are served every year in our churches, worshipping communities, schools, programs and activities. Our commitment at the Diocese of Atlanta is to keep God's precious ones nurtured in faith and safe from abuse of any kind.

Therefore, we are serious about educating parents, clergy and youth and children's ministers about the need for complete transparency and prudence in protecting our children.

Thank you for making the time to participate in this training designed to communicate important information that will help you and your parish keep children and youth safe.

With every blessing,

The Rt. Rev. Robert C. Wright  
Bishop of Atlanta



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## SUMMARY

### PURPOSE

These policies are to establish and maintain safe and loving communities for children and youth that are free from emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

### DEFINITIONS

**Church personnel:** Clergy, staff, contract workers and volunteers

**Children:** A child is anyone under the age of 12

**Youth:** A youth is anyone age 12 but not yet 18, and/or who is still in high school

**Personnel who REGULARLY work around children or youth:** Clergy; paid or volunteer church personnel whose work takes them throughout the facility or grounds; all persons who supervise children or youth; church school teachers; people who regularly provide transportation; all vestry members & children and youth commissions.

**Personnel who OCCASIONALLY work with youth:** All persons who occasionally supervise or assist with the supervision of children and youth or provide transportation; all persons who assist or supervise the nursery less than four times per year; all adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth twice a year or less.

**Abuse:** Intentional emotional, physical or sexual injury inflicted upon a child or youth.

**Neglect:** The failure to provide basic needs for a child or youth or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.

**Code of Conduct:** A uniform set of agreements adopted by the Diocese of Atlanta to create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them.

### GUIDELINES

Church personnel agree to do all in their power to prevent abuse and neglect. All church personnel must agree to comply with the Diocese of Atlanta Guidelines for Appropriate Affection. (Appendix A). Church personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race religion, sexual orientation, culture or socioeconomic status. Church personnel will maintain an attitude of respect, patience and maturity. Church personnel agree to report any observed inappropriate behaviors to church authorities such as the Rector, Wardens, Vestry or Diocesan Bishop and to report any suspected abuse to civil and church authorities (Appendix C).

### SCREENING

The selection of personnel who work with children and youth involves completing a standard application, background checks involving criminal, sexual offender registries, and motor vehicle checks, as well as a face to face interview and reference checks.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

All personnel who regularly work with children or youth are required to complete three hours of child abuse prevention and training as approved by the Diocese of Atlanta. Personnel who occasionally work with children are required to complete a one hour training session.

### MONITORING

Involves structural guidelines and standards for the programs and activities for children and youth, which includes clear approval steps for establishing new programs, proper adult ratios with children and youth and the overseeing of appropriate interactions with children and youth.

## INTRODUCTION

The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse define behaviors and practices that allow members and participants in the life of parishes and other Episcopal institutions in the Diocese of Atlanta to fully demonstrate love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

We recognize that relationships are the foundation of Christian ministry and that community is central to the life of the church. Relationships in ministry should always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. With this in mind, the Diocese of Atlanta is committed to providing safe places for children and youth to grow in their life in Christ. The following policies and codes of conduct have been adopted by the Diocese of Atlanta to create and maintain healthy environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel in the Diocese of Atlanta agree to adhere to the Codes of Conduct and the following Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.

## TYPES OF ABUSE \*

1. Physical abuse is physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker by other than accidental means.
2. Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.
3. Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
4. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
5. Neglect is the failure of a parent or caretaker to provide for a child or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
6. Economic exploitation is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money or time.

*\*For definitions in Georgia law, please see Mandated Reporting section in Appendix C.*

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Relationships among people are at the heart of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This Code of Conduct has been adopted by the Diocese of Atlanta to help churches create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code and within the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse before agreeing to sign the Compliance Agreement Form. The Compliance Agreement formally states that:

1) church personnel received a copy of the policies, 2) read and understood its contents and, 3) agree to adhere to the policies, guidelines and Code of Conduct.

- Church Personnel agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Church Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- All Church Personnel agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
- In the event that Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, church personnel agree to immediately report their observations.
- All Church Personnel acknowledge their 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 these policies *and the mandated reporting law in the state of Georgia (see Appendix C)*.
- Church Personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

## GENERAL DEFINITIONS

**A. CHURCH PERSONNEL** For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by a parish, camp, school or preschool.
3. Those who contract their services to a church, camp, school or preschool.
4. Volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, vestries, Children's Church School Teachers, Youth Leaders/Teachers, Acolyte leaders and children and youth choir directors, and parent volunteers who assist more than three times a year.

**B. CHILDREN AND YOUTH** A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years. A youth is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

**C. CHURCH PERSONNEL WHO REGULARLY WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH** (For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition):

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid or volunteer Church Personnel whose work regularly takes them throughout the facility or grounds.
3. All persons who teach, supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities more often than occasionally.
4. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle more often than occasionally.
5. All Vestry members or members of similar decision-making groups who have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs or activities for children or youth.

**Examples of Church Personnel who *regularly work with or around children or youth*: include, but are not limited to:**

- Church School teachers
- Children's or youth choir directors
- Musicians who work with children or youth
- Lay youth ministers



- Volunteer youth directors
- All Church Personnel who work or assist in the nursery more than four times a year
- All Church Personnel who work in the nursery if they are the only person over 21 present at any time
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth more than twice a year
- Preschool Teachers
- Youth Director
- Confirmation Mentors
- Youth Mentors
- Acolyte directors or leaders
- All staff, whether volunteer or paid, at church camps

**D. For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel who *occasionally work with or around children or youth*:**

1. 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).
2. All persons who provide transportation for children or youth without other adults in the vehicle infrequently, generally about four times a year.
3. All persons who work or assist in the nursery or preschool, three or four times a year. Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth once or twice a year.

## **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUTH SCREENING AND SELECTION**

1. Any and all Church Personnel who **regularly work with or around children or youth** are screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

- a. A **standard application** completed by the applicant that includes a) an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and b) the CODE OF CONDUCT.
- b. A **Criminal Records check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church. (Optional for Sunday School teachers).
- c. A **Sexual Offender Registry check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years.
- d. An **individual interview** with the applicant.
- e. **Reference checks** of persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children.
- f. **Driving or Motor Vehicle Records check** if the person may be transporting children or youth.

2. Any and all Church Personnel who **occasionally work or around children or youth** are screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

- a. A **standard application** completed by the applicant that includes a) an acknowledgment for the release of information to conduct background checks and b) the CODE OF CONDUCT .
- b. A **Sexual Offender Registry check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years.
- c. An **individual interview** with the applicant.
- d. At least one **reference check** of a person or persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who knows how the applicant interacts with children.
- e. **Driving or Motor Vehicle Records check** (if the person will be transporting children or youth).

3. All information gathered about an applicant is 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.

4. Church Personnel who work with or around children or youth have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.

5. Criminal records checks and sexual offender registry checks are conducted every five (5) years for Church Personnel who Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth. (Criminal records checks are optional for Sunday School teachers.)
6. To the extent possible, it is recommended that persons not be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with or around children or youth (for instance a nursery director supervising her 16-year-old daughter assisting in the nursery). For the purpose of this policy, immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar in-law relationship, stepchild, stepparent, step sibling, grandparent, or cohabitant.
7. Church Personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Atlanta and apply for or are asked to or who do undertake a position working with or around children or youth are required to undergo the same screening and selection process in Section A above.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Completion of the **Safeguarding God's Children** training program of child abuse prevention education and training as approved by the Diocese of Atlanta is required for all church personnel who **regularly work with or around children and youth** before they start their work with children or youth. If that is not possible, one hour of child abuse awareness training which includes the *Abuse Risk Management for Volunteers* module of **Safeguarding Online** is required before they start their work. Completion of the additional five **Safeguarding Online** training modules within one month, or completion of **Safeguarding God's Children** three-hour group training within three months of starting work is required.
2. All members of the Vestry and members of any supervisory group over the children and/or youth in the parish will either provide evidence of current training certification in **Safeguarding God's Children** or completion of the **Safeguarding Online** course or will have completed the **Safeguarding God's Children** course within three months of beginning their service.
3. **One hour** of child abuse awareness education and training, which includes the *Abuse Risk Management for Volunteers* module of **Safeguarding Online**, is required for all church personnel who **occasionally work with or around children or youth**, before they start their work with children or youth.
4. Church Personnel who are responsible for screening, selection and supervision of others in programs for children and youth are required to complete an additional three (3) hours of specialized education and training in screening, selection and monitoring every two years.
5. To maintain certification, church personnel will complete updated child abuse prevention training or education in related fields every three years. All personnel will review the Code of Conduct & Guidelines for Appropriate Affection annually.

6. The Rector or Vestry shall appoint a person in the parish to audit the training certification files annually so that current certification is maintained and appropriate liability insurance is secured.

## **MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS**

The monitoring and supervision of programs and activities involving children or youth is important for safeguarding children and youth and involves several aspects. One aspect involves having structural guidelines or standards for the programs and activities for children and youth. These include such things as who approves new programs, how many adults need to be present and the like. In addition to setting structural guidelines and standards, church leaders must make sure the structural safeguards are followed. Programs and activities have to be monitored and supervised to do that.

Another aspect of monitoring and supervision is that supervisory personnel and others monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth and children with other children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped. Some behaviors and interactions are potentially harmful to children or youth in and of themselves. Examples include providing alcohol or drugs to children or youth or actually having sexual contact with a child or youth. Other behaviors and interactions are not necessarily harmful in and of themselves, but are the same behaviors and interactions known to be used by those who abuse children or youth to "groom" them or their parents for eventual abuse, or which provide the privacy child molesters need in order to abuse children or youth. Examples of those behaviors and interactions include holding children over the age of three on the lap or transporting a child or youth alone.

The structural guidelines and standards are covered in both the Monitoring and Supervision section and in the section, General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth. The behaviors and interactions of persons with children and youth that need to be monitored and supervised are covered in the section titled General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth and in the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection (Appendix A).

## **Structural Guidelines & Standards**

1. Programs for children and youth have established ratios for adults and children. (Please see the *Resources/Safe Church Practices* webpage on the diocesan website, [episcopalatlanta.org](http://episcopalatlanta.org), for access to ratio guidelines. Look under *Forms and Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*)
2. Church Personnel are not alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.
3. Church Personnel over the age of 21 directly supervise Church Personnel under the age of 18 and are physically present during all activities.
4. An up-to-date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth is maintained in the church office or other place where church records are kept.
5. Any new activities developed by Church Personnel for children or youth which take place at a location other than the church or when parents are not present, must be approved by the Rector. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing to the Rector, Youth Leaders and appropriate Ministry teams. The Rector, etc. considers whether the plan for a new activity is appropriate and includes adequate adult supervision.
6. Each program develops age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using rest rooms and showers or baths.
7. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, Church Personnel remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
8. When at all possible, it is recommended that at least two unrelated Church Personnel supervise activities. On overnight trips, male and female adult supervision is mandatory when boys and girls are in attendance.
9. Parish computers should have adequate password protection.
10. 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.
11. Each parish is encouraged to conduct a “safe church audit” annually to review practices and policies within the congregation.
12. Parishes should adopt safe church policies, consistent with the requirements in this policy. Parish policies should be clear, should be 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 and senior warden and the phone number of the diocesan offices, 404-601-5320 or 800-537-6743.

## **General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth**

The following guidelines are intended to assist Church Personnel in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children and youth to identify and stop those that may be inherently harmful to children or youth, that are the type used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or that may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily. These guidelines should also be used to make decisions about interactions with children and youth in church sponsored and affiliated programs. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families. When exceptions to these guidelines must be made, the exception is reported to the supervisor of the church personnel making the exception as soon as possible.

1. All Church Personnel who work with children or youth must agree to comply with the Diocese of Atlanta Guidelines for Appropriate Affection (Appendix A) and have completed and signed the Compliance Agreement Form (Appendix C).
2. No person is allowed to volunteer to REGULARLY WORK WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months. The Rector has the right to refuse any person from working with children and youth.
3. Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
4. Church Personnel 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.
5. Parents or guardians complete written permission forms before Church Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose on more than an occasional basis.
6. Church Personnel respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socioeconomic status. Church Personnel portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity, avoiding even the appearance of favoritism.
7. One-to-one counseling with children or youth is done in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
8. Church Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
9. Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.

10. Church Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a preauthorized educational program.
11. Church Personnel are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.
12. Church Personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
13. Church Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with children or youth. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.
14. Church Personnel are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.
15. Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. 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.
16. Church Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
17. Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.
18. All personnel should be vigilant so that questionable situations do not arise.

## **RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS**

### **Reporting inappropriate behaviors or policy violations with Children or Youth**

When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection, or which may violate any provision of these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, they must immediately report their observations. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on overnight trips without other adults, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using staff or volunteers without the required screening.

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

- a. A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor of the person,
- b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the person is not the rector;
- c. A telephone call or meeting with a church warden if the person is the rector;
- d. A telephone call, meeting or fax to the Bishop's Intake Officer (page 18).
- e. Submit a NOTICE OF CONCERN (Appendix B), signed or unsigned, to the bishop's Intake Officer.

All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously.

## **Reporting Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth**

As of July 1, 2012, all Church Personnel are considered "Mandated Reporters" and are required by this policy and by Georgia Law, to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities.

1. By Georgia law, an oral report shall be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Services, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney. A report to the Rector or other Clergy person in charge of a parish may constitute fulfilling the above, providing that the clergy person follows through with the reporting within the 24 hour period and that no changes are made in the report itself (See Appendix C).

**After hours centralized intake: 1-855-GA CHILD (422-4453), 5pm-8am weekdays / 24 hours on weekends – holidays / furlough days.** These numbers are currently not available for Fulton and DeKalb counties. In these counties you must call Fulton or DeKalb DFCS directly. **If unable to reach DFCS, or if the child is in immediate danger, report to local law enforcement (911) or the district attorney in the county where the child lives.** For details of what the report should include and the rights of mandated reporters, see Appendix C.

2. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
3. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, Church Personnel are required to report any reasonably suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel or on church property directly to the Rector, priest in charge, or senior warden of the parish so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.
4. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve Church Personnel may be reported to the Diocese of Atlanta in the following ways:
  - a. A telephone call, meeting or email to the Intake Officer of the Diocese;
  - b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector if the rector is not the person suspected of abuse.
  - c. Submit a Notice of concern (Appendix B), signed or unsigned, to the diocesan Intake Officer.



The **Intake Officer** is the Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner at 404-601-5349; 800-537-6743 x 123 or email [aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org).

5. The Diocese of Atlanta and all parishes or Episcopal institutions involved will cooperate with any investigation by state authorities to the fullest extent appropriate and inform authorities that a concurrent internal investigation will be directed by the Diocese of Atlanta.

## APPENDIX A

### GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION

The Diocese of Atlanta and its churches and Episcopal institutions are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Personnel from misunderstandings.

When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate, otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse.

The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth.

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.

Examples of **positive and appropriate** forms of affection:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- "High-fives" and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arms 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
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate (For example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities.)

Examples of **inappropriate** forms of affection to use with children and youth in ministry settings 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

## APPENDIX B

### Confidential Notice of Concern

**Individual(s) of Concern:**

**Date of occurrence:**

**Time of occurrence:**

**Type of Concern:**

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

**Must be reported** to the Department of Family & Children's Services or the Police immediately, or no later than 24 hours after witnessing the action or hearing of the event.

- ☐ 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 else need to be notified? **If suspected abuse, it needs to be reported to DFCS or police within 24 hours.**

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Report made to DFCS or Police Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

- a. A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor of the person,
- b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the person is not the rector
- c. A telephone call or meeting with a church warden if the person is the rector;
- d. A telephone call, meeting with the Intake Officer (see below)

Please give this form to the appropriate supervisor or clergy person or contact the diocesan Intake Officer, the Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner at 404-601-5320 or 800-537-6743 x 123; or email [aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org).

12/2012/LS

## **APPENDIX C**

### **MANDATORY REPORTING LAW CHANGES**

#### **General Information**

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal signed into law HB 1176, the Criminal Justice Reform bill in May 2012. Among other things, it expands the pool of mandated reporters already in Georgia law to include volunteers whose duties include attending to children; and it includes clergy with an amended "confessional" protection. This law becomes effective July 1, 2012 under Code Section 19-7-5 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to reporting of child abuse. Subsections of the Code where changes were made are indicated below **(b, c, e, and g)**, in *italics* and underlined.

#### **(b)**

Georgia law defines "child abuse" as:

- physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker by other than accidental means
- neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker\*;
- sexual abuse of a child (*does NOT include consensual sex acts between minors or between a minor and an adult not more than 5 years older than the minor*)
- *sexual exploitation of a child (conduct by any person who allows, permits, encourages, or requires that child to engage in prostitution or sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual or print medium depicting such conduct.)*
- However, no child who in good faith is being treated solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall, for that reason alone, be considered to be an 'abused' child.

\*'Caretaker' -- If a person is a "caretaker," it is best to call the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS). If the person is not a caretaker the police are usually better able to respond. However, this is not an exact science. You may report to either and they will sort it out.

#### **Who MUST Report?**

#### **(c)**

1) Georgia law generally requires those who work with families or who come in contact with children to report suspected child abuse.

Designated professionals include:

- Physicians, interns or residents;
- Hospital or medical personnel;
- Dentists;
- Licensed psychologists and interns;
- Podiatrists;
- RPNs and LPNs; nurse's aides
- Professional counselors, social workers, or marriage and family therapists;
- School teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, (all levels of educational system)
- Child welfare agency personnel;

- Child-counseling personnel
- Child service organization personnel: means persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children
- Law enforcement personnel
- Reproductive health care facility or pregnancy resource center personnel and volunteers
- Clergy: ministers, priests, rabbis, imams, or similar functionaries, by whatever name called, of a bona fide religious organization\*

\* See section (g)

(2) If a person is required to report child abuse pursuant to this subsection because that person attends to a child pursuant to such person's duties as an employee of or volunteer at a hospital, school, **social agency, or similar facility**, that person shall notify the person in charge of the facility, or the designated delegate thereof, and the person so notified shall report or cause a report to be made in accordance with this Code section. An employee or volunteer who makes a report to the person designated pursuant to this paragraph shall be deemed to have fully complied with this subsection.

Under no circumstances shall any person in charge of such hospital, school, agency, or facility, or the designated delegate thereof, to whom such notification has been made exercise any control, restraint, modification, or make other change to the information provided by the reporter, although each of the aforementioned persons may be consulted prior to the making of a report and may provide any additional, relevant, and necessary information when making the report."

## **To Whom Do You Report?**

### **(e)**

An oral report shall be made **immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours** from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Services, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.

If a report of child abuse is made to the child welfare agency or independently discovered by the agency, and the agency has reasonable cause to believe such report is true or the report contains any allegation or evidence of child abuse, then the agency shall immediately notify the appropriate police authority or district attorney. Such reports shall contain the names and addresses of the child and the child's parents or caretakers, if known, the child's age, the nature and extent of the child's injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries, and any other information that the reporting person believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the perpetrator. Photographs of the child's injuries to be used as documentation in support of allegations by hospital employees or volunteers, physicians, law enforcement personnel, school officials, or employees or volunteers of legally mandated public or private child protective agencies may be taken without the permission of the child's parent or guardian. Such photographs shall be made available as soon as possible to the chief welfare agency providing protective services and to the appropriate police authority."

**(g)**

Suspected child abuse which is required to be reported by any person pursuant to this Code section shall be reported notwithstanding that the reasonable cause to believe such abuse has occurred or is occurring is based in whole or in part upon any communication to that person which is otherwise made privileged or confidential by law; provided, however, that **a member of the clergy shall not be required to report child abuse reported solely within the context of confession or other similar communication required to be kept confidential under church doctrine or practice. When a clergy member receives information about child abuse from any other source, the clergy member shall comply with the reporting requirements of this Code section, even though the clergy member may have also received a report of child abuse from the confession of the perpetrator.**"

**After hours centralized intake: 1-855-GA CHILD (422-4453) 5 p.m. -8 a.m. weekdays/ 24 hours on weekends / holidays / furlough days. These numbers are currently not available for Fulton and DeKalb counties. In these counties you must call Fulton or DeKalb DFCS directly.**

If unable to reach DFCS, or if the child is in immediate danger, report to local law enforcement (911) or district attorney in the county where the child lives.

**Comply with any internal workplace protocols:** In Episcopal Churches and institutions, please make a similar report to the Rector, Warden or Director of the parish or institution and/or the diocesan Intake Officer so that proper procedures may be followed.

The diocesan Intake Officer is The Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner and she may be reached at [aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org](mailto:aschusterweltner@episcopalatlanta.org). or call her at 404-601-5320 x 123. If you send an email, please do not describe the situation in the email. Simply say it concerns an abusive situation, then leave your phone number and the best time for her to call. She will return your call as soon as possible.

**What Do You Report?**

"Reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused". Suspicions, not necessarily direct evidence.

Make the report even if you do not have all the information:\*\*

- Name, age, address and current location of the child
- Name and address of child's parents or caretakers, if known
- Name and address of suspected perpetrator
- Location where maltreatment took place, if known
- The nature and extent of the child's injuries
- Any other information the reporter believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the perpetrator.

\*\* Please see the "Confidential Notice of Concern" form on page 21-22 of the Diocese of Atlanta **Policies for the Protection of Children & Youth from Abuse**, also available on our website, [www.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.episcopalatlanta.org).



### **Rights of Mandated Reporters**

- Anonymity or confidentiality (when at all possible)
- Knowledge of the outcome ONLY of a report
- Immunity for "good faith" report
- **Penalty for NOT reporting:** Any person or official required by Georgia law to report suspected cases of child maltreatment and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor

We hope to be able to answer your questions over the next several months with the help of some of the organizations mentioned in our website's Advocacy and Action section. If you have immediate questions or concerns, please contact Linda Scott at the diocesan office 404-601-5353 or 800-536-6743 x 121 or [Lscott@episcopatlanta.org](mailto:Lscott@episcopatlanta.org). She will be happy to speak with you. Remember, if reporting suspected abuse, please contact our Intake Officer, The Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner, mentioned above. **END**

**Rev 12-30-2012/LS**

*Continued*

**APPENDIX D**  
**(formerly Appendix C)**  
**Compliance Agreement Form**

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Compliance Statement**

I certify that:

- I have received and read the Diocese of Atlanta's Policies on the Prevention of Abuse for Children and Youth.
- I understand its contents.
- I fully understand my responsibility to comply with the Policies and Code of Conduct.
- I understand my responsibility to report any violations or potential violations of the Code of Conduct to church authorities.
- I recognize that any violation of the Code of Conduct may be grounds for dismissal from employment or may terminate my right to volunteer to work with children or youth.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Parish & City \_\_\_\_\_

***NOTES...***