



THE EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE OF
WEST VIRGINIA

Policy for the Protection of
Children and Vulnerable Adults
October 2025

This Policy Includes the Following:

NOTE: When accessing this document in Microsoft Word format on a computer, hold CTRL (or ⌘ command for Apple Computers) and click on the titles for direct links to the corresponding section.

These policies were adapted using the Model Policies of the Episcopal Church, the policies of other Episcopal Dioceses, including Diocese of Virginia, Southern Ohio, and Massachusetts

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I. THEOLOGICAL & ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld the Word’s glory, glory as of the only Child from God.”— John 1:14 (*An Inclusive Language Lectionary*)

God expresses the fullness of humanity in Jesus of Nazareth, whom we worship as the Word made flesh. To be human is to live with God and creation in the fullness of freedom and challenge of responsibility. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection resonates unreservedly with God’s call to perfect freedom and responsibility.

In baptism, God, speaking through the Church, claims us in Christ. We become, in Christ, the community of God’s final purpose: justice and peace, love and plenty for all creation. This community lives in Eucharistic fellowship with God and creation, as a sign and instrument of God’s reconciling purpose in the world.

The Church is called to embody and advance God’s mission. Ministry is the community’s vocation: laity, deacons, priests, and bishops together represent Christ and the Church in the world.

The obligation to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being binds all the baptized. The authority with which **leaders** — ordained and lay who minister with minors (**children** and **youth**), youth in leadership roles, and/or **vulnerable adults** — are entrusted, creates an inherent power imbalance in the **pastoral relationship**. This power imbalance derives from the leadership role and, in the case of clergy, the symbolic authority of ordination. Christian leadership is to provide guidance and grace, and its abuse is always and unequivocally wrong.

Ministry involves a necessary tension between both a Gospel-based integrity and intimacy modeled by Christ. While rigid adherence to a system of rules leads to an unproductive legalism, without the law, the intimate relationships into which Christ calls us risk distortion and harm. All God’s people must minister attentively within this tension. These model policies intend to provide a pattern for attentive practice.

This document is a statement for the Episcopal Church, setting forth expectations for its leaders in their relationships with children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults. The purpose of these model policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings. The document includes:

- **Screening & Training Protocols** (Appendix A), which explains the level of screening and training required before engaging in ministry with children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults;
 - A description of requisite training that is specialized and tailored to ministry role and function;
 - Behavioral standards designed to ensure that children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults, and all who engage in ministry with them are treated with dignity and respect in all settings; and
 - **Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications for Children and Youth and Vulnerable Adults** (Appendix B)
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II. EXPECTATIONS & LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

This policy sets general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church engaged in ministry with children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults. This policy is mandated for all such activities sponsored by every diocesan congregation, institution, organization, school, and agency. These policies seek to create safe and welcoming space for all children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults and those engaged in ministry with children and youth and/or vulnerable adults, and to prevent sexual abuse.

Church governing bodies and leaders should understand these policies and all local requirements thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments, consulting with the Office of the Bishop when unanticipated situations arise.

No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Whenever applicable, questions of civil, criminal, and/or ecclesiastical discipline and employment offenses should be addressed with the relevant authorities immediately. Please contact the Office of the Bishop for consultation and resources if assistance is needed.

III. DEFINITIONS

NOTE: These definitions reflect our understanding of terms describing gender identity and sexuality, which are evolving as these model policies are being written.

Adult: Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school (*see footnote to youth on page 6*).

Adult Protective Services: A social services program provided by state and local governments serving vulnerable adults and their families who are in need of assistance. Adult Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Bullying: Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbal, psychological, social, physical, or otherwise.

Child: Anyone under the age of 12 years (*see footnote to youth on page 6*).

Child Protective Services: A social services program provided by state and local governments serving children and their families who are in need of assistance. Child Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Cisgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender or sex assigned at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Gender Non-Binary: An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both ("bigender"), neither ("agender"), a mix between the two ("genderfluid"), or they can be unsure of their gender ("genderqueer"). This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Intake Officer: The person(s) designated by each diocese to receive information regarding an offense for which a member of the clergy may be held accountable under Title IV of the *Constitution*

and Canons of The Episcopal Church, which sets out the disciplinary process for clergy. Anyone may contact an Intake Officer to report concerns.

Leader: A person, adult or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of others engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, and program team.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to people whose gender identities vary from their gender or sex assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientations differ from the heterosexual majority. The “+” is an effort to include additional gender identities. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Mandated Reporter: A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. State laws vary greatly. Generally, state law mandates that either all adults or adults in certain professions report suspected abuse of children and/or youth.

It is imperative to know the requirements of applicable state laws. Typically, individuals who are not mandated to report suspicion of abuse may make a report to the appropriate state agency, even though not legally required to do so.

Off-Site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal Church, institution, facility, or campus.

Organizations: All institutions for which the diocese or congregations have legal or fiduciary responsibility (examples: diocesan departments, commissions, conference & retreat centers, adult day care centers, retirement communities, religious orders, congregations, schools, etc.).

Overnight: Any event that starts on one calendar day and ends on a different calendar day.

Pastoral Relationship: Any relationship (1) between a Member of the Clergy and any person to whom the Member of the Clergy provides or has provided counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance, or from whom such Member of the Clergy has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, or (2) between a lay minister and any person to whom the lay minister is offering prayer, ministry, and/or any person from whom the lay minister has received sensitive, personal, or confidential information in the course of offering ministry.

Programs: Official activities and programs sponsored by The Episcopal Church and its provinces, dioceses, and congregations (examples include: The Episcopal Youth Event, Provincial Youth Events, Happening, Teens Encounter Christ, pilgrimages, mission experiences, New Beginnings, camp programs, Acolyte Festival, etc.).

Public Records Check: A search of documents and data available to the public including criminal and civil court records, credit reports, and driving records from the department of motor vehicles. Typically, such searches are conducted by a third party with area expertise.

Responsible Person: The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program.

Residential Facility: Any institutional or group home setting where a vulnerable adult resides on a permanent or temporary basis such as a nursing home, rehabilitation center, assisted living facility, treatment center, or memory care facility.

Sacramental Use: Consecrated or unconsecrated wine used in the setting of Eucharist.

Sexual misconduct: A broad term encompassing any behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or capacity for consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different gender.

Supervisor: A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or Leaders in a ministry program.

Title IV: A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability and ecclesiastical discipline.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Training: Organized activity designed to provide information and/or instructions to strengthen and enhance the recipient's understanding, capacity, and exercise of ministry.

- **Universal Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all people that includes a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. This training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant.
- **Specialized Training:** A standard of additional training that equips people who participate in or have oversight responsibility for ministries. In addition to Universal Training, a person will have access to training that is specialized and tailored to their role and ministry function.

Youth: 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, and still in high school.¹

Vulnerable Adult:

- Any adult at or older than the age designated as an elder by applicable state law;
- Any adult who is infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness, or disability;
- Any adult who is ministered to in their home (by Eucharistic Visitors, Pastoral Care Visitors, Stephen Ministers, or others);
- Any adult who is wholly or partially dependent upon one or more other persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support, such dependency may be temporary as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child; and
- Any adult who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lacks agency in a pastoral relationship as in the wake of death of a family member or job loss.

¹ Ages established in accordance with generally accepted definitions in the United States. These ages may vary across the wider Episcopal Church.

IV. APPLICATION & SCREENING

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations are required to screen all persons according to the standards in the *Screening & Training Protocols* (Appendix A). For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

A. Public Records Checks

- Congregations and other organizations shall use a provider approved by the diocese to conduct public records checks. Checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults;
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries;
- A Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records check is needed if transporting children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the church or for a church-sponsored event;
- A credit check is required with check signing authority; and
- Public records checks must be updated at least every five years.

B. Additional Screening Requirements

- Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries as specified in the *Screening & Training Protocols* (Appendix A). Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:
- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written “job description.” The application includes verifiable personal information;
- Personal interview;
- Reference verification conducted by congregations and other organizations to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant); and
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

Potential Leaders or Supervisors must be known and active in the congregation for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults, unless they are required to have public records checks and reference checks pursuant to the *Screening & Training Protocols* (Appendix A).

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the diocesan, church’s, or organization’s office. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy, including any local procedures or variations. Employees/regular volunteers sign that they have read the organization’s written abuse policies and retain the records permanently

V. EDUCATION & TRAINING

Training shall be appropriate to each person's function according to the *Screening & Training Protocols* (Appendix A).

Contact Catherine Saxe, Canon for Ministry and Mission (csaxe@wvdiocese.org) for a list of required modules.

Depending on role and responsibility, Specialized Training should include:

- Prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect; **including financial exploitation**;
- Vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;
- An introduction to gender non-binary;

Children & Youth

- The needs of LGBTQ+ children and youth;
- The ways that children and youth can engage in self-advocacy; and
- The needs of differently-abled children and youth.

Vulnerable Adults

- Mandated and voluntary reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults;
- The needs of aging LGBTQ+ individuals who often struggle to find care or residential facilities adequately equipped to meet their needs; and
- The ways that vulnerable adults can engage in self-advocacy.

Certification of training shall be renewed every three years.

Dioceses, congregations, and other organizations with responsibility for programs with services or ministries to children and youth shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

IV. MONITORING & SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS

A Responsible Person shall monitor and supervise adults, children, and youth to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

All who minister to children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults and/or have pastoral relationships with others must have ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by the Supervisor. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibilities of the person engaged in the ministry. Each person engaged should know their Supervisor(s) and how to contact the Supervisor(s) at all times.

Dioceses, congregations, and organizations shall ensure that all who minister to children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

Dioceses, congregations, and organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons approved to minister to children and youth, and/or vulnerable adults, and/or engage in a pastoral relationship with others with their contact information. This list shall be kept in the organization's office or other place where records are kept.

For policies related to Vulnerable Adults, see page –.

Children & Youth

C. Unrelated Adults Required

There shall be at least two unrelated adults (at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to the Supervisor, clergy in charge, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

D. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth

To create safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances where children and youth are exposed to inappropriate consumables, materials, unmonitored adult contact, or unsupervised peer contact. For example:

- **Alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas.
- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to dioceses, congregations, and other organizations. Devices shall have adequate password protection. Each user shall have their own account and password. See *Practices and Guidelines for Social Media & Electronic Communications* (Appendix B)
- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** Anyone with keys or electronic access to buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training according to *Screening & Training Protocols* (Appendix A).
- **Unused spaces.** Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible. Given facility differences, each diocese, congregation, and other organization should determine how best to meet this standard.

E. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation. Examples include:

- **Planned or unplanned on-site conversations/meetings** can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
- **Planned off-site conversations/meetings** can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person and parent/guardian shall be informed about the appointment in advance.

Due to mandatory reporting laws, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation.

Impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, may foster a high-risk situation, and is to be avoided. See *Practices and Guidelines for Social Media & Electronic Communications* (Appendix B).

F. Basic Needs

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event.

Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, need, and hunger, such as intentional fasting programs. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the child or youth does not have a medical condition that would put them at risk by fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have basic needs met immediately.

G. Inclusiveness

No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

The Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their transgender status confidential. They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.

Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility.

Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on **Overnight Programs** (Section VI, I).

H. Violence & Weapons

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.

Report suspected violations immediately. See *Suspected Violations of this Policy* (Section VII, B).

I. Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children or Youth

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the healthy relationships children and youth deserve in all settings. Interactions should meet all requirements outlined above, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth from the church away from sanctioned church activities.

DOs Adults are encouraged to:	DON'Ts Adults shall not under any circumstances:
● Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study; ● Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ; ● Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include: ○ high fives and fist bumps; ○ hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer; ○ brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms; ○ “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision; ○ brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and ○ Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior. The above described physical contact is only acceptable with the consent of both parties.	● Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography; ● Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event; ● Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an 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; or ● Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use, or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth. Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in <i>Responding to Concerns</i> (Section VII).

J. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming

Off-site programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development in children and youth. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

In the event of uncertainty about policy application, the Responsible Person should contact their Supervisor with relevant queries.

Because of unique and unanticipated risks, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below:

1. **Prior Approvals**

- Prior approval by the governing body and the member of the clergy in charge is required, and that approval shall be reflected in the minutes of the governing body. Diocesan sponsored programs, trips, or events shall receive prior diocesan approval.
- Prior, written parental approval is required to view any movie, whether off- site or on-site, rated “PG-13” or above, or to participate in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.
- Prior approvals are required when the event’s host site is a private residence.

2. **Registration, Waiver & Release Forms**

- All children, youth, and adults shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any programs. These forms must preserve confidentiality with respect to medical and other sensitive information. Such forms can encompass a program year.
- A parent/guardian’s signature is required on all release and waiver forms for minors.
 - Please check with your bishop’s office concerning whether digital signatures are acceptable in your state.
- Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online.
 - Please check with your bishop’s office concerning whether such forms may be saved electronically and the length of time the forms must be saved.
- Permission slips with parent/guardian’s signature shall be provided for each off-site event.
- Prior permission from a parent or guardian for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required..

3. **First Aid & Medications**

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is ***strongly encouraged*** for those working with children and youth.
- An easily accessible, appropriately stocked first aid kit, shall be available.
- Records must be kept for all medication or first aid administered to participants. Records shall include the participant’s name, the service’s date and time, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication (including dosage) and/or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person. Exceptions may include inhalers, epi-pens, and birth-control pills.
- Only the Responsible Person or adult designee shall administer medications.

4. **Supervision**

- At any gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants.
- Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:
 - 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
 - 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
 - 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day

- 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day
- Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy.
- Leadership teams should provide a reasonable number of experienced adult leaders to support new leaders-in-training.

5. Insurance

All trips off-site must have adequate insurance in case of emergency. For more information, contact your insurance broker.

K. Overnight Programs

In overnight programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as LGBTQ+ and differently-abled individuals. In a situation of unequal power and safety, preferences of these individuals merit additional consideration, accommodation, and action to ensure:

- Participant privacy;
- Maximization of social integration of all participants;
- Minimization of stigmatization of any participants;
- Equal opportunity to participate; and
- Safety of all participants.

Other guidelines for overnight programs:

- Safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires dioceses, congregations and other organizations to consider multiple factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy.
- Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
- No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall accommodate more than one person.
- Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where youth are sleeping.
- It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals per full day and sufficient water.
- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hideabeds, and rollaway beds;
- At least 2 children or youth in each room.
- Adult supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered among rooms with children or youth, with at least one adult room by the stairs or elevators;
- An adult leader assigns rooms and room occupants;

L. Transportation

- For the participant health and safety, the following practices shall be enforced:
 - For events originating and/or terminating at diocesan, congregation, or organization's facilities, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age, provide proof of insurance, a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory DMV records check.
 - All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone use.
 - Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

M. Camps & Retreat Centers including Peterkin Camp & Conference Center & the Highland Educational Project (HEP)

All diocesan camps, camping programs, and retreat centers shall follow guidelines for off-site programming established in this policy. In addition, camps should aim to follow American Camp Association standards to the best of the camp's ability, including Safe Church training and background checks for counselors, staff, and weekly camp leadership team members.

N. Travel

Travel with children and youth presents opportunities to experience the church and the world on a larger scale with the vastly different perspectives of faith communities and their contexts. It also presents challenges to normal safety protocols. The following policies help groups prepare for a variety of scenarios, as well as for domestic and international travel.

1. Adult Leaders and Chaperones

- Minimum ratios of adult to youth need to increase due to the possibility of leaving an adult behind with a participant in the event of a medical emergency.
 - 9–14 years — 1:5
 - 15–18 years — 1:7
- Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than three adult chaperones.
- One adult, minimum age 25, should serve as travel administrator responsible for all aspects of the trip, including carrying all necessary documentation, contacts, and forms including:
 - medical releases;
 - community covenant;
 - emergency contacts;
 - itineraries; and
 - cash and/or credit card in case of emergencies.
- It is a best practice that, one adult, minimum age 25, hold a current medical certification to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, immediate and necessary first aid, and triage medical situations to determine an individual needs to be taken to a higher level of care. When this is not possible, one person should be designated to supervise the administration of medications as instructed on medical release forms, and a clinic near your destination identified ahead of time to respond to health emergencies as rapidly as possible. Acceptable medical certifications include:
 - Wilderness Medical Response

- Outdoor Emergency Care
 - Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic
 - Nurse — RN/LPN/Nurse Practitioner
 - Physician's Assistant
 - Medical Doctor
- Best practice is to designate an adult to serve as back-up to the travel administrator, and as back-up for simple first aid and administration of prescriptions. These can be the same person.
 - A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's office. That person will serve as the local emergency contact for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

2. Key guidelines for overnight programs:

- Safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires the diocese, congregation and other organizations to consider multiple factors, including but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate showering schedules.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
- No bed, cot or sleeping bag shall have more than one person
- Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where youth are sleeping
- It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.

Insurance for Travel

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most church and organization's policies as an added rider, must be secured at-least one month prior to travel.
- It is recommended all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended health insurance be added to trip insurance.

3. International Considerations

- Check with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond the return date.
- Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group with active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.
- A more thorough list of international travel considerations with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in the *Youth in Mission Manual* here:
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling_7.pdf

Vulnerable Adults

C. Presence of Unrelated Adults Suggested

While not required, it is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults or in the homes of others to do so with another trained adult minister present. Those engaged should minister in pairs.

D. Creating Safe Pastoral Relationships &/or Ministry with Vulnerable Adults

To create safety, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances resulting in exposure of vulnerable adults to undue influence or exploitation. On- and off- site ministry settings with vulnerable adults and pastoral relationships and conversations should:

- Be in places where casual monitoring by others is convenient; and
- Convey safety and comfort.

E. Inclusiveness

No one shall be denied rights, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, socio-economic class, or age. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities and ministry shall be accessible. The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of West Virginia seek to support all persons by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary adults who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements.

Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single-stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the adult's ability to keep their transgender status confidential, if they so desire.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary adults should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity. Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned for the use of a single facility).

F. Violence

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- No one is to control or attempt to control another by bullying, intimidation, threats, verbal/emotional abuse, or isolation from others. Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Report suspected violations immediately. See *Suspected Violations of this Policy* (Section VII, B).

G. Behavioral Standards for Ministry with Vulnerable Adults

All who work with vulnerable adults are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships. To this end, lay, and ordained ministers working with vulnerable adults shall:

- Take care not to unduly influence a person to whom they minister;
- Accept only token gifts from those to whom they minister. Ministers given gifts shall report those gifts in writing to their Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person;
- Decline to accept loans of any kind from those to whom they minister;

- Decline to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of anyone to whom they minister; and
- Inform Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person of anything that causes concern for the safety or wellbeing of those to whom they minister.

DOs All who minister to vulnerable adults are encouraged to:	DON'Ts All who minister to vulnerable adults shall not under any circumstances:
● Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study; ● Spend time with and listen to vulnerable adults, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ; ● Offer appropriate physical expressions of affection, as long as they are welcomed by the recipient. These may include: ○ brief hugs; ○ pats on the shoulder or back; ○ kisses on the cheek; ○ handshakes; ○ holding hands during prayer ● Maintain healthy boundaries when sharing personal information. The above physical contact is only appropriate with the consent of both parties.	● Provide vulnerable adults with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography; ● Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse of legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a vulnerable adult; ● Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a vulnerable adult; ● Engage in illegal behavior or permit others to engage in illegal behavior; or ● Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any vulnerable adult. Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in <i>Responding to Concerns</i> (Section VII).

Visits to Private Residences

Safety and healthy boundaries are essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a private home.

- Avoid situations that might compromise privacy; common examples include:
 - Visiting behind closed bedroom doors;
 - Sitting on the bed of the person being visited; or

- Visiting a person while they are not fully clothed.
- The best practice is to visit in teams of two or more. If it is not possible for another adult minister to be present, a member of the vulnerable adult's household should be present. If neither is possible, documentation of time, duration of visit, general matters discussed, and any pastoral concerns shall be provided to the Supervisor as soon as possible.

Visits to Residential Facilities

Safety and healthy boundaries are also essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a Residential Facility. Best practices include:

- Facility staff should be informed of the visitor's presence;
- If a visit takes place out of sight of staff, they should be notified in advance and informed when such meeting is concluded;
- The door to a resident's private room must remain open during visits;
- Visitors should be mindful that LGBTQ+ residents may not be safe to express their sexual identity or orientation, as staff members may not yet have been trained; and
- In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the visitor is encouraged to contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

Off-Site Visits, Events & Programs

Off-site programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable adults. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the Responsible Person should contact their Supervisor.

Because of unique, and unanticipated risks, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

1. Prior Approvals

- Prior approval by the governing body and the member of the clergy in charge is required, and that approval shall be reflected in the minutes of the governing body. Diocesan sponsored programs, trips, or events shall receive prior diocesan approval.
- These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, progressive dinners, etc.

In the event of uncertainty, the Responsible Person should contact the bishop's office with relevant information.

2. Registration, Waivers, and Release Forms

Due to the unique and unanticipated risks of off-site visits, events, and programs, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below:

- All participants shall complete and sign a registration, waiver, and release before participating in any program. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical information.
- There must be a signature on all release and waiver forms. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, the signature of that person's guardian, spouse, or other

trusted family member is required. State law determines whether digital signatures are acceptable.

- Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site. Check with the bishop's office regarding whether forms may be saved electronically and how long they must be retained.
- Permission slips shall be provided for each event and shall be signed by the participating adult, guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member.
- Prior permission is required for an individual to be photographed, recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media.

3. First Aid and Medications

Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is ***strongly encouraged*** for those working with vulnerable adults.

- An easily accessible, appropriately stocked first aid kit, shall be available.
- If a vulnerable adult requires assistance with medications of any type, then records must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. Records shall include the participant's name, the service's date and time, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication (including dosage) or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to vulnerable adults requiring assistance with medications shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- Only the Responsible Person or adult designee shall administer medications.

H. Transportation

For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed:

- For events that originate and/or terminate at diocesan, congregation, or organization facilities, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age, provide proof of insurance, a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory DMV records check;
- A list of those approved to provide transportation to vulnerable adults shall be maintained in the office of the organization;
- Anyone being transported must consent to such transportation beforehand. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then prior approval by that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required; and
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.

Insurance for Overseas Pilgrimages and Mission Trips

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most church and organization's policies as an added rider, must be secured at-least one month prior to travel.
- It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

International Considerations

- Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
- Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.

Conference and Retreat Centers

All conference and retreat centers of the diocese, congregations, and organizations shall follow the guidelines for off-site Programming established in this policy, including Peterkin Camp and Conference Center and the Highland Educational Project (HEP).

VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

O. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation

Any adult who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth, and/or a vulnerable adult is strongly encouraged, with all mandated reporters required, to contact the state's Child or Adult Protective Services.

In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth, and/or vulnerable adults has taken place within a facility or program of the diocese, congregation, or other organization, should immediately inform one of more or the following:

- The bishop or the bishop's office in the case of a diocese;
- Member of the clergy in charge or the senior warden in the case of a congregation;
- The director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or
- The Intake Officer in case a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.

Diocesan Resource Contact List

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Cowden	Bishop	(304) 344-3597 mcowden@wvdiocese.org
Canon Catherine Saxe	Canon for Ministry & Mission	(304) 400-8533 csaxe@wvdiocese.org
Bree Fleming	Diocesan Youth Director	bffleming@wvdiocese.org
The Rev. Susan Claytor	Intake Officer	revclaytor@gmail.com
Child Protective Services & Adult Protective Services (WV)		1-800-352-6513

P. Suspected Violations of this Policy

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person, member of the clergy in charge, and senior warden.

Clergy in charge receiving reports of violations of this policy 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 unpaid ministry with the church. If the Responsible Person is a lay person, they are responsible to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a member of the clergy shall immediately report the violation to the Bishop's office and/or the Intake Officer. Anyone can make a report to an Intake Officer.

The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by laity 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, as provided by Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons and/or termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the diocese.

Appendix A: Screening and Training Protocols

Screening & Training Chart	Ministry Function	Public Records	App/Inter/Ref	Universal Training	Leader	Supervisor
Staff & Contracted Ministers (not covered below)	Church Employees	X	X	X		X
	Diocesan contractors (1099)	Depends		X	X	
	Clergy	X	X	X		X
	Church contractors (1099)	Depends		X		
	Diocesan Employees	X	X	X		X
	Diocesan Staff - unpaid	X	X	X		X
Program Supervisors						
	Child/Youth Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Commissioned Ministry Teams	X	X	X		X
	Director of Religious Education	X	X	X		X
	Camp Director	X	X	X		X
	Youth Minister	X	X	X		X
Program Participants (non-supervisory)						
	Acolyte Mentor	X		X	X	
	Choir parents			X		
	Church School Teacher	X		X	X	
	Counselor in Training	X- 18 and over	X	X	X	
	Nursery Worker - unpaid	X		X	X	
	Parish Nurse	X	X	X		X
	Teenage assistants			X	X	
	Musicians who work with youth	X	X	X		X
*Off-site	Camp Counselor	X	X	X		X
	Confirmation mentors	X	X	X	X	
	Lay Chaplains	X	X	X		X
	Pastoral Care Teams	X	X	X	X	
*Overnight	Youth Group Leaders	X	X	X		X
Drivers	Drivers	DMV		X		
Governance	Church Elected			X	X	
	Treasurer	Criminal & Credit		X	X	
	Vestry			X	X	
	Wardens	Criminal & Credit		X		X
Key Access	Altar Guild	Recommended		X		
	Building Hosts	Recommended		X		
Home Visitors	Eucharistic Visitors	X	X	X	X	
	Home Visitors	X	X	X	X	
	Stephen Ministers	X	X	X	X	
	Church Staff- unpaid	X	X	X		X
*Off-site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal church, institution, facility, or campus.						
*Overnight: Any event that starts on one calendar day and ends on a different calendar day.						

Appendix B: Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications for Children and Youth & Vulnerable Adults

Social media shapes the lives of young people and adults, and has the potential to empower ministry. Behavior in the digital sphere is never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations, putting them at risk. In addition, these powerfully connective tools are subject to the same dynamic of unequal power and potential for abuse that present a risk in all ministry relationships.

Churches face the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in social media use in the midst of rapidly evolving technology.

General Information about Digital Communications

- All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL and can be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, “friend” can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality, and expectations for relationship.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth and/or vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. Check your local applicable laws.

Practices & Guidelines for Churches & Organizations:

- The diocese, congregation, or organization create and “own” the social media accounts representing the diocese, congregation, or organization respectively and have multiple administrators and/or supervisors with access. If personal accounts are used, a system of monitoring should be established.
- Youth *should not* be tagged in pictures or social media posts by name.
- Tagging of vulnerable adults is discouraged. The captioning of photos or videos may be permitted when written permission is provided by a vulnerable adult (or the person’s guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member when the vulnerable adult is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency). The caption should not include the individual’s full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone’s personal profile.
- A diocese, congregation, or organization does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by that diocese, congregation, or organization, except as described in #2 above. The preceding statement should be included in the diocese, congregation, or organization’s Social Media Policy.
- Email can be a good method of communication, and it also has the opportunity to be misunderstood. Having a clear understanding and procedure for responding to digital communication that raises concern is prudent for all. Best practices can include not responding immediately and sharing the communication with a supervisor before responding. Phone and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications or pastoral emergencies.
- When using photos and videos for ministry purposes, obtain a media release for each person and only post images that respect the dignity of every person depicted.
 - Pictures of minors swimming and/ or at the pool, lake or river *should not* be posted.

- The Diocese, congregations, or organizations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space. Signs should be posted that indicate a service or activity will be broadcast when worship services or activities are streamed or distributed on the web or via other broadcast media.

Practices & Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:

- Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a child or youth is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 10:00 pm, unless it's an emergency.
- Privacy settings and personal boundaries should be implemented.
 - Create and use profiles on social networking sites that meet professional and institutional standards.
 - Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or "Add Me" on Snapchat) to children or youth for personal interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults.
 - Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all children and youth, across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.
 - Establish a regular ongoing and consistent system of review that focuses on settings, accessible content, photos, and videos to ensure compliance with professional and institutional standards.
 - Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.
 - When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual's "wall," or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos.
 - When sending emails to a child or youth that contain personal or private information regarding that child or youth, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well. Examples of these types of emails include: payment due information, specific medical requests or questions, etc. Mass emails sent to an entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.
 - Disclose **ongoing** digital pastoral communications (ie: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc) with children and youth to a parent and/or a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.
- Create covenants to govern digital groups, which include:
 - Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior;
 - Who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group and when/if the group will be disbanded;
 - Description of content that can be posted or published on the site or page;
 - A prohibition of "tagging" photos and videos of children and youth. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with written permission from a parent or guardian;
 - Notification that mandatory reporting laws will be followed; and
 - Consequences for breaking the covenant.
- Delete inappropriate material posted in digital groups, address the behavior and report it, if necessary, in accordance with legal and institutional requirements

In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed. Comply with the following best practices regarding “groups” on social networking sites:

- Have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators for groups that are designed for youth;
- Use closed groups, but not “hidden” or “secret” groups, for youth;
- Have only youth administrators invite other youth to join the online group, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite them to join;
- Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant;
- Open social networking groups for youth to parents of current members;
- Remove adult leaders of youth groups and youth who are no longer members, due to departure, removal from position, or are ineligible because they “aged-out” of a program from social networking sites, list serves, etc;
- Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Recommended Practices & Guidelines for Vulnerable Adults:

- Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a vulnerable adult is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 10:00 pm, unless it’s an emergency.
- Privacy settings and personal boundaries should be implemented.
- Create and use profiles on social networking sites that meet professional and institutional standards.
- Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all vulnerable adults, across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.
- Establish a regular ongoing and consistent system of review that focuses on settings, accessible content, photos, and videos to ensure compliance with professional and institutional standards.
- When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual’s “wall,” or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images, and videos.
- Disclose ongoing digital pastoral communications (ie: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc) with a vulnerable adult to a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.
- Create covenants to govern digital groups, which include:
 - Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior;
 - Who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group, and when/if the group will be disbanded;
 - Description of content that can be posted or published on the site or page;
 - Discourage “tagging” photos and videos of vulnerable adults. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with appropriate written permission as described above;
 - Notification that mandatory reporting laws will be followed; and consequences for breaking the covenant.
- Delete inappropriate material posted in digital groups, address the behavior and report, if necessary, in accordance with legal and institutional requirements.
- In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed.
- Comply with the following best practices regarding “groups” on social networking sites:

- Have at least two unrelated administrators;
- Use closed groups, but not “hidden” or “secret” groups, for vulnerable adults;
- Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant; and
- Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.