



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Youth Protection Policy¹

CHURCH LEADERS, ADMINISTRATORS, STAFF AND
VOLUNTEER YOUTH WORKERS

November 2024

¹ DISCLAIMER: This document does not constitute legal advice. Each diocese/parish should consult its own attorney for advice regarding implementation of this Policy.

Table of Contents

PART 1: INTRODUCTION	4
Why churches must care	4
Scope of Policy	5
Awareness of abuse	5
Responsibilities	6
PART 2: POLICIES	6
Terms	6
Serving as a Youth Worker	8
Background checks	9
Youth Worker Training	10
Youth Program Registration	10
PART 3: CODE OF CONDUCT	10
Encouraged behavior	10
Appropriate Physical Contact	11
Appropriate Verbal Interactions	11
Prohibited behavior	11
Inappropriate Physical Contact	11
Inappropriate Verbal Interactions	12
Other prohibited behaviors	12
PART 4: PROTECTIVE PRACTICES	12
Youth Program Supervision	13
2 adult/3 person rule	13
Open door policy	13
Program attendance	13
Drop off/pick up	13
Unsupervised youth on premises	14
Restroom visits	14
Floater volunteers	14
Monitors	15
Time Outside of Youth Programs	15
Overnight events	15
Clothes Changing Policy	16
Off-Site Events	16
Spontaneous Activities	16
Car Transportation	16
Large Events	17

Events at Private Homes	17
Personal Interactions	17
Mixed- Age Youth Groups	17
Teen Youth Workers	18
Youth-to-youth interactions	18
One-on-One Adult/Youth Interactions	19
Youth Confessions	19
Non-Ministry Contact and Personal Relationships	19
Gifts	20
Sensitive Activities and Topics	20
Special needs youth	20
Electronic Communications with Youth	20
Facilities	21
PART 5: RESPONDING TO MISCONDUCT	22
Reasonable Suspicion of Abuse	22
What To Do If You Have Reasonable Suspicion of Abuse	23
Further Details about Reporting	25
Disciplinary Measures	27
CONCLUSION	28
YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	28
APPENDIX A: Sample Certification of Compliance Form	29
APPENDIX B: Sample Youth Worker Registration Form	31
APPENDIX C: Sample Youth Registration Form	32
APPENDIX D: Sample Archdiocesan HR Reporting Form (US) and Definitions	33
APPENDIX E: Sample Archdiocesan HR Reporting Form (Canada) and Glossary of Terms	38

This Youth Protection Policy (the “Policy”) outlines procedures and guidelines for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese to prevent, identify, and respond to instances of child abuse that may occur on church premises or during church-related activities. It is the mandate of the Archdiocese that all Diocese, parishes, Departments and other entities under its auspices comply with the provisions stated in the Policy.

All Church Leaders and Youth Workers, as defined herein, must read this Policy and sign an acknowledgement of having done so every calendar year.² Additionally, persons in these positions as well as all clergy (bishops, priests, and deacons, subdeacons, readers, and adult altar servers), Parish Council Members, parish employees, anyone with keys or electronic access to parish facilities, and all other adults, including contractors, who will have more than incidental contact with youth in connection with the parish’s ministries or programs are required to complete a background check every three (3) years and youth safety training once every calendar year. All Churches, as defined herein, must maintain insurance which includes parish liability for sexual misconduct. Head pastors must complete, sign, and submit a Certification of Compliance Form³ to Archdiocesan headquarters each year. This Policy outlines these requirements.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Why churches must care

Why must churches care about protecting our youth from sexual abuse? As St. John Chrysostom wrote, “God Himself takes great care over the upbringing of children. That is why He placed such a natural attraction in parents toward their children—in order to put parents in unescapable necessity of caring for their children.”⁴

When youth participate in the life of the church, their care is entrusted to the respective programs of the Archdiocese. Church leaders, staff, and volunteers who work with youth must be prepared to uphold this sacred trust.

Sadly, sexual abuse of youth may occur in any organization where youth are present. The past few decades have shown that sexual abuse against youth is all too prevalent among churches and other organizations that serve youth.

Such abuse is one of the worst evils that can be inflicted upon youth as it robs them of their innocence, causes a lifetime of trauma, and often turns them away from faith.

² See *Youth Protection Policy Acknowledgement* on Page 28

³ See *Sample Certification of Compliance Form* in Appendix A. This form will be sent by and returned to Archdiocesan headquarters as part of the annual End-of-Year Assessments package.

⁴ “Chapter 9, Lessons by Our Holy Father John Chrysostom on Education.” In *The Path to Salvation: A Manual of Spiritual Transformation* by St. Theophan the Recluse. Translated Fr. Seraphim Rose. California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1996.

Scope of Policy

This Policy is intended for use by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. This Policy provides a framework to prevent, identify, and respond to instances of youth sexual abuse that may occur within church premises or during church, Diocese or Archdiocese related activities. This includes all programs and activities within the purview of the church, including Sunday Church School programs, youth groups, Vacation Bible School, sport activities, field trips, Diocese and Archdiocese events and all other events or activities in which youth are involved.

Awareness of abuse

No parish or Archdiocese sponsored programs or activities are immune from the risk of abuse.

People frequently assume that child molesters are sinister strangers who abduct children and commit violent acts against them. Therefore, they believe there are no such types of people in the church or the risk of such crimes is very low.

Offenses by strangers do happen, but over 60 percent of sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the child,⁵ including casual acquaintances, trusted family and friends, and people in positions of authority. Perpetrators do not fit any particular mold. They may be of any race, ethnicity, or income level, and are often very kind and friendly, even outwardly devout. In fact, it is through these outward characteristics that they typically gain access to their victims.

While children are often taught to avoid strangers, they are generally instructed to be obedient to adult family, friends, and leaders. Although obedience is typically a good trait, offenders often exploit their roles of authority to access and abuse children.

Furthermore, it is not only adults who abuse children; youth also commit abuse against other youth. An estimated 23% of reported cases of child sexual abuse are committed by youth against other youth.

Perpetrators typically “groom” their victims, as well as the victim’s “gatekeepers” (parents and church leaders) through the following acts:

- Gaining trust by cultivating friendships with the child and gatekeepers
- Offering gifts (e.g., jewelry, money), compliments, and lavish attention
- Finding or creating situations to be alone with the victim

Although churches must be alert to the possibility of anyone being a perpetrator, this does not mean they must develop a culture of distrust or suspicion. Rather, it simply means that churches must be vigilant and implement safeguards to prevent perpetrators from committing their crimes.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice National Sex Offender website: www.nsopw.gov

Responsibilities

Clergy - Clergy are under the direct supervision of the Metropolitan Archbishop. Parish Councils, Department Heads or others should consult with the Metropolitan Archbishop, through the Office of the Protosyngellos, pertaining to concerns about clergy conduct. Clergy are held to high standards of conduct as derived from the Scriptures, Canon Law and the policies of the Archdiocese and Patriarchate.

Church Leaders & Youth Workers – All church leaders and Youth Workers, as defined below, are required to familiarize themselves with this Policy and sign an agreement to comply with it. Persons in these positions are required to complete a background check at least once every three (3) years and youth safety training at least once a calendar year.

Parents – The role of parents and guardians is crucial in taking precautions for the protection of their own and other children. They have an obligation to comply with and respect the Archdiocese leadership's efforts in implementing this Policy and comply with its mandates.

Parishioners - All parishioners are requested to assist in the common effort of creating a safe environment for all our youth.

Youth Protection Coordinator – Each parish must designate one person to serve in this role and to administer this Youth Protection Policy.

PART 2: POLICIES

Terms

This Policy uses the following terms:

Abuse - The rules and practices in this Policy primarily focus on the prevention of sexual misconduct against youth. However, state and provincial laws may have different, and possibly broader, definitions of abuse, particularly with respect to mandated reporters.⁶ These legal definitions including physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect are explicitly understood in the use of the term “abuse” in this document.

Sexual abuse - Generally, this includes physical contact with an intimate part of the human body, other forms of sexual activity, sexual exploitation of a youth conducted without consent (including by force, manipulation, or trickery), engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade or abuse.⁷

⁶ See “Mandated Reporters” section below.

⁷ Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits, *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide*.

Church - In the context of this Policy, the term “Church” includes individual parishes, the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and all activities whether parish, Diocese, or Archdiocese-based.

Church Leaders – For purposes of this Policy Church Leaders include the senior pastor, priests, deacon(s), subdeacon(s), Parish Council, Sunday Church School Director, the head staff administrator (if any), and any other positions designated by the senior pastor and Parish Council as church leaders. It also includes the Archdiocese Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

Large/Small Parishes - Large Parishes are those that have an average Sunday attendance of approximately 250 individuals or more. Small Parishes are those that have an average Sunday attendance of fewer than approximately 250 individuals.

Must/Should - Policies using the terms “**must**” or “**required**” are mandatory rules and must be followed. Policies using the terms “**should**” or “**ideally**” are highly suggested and serve as best practices.

Parents - This includes biological, foster, adoptive parents and legal guardians.

Perpetrator - Any individual who engages in abuse against a child.

Youth - Individuals under the age of 18. This Policy will use the terms “youth,” “children,” and “minors” synonymously. This Policy also applies to Vulnerable Adults.

Young Children - Youth ages 9 and under.

Youth Program - Includes all activities and events directed primarily for youth which take place on church grounds, and off-site events that are sponsored or coordinated by the church, Diocese or Archdiocese or in conjunction with other organizations. This includes ministry and non-ministry events (including, but not limited to sporting events, cultural events, dance classes, language classes, etc.).

Youth Workers - All individuals, whether staff or volunteer, who work with youth in the church on more than an occasional or incidental basis. This includes, but is not limited to all Youth Program leaders and regular volunteers, Sunday Church School teachers, youth advisors/mentors, Vacation Bible School teachers, nursery workers, sports team coaches, language teachers, etc. When in doubt, err on the side of requiring someone to abide by this Youth Protection Policy.

Vulnerable Adult - An individual eighteen (18) who is unable or unlikely to report abuse without assistance because of impairment of physical or mental function or emotional status. Additionally, a vulnerable person means: a person 18 years of age or older whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, sensory, long-term physical, or developmental disability

or dysfunction, or brain damage, or the infirmities of aging. For purposes of this Policy the term Vulnerable Adult may be used interchangeably with Youth.

Serving as a Youth Worker

Staff and volunteer youth workers are a crucial part of a church's ministry. To ensure the safety of our youth, the church must take steps to prevent misconduct in our activities. Only individuals who meet the qualifications below are authorized to lead or serve in church Youth Programs.

Criminal background checks are required and are an essential tool for preventing prior perpetrators of sexual abuse from working with youth. To qualify as an authorized staff or volunteer Youth Worker, an individual must:

1. Register as a Youth Worker⁸ at the beginning of every ministry year.
2. Review this Policy and sign an acknowledgement of having read, understood and agreed to abide by it every calendar year.
3. Complete a youth safety training once every calendar year.
4. Pass a background check before beginning service, then again at least once every three (3) years.
5. Youth Workers should be active members in good standing of the church or individual parish for a minimum of one year.⁹ However, the Youth Protection Coordinator may reduce this timeframe for good cause.

Any member of the designated screening group coming from another church affiliation or jurisdiction must complete the background check and training prior to working with Youth, regardless of whether the person was screened and qualified elsewhere.

Youth Protection Coordinator / Team

Each parish's senior pastor and Parish Council must designate one person from within the parish, whether a staff member or volunteer, to serve as the Youth Protection Coordinator (YPC). The YPC's duties include managing:

- Youth Workers (and other required adults) background checks
- Youth and Youth Worker annual registration forms
- Youth Worker training
- Youth event registration and permission forms
- Youth Worker disciplinary actions
- the Parish's compliance with all procedures and requirements in this Policy

⁸ See *Appendix B: Sample Youth Worker Registration Form*.

⁹ The goal is to allow Church leaders time to get to know people before they're allowed to work with youth and prevent potential perpetrators from working with youth.

It is recommended that the YPC **not** be a Youth Program leader or other key Youth Worker. Rather, the YPC may be an administrative staff member, a Parish Council member, or any volunteer with good management skills.

To assist the YPC implement the Policy, it is recommended that large parishes create a Youth Protection Team.¹⁰

Background checks¹¹

Background checks are required for staff and volunteer Youth Workers, all clergy (bishops, priests, and deacons, subdeacons, readers, and adult altar servers), Parish Council Members, Parish employees, anyone with keys or electronic access to parish facilities, all other adults, including contractors, who will have more than incidental contact with youth in connection with the parish's ministries or programs.

The background check include:

- Nationwide criminal record check
- Nationwide sex offender registry check
- State and county criminal record check in the state and counties in which the candidate has lived the past 7 years
- State sex offender registry check in the states in which the candidate has lived the past 7 years

Individuals with convictions¹² of the following types of crimes are prohibited from serving in any Youth Worker position, whether staff or volunteer¹³:

- Felony crimes committed at any time involving abuse, assault, crimes of a sexual nature (e.g. indecent exposure), domestic violence, or involving a minor (collectively, "Violent Crimes")
- Non-Violent felony crimes committed in the past 25 years
- Misdemeanor Violent Crimes committed in the past 25 years

Any individuals with any other types of criminal convictions not listed above, or those outside the above time frames, as well as applicants for staff or Key Volunteer Youth Worker positions

¹⁰ The Committee's role may encompass more than the issues covered in this Policy, for instance: adult sexual misconduct, general physical safety issues, food safety, etc.

¹¹ Parishes must also abide by applicable laws regarding use of background checks in hiring. Under federal law, a person's written consent is required before performing a background check for employment purposes. Consent should be requested in the applicant's application form. Some states have "adverse action" laws requiring organizations who decline to hire an applicant based on a criminal record to provide a copy of the record and give an opportunity to explain the record. (As of 2024, the following states have such "adverse action" laws: AR, CA, DE, IL, MD, MA, NJ, NY, NC, ND, OK, PA, RI, WA, WV). Parishes should check with local legal counsel before rejecting an employee applicant based on criminal records.

¹² "Conviction" refers to a conviction entered after a trial, guilty plea, or plea of no contest.

¹³ Each state has its own laws governing how far back criminal records are kept or may be revealed and used for employment and other purposes. Many states only reveal records for the past 7 years. Parishes should check the relevant state law.

who fail to disclose any of the foregoing crimes in their applications are presumptively prohibited from serving in any Youth Worker position, whether staff or volunteer. However, they may be permitted to serve for good cause upon:

- Approval of the senior pastor, Parish Council President, and Youth Protection Coordinator after determination of the person's repentance of past criminal activity, present moral character, and fitness to serve, and
- Approval of the Diocesan Bishop
- Positive background check

Youth Worker Training

Youth safety training is required by all staff and volunteer Youth Workers, all clergy (bishops, priests, and deacons, subdeacons, readers, and adult altar servers), Parish Council Members, parish employees, anyone with keys or electronic access to parish facilities, all other adults, including contractors, who will have more than incidental contact with youth in connection with the parish's ministries or programs. These individuals must complete youth safety training before beginning their service and thereafter, at least once every calendar year.

Youth Program Registration

At the beginning of each ministry year, parents/guardians must register their youth to participate in Sunday Church School and Youth Programs.¹⁴ This permits the parish to have records of youth participants and important information about each youth.

Youth who attend Youth Program events for the first time after the start of the ministry year do not need to register immediately, but must register promptly afterward, prior to continued participation.

PART 3: CODE OF CONDUCT

This Policy cannot capture all behavior that constitutes sexual misconduct or abuse. Youth Workers must ensure that their conduct is caring and proper given the context of each situation and that reasonable boundaries are set and maintained. These guidelines are for the protection of our youth; adherence to these guidelines also protects adults from false allegations and accusations based on misunderstandings.

Youth Workers who violate the provisions of this Policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination and expulsion from the parish, department or organization.

Encouraged behavior

Youth Workers should regard their relationship with Christ seriously and cultivate it on an ongoing basis. Everything a Youth Worker says and does in the presence of youth should be meant to exemplify Christ and model a godly lifestyle.

¹⁴ See *Appendix C: Sample Youth Registration Form*.

Appropriate Physical Contact

Some examples of appropriate physical contact include:

- Friendly hugs and arms around shoulders;
- Pats on the shoulder or back;
- Handshakes, high-fives, hand slapping, and fist-bumping;
- Light touching of hands, shoulders, and arms;
- Holding hands in appropriate situations (e.g. escorting young children; dance classes);
- Sitting beside young children without physical contact;
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with young children;
- Kissing of cheeks when culturally appropriate.

All physical contact should be brief and unambiguous in meaning.

Appropriate Verbal Interactions

Examples of encouraged verbal interactions include, for example:

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Verbal Praise

Prohibited behavior

The following are behaviors prohibited during adult interactions with youth. Youth Workers are called upon to use good judgment and to always act above reproach, striving to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Youth Workers are representatives of God and should act as such.

Inappropriate Physical Contact

Youth Workers are prohibited from engaging in any sexual activity with youth regardless of the age of the youth or the proximity in age of the Youth Worker to the youth. Prohibited physical behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual contact or touching a youth's breasts, legs, genitals, buttocks (other than for diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers);
- Kissing the mouth or any other body parts, other than culturally appropriate kisses on the cheek(s);
- Any physical contact that the youth has indicated is unwelcome, unless such contact is necessary, e.g., to protect the safety of the youth or others;
- Inappropriate or lengthy hugs or other signs of affection;
- Having children over 3 years old sitting on the lap;
- Wrestling, tickling, massaging, horseplay, or other prolonged physical contact;
- Occupying a bed or lying together;
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touching of underwear.

Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

Youth Workers must not speak to youth in any manner that is unbecoming of a representative of Christ, including but not limited to:

- Flirting, making sexual advances, and seeking romantic or sexual relationships;
- Conversations or comments of a sexual nature (except as part of a legitimate ministry discussion);
- Compliments or comments relating to physique or body development;
- Making sexual or derogatory comments, gestures, or jokes;
- Cursing, using profane language or taking the Lord's name in vain;
- Name-calling, shaming, demeaning, or belittling others;
- Telling secrets or gossip or instructing youth to keep a secret;
- Threatening violence.

Other prohibited behaviors

Possessing Sexually Oriented Materials – While on church grounds and at church sponsored events, Youth Workers must not view or possess any sexually oriented videos, websites, photos, media, or intimate clothing of the opposite sex, etc. (except as part of a pre-authorized educational program).

Controlled substances - Youth Workers must not use, possess, distribute, or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, marijuana or other controlled substances.

Discrimination and Favoritism – Youth Workers will avoid favoritism among youth and should endeavor to interact equally with all youth, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, or socio-economic status.

Harsh Verbal Interactions - Youth Workers shall not speak to youth in a way that is, or could be reasonably be construed to be, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Physical Punishment - Youth Workers must not use physical punishment in any way on youth. However, force may be used only to the extent necessary to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the youth, Youth Worker, or to others.

Immodest clothing. Youth Workers should set a good example by wearing clothing that is not sexually suggestive.

PART 4: PROTECTIVE PRACTICES

The following are best practices and general guidelines for Youth Program operations.

Youth Program Supervision

2 adult/3 person rule

Most sexual abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a youth. Therefore, Youth Workers should always avoid being alone with a single youth, except in emergencies and limited circumstances.

As a general rule, two or more unrelated adult Youth Workers should be present during all Youth Programs, except for necessary brief absences (i.e. no more than approximately 5-10 minutes). Permitted brief absences include escorting a young child to the restroom. (See discussion below).

If it is not possible for two Youth Workers to be present during a youth activity for more than a brief period, then any non-Youth Worker adult is encouraged to serve as a temporary substitute.

If it is not possible to have any two adults present, the next best practice is for the adult to be present with multiple youth, as it is less likely for abuse to be committed against a youth in the presence of more than one youth.

Open door policy

All Youth programs must have an open-door policy, i.e. clergy, parents, staff, and members of the church shall have the right, at any time, to observe any youth activity, so long as the observation is done unobtrusively and respectfully.

Program attendance

Churches are generally responsible for the safety of minors from the time they receive custody until the time custody ends. Generally this is when the youth is physically on church grounds. Recording attendance establishes evidence of the youth's participation.

Youth Programs involving Young Children (age 9 and under) should have a check-in and check-out procedure such that the child is released only to their parents/guardians at the end of a program, including Sunday Church School.

Drop off/pick up

Today, with many youth having separated or divorced parents, child custody rights can be a legal trap for unprepared churches. To avoid releasing youth to parents with limited custody rights (and who may be abusive), the church must take steps to know of such limitations.¹⁵

¹⁵ This is one reason for requiring youth registration at the beginning of each ministry year. See *Appendix C: Sample Youth Registration Form*

The church should request parents to provide specific limitations on pick up rights at specific events early enough to prepare and be sure that such instructions are clearly communicated to, and abided by, all Youth Workers and other church leaders involved with each event.

Unsupervised youth on premises

Young Children should not be released from two-adult supervision after Sunday Church School classes and other youth programs until they are in the custody of a parent/guardian.

The church leadership should encourage parents/guardians to supervise their youth (especially Young Children) at all times outside of formal Youth Program events on church grounds (e.g., during fellowship hour after liturgy or other down times when youth are “hanging out” outside of scheduled Youth Events).

Restroom visits

For the protection of all, Youth Workers should never be alone with a child in a restroom or stall with the door closed. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the restroom prior to Youth Program events.

When a Young Child needs to use the restroom, a Youth Worker of the same sex should go with more than one child together. The worker should check the restroom first to make sure it is empty, then allow the children inside. The worker should remain outside the restroom and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the restroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the restroom door partway and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

Older children ages 10-12 should go with at least one other older child of the same sex.

Ideally the church should have floater volunteers or monitors (see below) to assist with restroom visits.

Parents/guardians of children at diapering and toileting ages must be required to remain on church premises during Youth Programs and be ready to receive a call or text by phone when needed.¹⁶ In cases where parents/guardians cannot be reached to come quickly enough to help a child, a Youth Worker may help the child together with another adult or at least another child present.

Floater volunteers

To accommodate situations where a regular Youth Worker needs to leave a room (thus leaving an event with only one adult), it is helpful to recruit adult volunteer “floaters” to be on call to substitute a Youth Worker or help with emergencies.

¹⁶ During church services parents’ phones should be set to vibrate mode.

In Large Parishes, having floater volunteers should be a regular practice during Sunday Church School times and at all large Youth events.

Monitors¹⁷

Given the difficulty of requiring parents/guardians to supervise their youth at all times, it is highly recommended that churches enlist volunteer adults to serve as monitors to patrol church facilities, especially when youth are present outside of formal Youth Program times, especially in Large Parishes. Monitors should patrol all areas of the premises, particularly in spaces where adults are not present (e.g. unused rooms, storage facilities, and hidden areas indoors and outdoors).

Time Outside of Youth Programs

Generally, all rooms that are not in use outside of formal Youth Program times should be kept locked so unsupervised youth cannot enter. If informal play areas are desired during down times, specific rooms (or outdoor areas) should be designated as such, especially for Young Children. Such times should be treated as formal Youth Program events, monitored by at least two adult Youth Workers with the same sign-in and sign-out policies.

Overnight events

At all overnight events, boys and girls must have separate sleeping quarters.

Churches must permit parents/guardians to accompany Young Children to any off-site or overnight program sponsored by the church. For overnight events that lack sleeping facilities for parents/guardians, the parents/guardians must be permitted to attend the events at any time until sleeping hours (at which time they may be required to arrange for their own lodging).

Ideally, youth should be in rooms where a large number of people are in the same room (e.g. cabin style), rather than rooms where only a small number share one room (e.g. hotel style).

In cabin style facilities, each room should have at least two unrelated adult Youth Workers of the same sex as the youth.

In hotel style rooms, ideally each youth should have his or her own bed. Where it is necessary for youth to share beds, the following guidelines apply:

- Youth age 9 and under may participate only if they sleep in rooms with their own parent/guardian.
- For youth age 10 and older, the church must inform the youth and their parents/guardians of the sleeping arrangement and should obtain the parent's/guardian's prior written consent, ideally in signed permission forms.
- There must be at least 3 people (3 youth or 1 adult and 2 youth) in the room.

¹⁷ Monitors may be the same volunteers as "floaters."

- Youth may share a bed with other youth no more than 3 years older or younger than them (a 10 year old may not share a bed with youth 13 or older; a 17 year old may not share a bed with youth 14 or younger).
- At no time may any adult share a bed with any youth.¹⁸

Outdoor Camping Events. The same guidelines as sharing beds above apply for sharing of tents at camping outings.

Clothes Changing Policy

At swimming facilities, overnight events, etc., adult Youth Workers must not undress, bathe, or shower (except in swimming suits), in the presence of youth.

Youth should be required to use private facilities when undressing to full nudity and bathing or showering (except in swimming suits), unless the site lacks such facilities.

Off-Site Events

Prior signed Permission Forms must be obtained from a parent/guardian for a youth to participate in any Youth Programs sponsored by the church that occurs away from church premises (e.g., field trips, offsite retreats, camping trips, monastery pilgrimages, Parish Life Conferences, Archdiocese Conventions, etc.).

For all off-site and overnight events, all youth age 5 and under must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. Youth age 9–17 may participate with a Permission & Release Form signed by a parent/guardian. Age requirements are left to the discretion of the church.

Spontaneous Activities

Although youth often enjoy spontaneous activities, such as going out for a late-night dinner run after a church youth event, parental permission is required if a Youth Worker coordinates or attends the activity. The youths' parents/guardians must be notified about where the activity will be and who is driving. The Youth Worker must receive permission via email or text from each youth's parent before the youth can participate.

Car Transportation

If families arrange transportation on their own without the church's coordination, the church will generally not bear responsibility for the transportation. If the church assists in coordinating rides, the church bears responsibility for how such rides are coordinated.

Only Youth Workers age 21 or older are permitted to drive youth to and from church-sponsored activities.

When the church assists in coordinating rides, the church must coordinate the rides in such a way that the 2 adult/3 person rule is observed, particularly on long rides (1 or more hours). If

¹⁸ Except immediate family members.

youth are dropped off at different points, the rides must be coordinated such that no youth unrelated to the driver is left alone with the driver. If there is a need for a single adult driver to drive a youth alone, prior permission must be obtained from the youths' parents/guardians, except in emergencies.

If a church engages in frequent or regular coordination of rides, the church must compile a list of drivers who register as Youth Workers and conduct checks of their driving records in addition to the standard background checks. Only Youth Workers who have passed a driving background check are permitted to drive youth on Church-coordinated long-distance trips (over one hour away). It is recommended that drivers consult with their individual auto insurance carrier as to whether extended coverage is advisable or required.

Drivers of youth on Church-coordinated trips are strictly prohibited from being under the influence or use of alcohol, marijuana or illegal substances. Drivers also must not use phones for communication while driving.

Large Events

Large events (e.g., food festivals, holiday parties, etc.) where there are large numbers of adults and youth present pose significant risk of sexual misconduct against minors. All efforts should be made to keep youth in defined areas with sufficient numbers of qualified Youth Workers monitoring the area. Young children should not be permitted to wander the facilities on their own. It is recommended that trained monitors patrol the facilities throughout the event.

Events at Private Homes

At youth events held in private homes that are sponsored or coordinated by the church or a Youth Worker (in his or her capacity as a Youth Worker),¹⁹ such as youth parties, Bible study group, etc., the majority of adults (at least two) must be qualified Youth Workers. Adults who are not qualified as Youth Workers should not be permitted to have any significant interactions with youth.

It is highly recommended that official church events involving large numbers of adults and youth (e.g. holiday parties) **not** be hosted at private homes, given the difficulty of monitoring youth and minimizing their interactions with adults who are not qualified Youth Workers.

Personal Interactions

Mixed- Age Youth Groups

There are benefits to mixed-age youth groups, such as the ability for younger children to have older youth role models, and older youth gaining experience teaching and leading younger children. However, in most incidents involving youth-on-youth abuse, the youth are from different age groups. Therefore, it is recommended that the largest age gap between the oldest and youngest youth in a Youth Program or Event is no more than 3-4 years.

¹⁹ For example, announced at a church event or through church communication channels.

Teen Youth Workers

There are benefits to having teenage Youth Workers. However, teen Youth Workers must be provided with guidelines regarding appropriate behavior, and properly supervised to abide by this Policy.

It is recommended that teen Youth Workers be at least three (3) years older than the age group that they supervise.

No Teen Youth Worker can have sole responsibility, nor be alone with Youth, but must work in conjunction with at least one adult Youth Worker who is age 21 years or older at all times.

Teen Youth Workers are prohibited from escorting Young Children to restrooms and assisting them with changing clothes unless they are immediate family members.

Youth-to-youth interactions

Sadly, youth-on-youth sexual misconduct is a growing phenomenon. Most serious incidents of youth-on-youth sexual misconduct are preceded by more subtle incidents. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing standards of conduct can help keep youth programs safe.

Youth Workers must immediately stop interactions such as the following, and educate youth about the serious nature of:

- Intimate touching, kissing, and other public displays of affection;
- Possession or viewing of pornography or racy photos;
- Sexually suggestive or vulgar language, jokes, and innuendo;
- Roughhousing or hazing;
- Bullying, taunting, ridicule, or humiliation (including on social media and messaging);
- Singling out individual youths for different treatment.

In the event a Youth Worker witnesses inappropriate youth-on-youth intimate activity, the Youth Worker must immediately separate the youth in question and explain that such interactions are not permitted.

The Youth Worker must report such incident to his or her supervisor, either immediately or soon after the Youth Program, depending on the severity of the interaction. All non-consensual physical interactions of a sexual nature are extremely serious and must be reported immediately. The supervisor and the church leader should determine appropriate actions based on the procedures in “Responding to Violations” below.

However, in most states Youth Workers are mandatory reporters. Interactions of a sexual nature may fall under the requirement of a mandatory report. Churches should seek legal counsel in their state or Canadian Province to determine such requirements.

One-on-One Adult/Youth Interactions

There may be occasions when one-on-one adult/youth interactions are warranted and beneficial, for example, when a child is distraught and needs to be separated from other kids, or when an adult wishes to provide a moment of spontaneous counseling to a youth.

In such instances, the following guidance should be followed:

- Inform another adult;
- Interact with the youth in a public area where other adults are likely to be present;
- If required to be in a room, leave the door open so other adults are able to see inside;
- Keep the interaction time to a minimum;
- Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted;
- Inform the youth's parents/guardians about the interaction soon after it occurs;
- Report to the Youth Safety Coordinator of any unusual incidents, including injuries and behavioral problems and how they were handled, or any interactions that could be misinterpreted,

For one-on-one interactions that can be scheduled, e.g. more formal counseling or mentorship of older youth, the following guidance should be followed:

- Obtain prior written consent from the youth's parents/guardians
- Set a defined schedule for the duration, frequency, and location of meetings
- Ideally, meet at the youth's home when a parent/guardian is home, or in public locations where other adults are present, e.g. on church grounds or coffee shop

Youth Confessions

For the sake of youth safety and protecting priests from false accusations, confessions with a Youth must be conducted at a place and time when one or more other adults are in the vicinity and are able to view the sacrament. This means the confession should never take place behind a closed door (unless it has a window) or in a holy altar or vestry that is closed to view.

Ideally, confessions should be heard when either the youth's parent/guardian or multiple other adults are nearby (e.g., at a time designated for parishioner confessions).

Non-Ministry Contact and Personal Relationships

Youth Workers are encouraged to develop relationships with youth in their church youth groups. However, Youth Workers should not make individual youth a regular part of their own social life, unless they have pre-existing personal relationships independent of church Youth Programs (e.g., family and god family, neighborhood and community organizations).

Inappropriate Non-Ministry Contact. Generally, absent a pre-existing relationship, Youth Workers should not engage in the following without permission from the senior pastor or Youth Protection Coordinator and consent of the parents/guardians:

- Invite youth for home visits;
- Visit the homes of youth, unless pre-arranged with a parent/guardian present;

- Invite youth for social contact off church grounds, or accept such invitations, if the activity involves only youth and no other adult participants;
- Transport youth in personal vehicles. On a case-by-case basis, a church leader may make exceptions to this requirement in the event of exigent circumstances.

Appropriate Non-Ministry Contact. Examples of appropriate Non-Ministry Contact include, for example:

- Taking groups of youth on an outing with a second adult;
- Attending a public sporting or music activity in which the youth is participating;
- Attending functions at a youth's home, with a parent/guardian present;
- Taking a group youth to public church or community events (e.g. festivals);
- Taking a group of Youth on an outing with written parental consent;
- Purchasing meals for a group of youth (such as a pizza party for a Youth Group event).

Gifts

The following guidelines should be followed when giving gifts to youth:

- Youth Workers should not give money to individual youth.²⁰
- Appropriate gifts may be given to youth for special occasions on an equal basis to all youth (e.g., graduating seniors; thank you gifts for youth volunteers).
- Gifts may be given to an individual youth from a Youth Worker who has a pre-existing relationship with the youth, with the parent's knowledge.

Sensitive Activities and Topics

Youth Workers should use judgment in organizing youth activities and games. Wrestling and other activities involving significant physical contact are not permitted.

Educational lessons and activities involving sensitive topics, including dating, sex, pornography, sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity, etc. must be pre-approved by the senior pastor.

Special needs youth

Youth with special needs, either physical, emotional, or developmental, may be more vulnerable to abuse. Parishes with special needs youth are encouraged to obtain training to better accommodate and protect such youth.

Electronic Communications with Youth

One-on-one electronic communications between Youth Workers and youth poses the risk of inappropriate communications that can lead to abuse or misunderstandings.

Youth Workers are advised to maintain proper boundaries in communication with youth – from a position of ministry and authority, rather than personal friendship. Youth Workers must also

²⁰ If a Youth Worker wishes to help a youth whose family is financially disadvantaged, funds should be given to the parents as part of a coordinated benevolence program of the church.

recognize that their presence on social media and other digital platforms, even on personal accounts, represents the Church, so should be mindful to always communicate in a Christ-like manner.

- Youth Workers must not transmit any text or images that are pornographic, sexually suggestive, abusive, discriminatory, or harassing when communicating with each other or with Church youth.
- Youth Workers should use official Church platforms when communicating with youth. Such platforms must be accessible by at least one Church leader and one other Youth Worker, such as Remind, GroupMe, WhatsApp, etc.
- Youth Workers should not communicate one-on-one with any youth by personal messaging or social media.²¹ Any texts, chats, instant messages, or emails sent by Youth Workers must go to a group rather than to individual youth.
- In cases when a Youth Worker needs to communicate with an individual youth, he or she must include the youth's parent/guardian or at least one other Church Leader or staff Youth Worker on the message.
- Except in emergencies, Youth Workers may not share with anyone except other Youth Program leaders any personal information (including phone numbers, email addresses, and home addresses) of a youth without the youth and his or her parent's written consent.
- Youth Workers should not "follow" or "friend" youth on personal or Church social media accounts. Church social media accounts may only follow or friend accounts of other organizations or of legitimate Orthodox ministry leaders.
- Youth Workers may not post photos of church youth on personal social media.

Facilities

Doors in all rooms where Youth programs are held must either have reasonably sized glass windows for observation or the doors must be left at least partially open while events are happening.

Churches should consider their church's physical structure in the prevention of misconduct against youth. It is recommended that every three years the parish Youth Protection Coordinator carefully review church grounds (indoor and outdoors) to look for places vulnerable for misconduct, e.g. hidden, isolated, or unsupervised areas where someone seeking to harm a child would have an opportunity to do so.

Determine how to minimize risk in such areas, e.g. designating spaces for children to play and locking areas where children should not be.

Note, however, that locks on doors can pose an inadvertent danger of a perpetrator locking a door while abusing a child. Parishes should provide ample Youth Workers with keys or the ability to quickly obtain keys to access all doors.

²¹ Except youth who are family or god-family.

Security Cameras. The installation of video cameras in strategic locations can serve as a powerful deterrent to child molesters and can reduce a church's risk of negligent supervision.

Large parishes should install a reasonable number of security cameras at strategic locations on church premises. Cameras are particularly useful in

- nurseries and rooms used by very young children;
- hallways outside of restrooms;
- locations where fewer adults are generally present and where perpetrators may be more likely to hide.

The use of cameras should be made known to parishioners, both as a means of deterrence and so parishioners are made aware of confidentiality concerns.

PART 5: RESPONDING TO MISCONDUCT

Reasonable Suspicion of Abuse

What constitutes reasonable suspicion?

Generally, reasonable suspicion includes but is not limited to: a witnessed act of abuse, a child's disclosure of abuse, or signs of abuse in a child. Reasonable suspicion may also come from another person, who may have heard about possible inappropriate behavior from the victim.

Signs of Abuse. To learn about signs of child abuse, see:

- U.S. Child Welfare Information Gateway: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/>
- US Child Help Hotline: www.childhelpline.org
- Canada Child Abuse Information and Resources: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-ip/fv-vf/ca-me.html>
- Canada 24/7 e-mental health service hotline: <https://kidshelpphone.ca>

If youth divulge suspicion of abuse²²

If a youth divulges information that creates a suspicion of abuse, a Youth Worker should obtain whatever basic pertinent information the youth is willing to disclose about what happened to report to authorities.²³ The Youth Worker should listen calmly without showing shock or anger. Show the youth that you care and will support them, and do not disbelieve or cast doubt about the youth's disclosure.²⁴ Only a small percentage of abuse claims from youth are

²² For more information, see the Dept. of Justice National Sex Offender website: www.nsopw.gov/safety-and-education/how-to-respond#0-0

²³ See "What should be reported to legal authorities?" section below.

²⁴ Only a very small percentage of abuse claims from youth are false. Therefore, Youth Workers must believe the child even if there is doubt that the alleged perpetrator could have committed the abuse.

false. Therefore, Youth Workers must believe the child even if there is doubt that the alleged perpetrator could have committed the abuse.

It is not the job of a Youth Worker to be a professional counselor. It is also not the job of the Youth Worker to investigate the situation. People who are untrained in investigating abuse may make matters worse.

Youth Workers should not promise that secrecy will be maintained. Rather, Youth Workers can say they may need to tell others in order to protect the safety of the youth and others.

Confidentiality of suspicion of abuse

To preserve confidentiality, the Youth Worker must not disclose the suspicion of abuse to anyone other than a supervisor or the senior pastor, legal authorities, or the appropriate Archdiocese staff.

Only the senior pastor or other person designated by Church leaders may communicate with the media or public regarding any incidents or allegations of abuse. It is recommended that legal counsel be consulted if the church is contacted by media prior to providing any statements.

What To Do If You Have Reasonable Suspicion of Abuse

Ensure the youth's safety

The first step whenever there is suspicion of abuse against a youth is to ensure the youth's safety. If a Youth Worker sees that a youth has just been victimized or is in immediate danger or harm, immediately call 911 and request the police or an ambulance.

Inform Supervisor/Clergy

If a person has **any reasonable suspicion** that a youth has been the victim of abuse, but is not in immediate danger or harm, that person should immediately inform their supervisor and/or senior pastor²⁵, or if they are not available, the Youth Protection Coordinator.

Report to Legal Authorities and HR

A report of suspicion of abuse must be made regardless of whether the possible abuse:

- occurred on church premises or elsewhere
- was committed by a staff, volunteer, parishioner, family member, another youth or anyone else
- was committed by an adult or another youth

Keep in mind that **informing one's supervisors and/or senior pastor is not the same as reporting reasonable suspicion of abuse to legal authorities.**

In cases of reasonable suspicion of abuse, TWO reports must be made.

²⁵ If the suspected perpetrator is the senior pastor, then the Youth Worker should inform the Youth Protection Coordinator and/or the Parish Council President. In such case, the Youth Protection Coordinator and/or the Parish Council President should make the report to law enforcement with the Youth Worker and to the Diocesan Bishop.

- **Reporting to Law Enforcement:** The first report must be made to law enforcement. The person to whom the alleged abuse was reported should make the report to law enforcement, as he or she has pertinent information. But if he or she is uncomfortable doing so, the senior pastor or Youth Protection Coordinator should make the report in the presence of the Youth Worker.
 - In most jurisdictions, it is likely the local Child Protective Services agency handles child abuse cases. However, each state, province or locality may have different responsible authorities and procedures, including the police or a welfare department.
 - Churches should disseminate appropriate contact information to the membership, including on public bulletin boards, newsletters, and easily accessible information directories.
 - State-level contact information can be found at: www.childwelfare.gov. Assistance in reporting suspected abuse can be obtained from the ChildHelp National Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-ACHILD (1-800-422-4453).
 - Reports may generally be made anonymously, but it is helpful to provide contact information so authorities can follow up for more information and the reporter can serve as a witness.²⁶
- **Reporting to HR:** All abuse or suspected abuse must also be reported to the Archdiocesan HR Department.²⁷

Inform parents/guardians

If the suspected abuse occurred on church grounds or at a church activity or event, the church should inform the victim's parents/guardians about the suspicion of abuse. If the name of the suspected abuser is known, it should not be disclosed.

However, if a parent/guardian is the suspected abuser, the church must not contact the suspected parent or the other parent(s). Notifying parents before civil authorities conduct an investigation could potentially compromise the investigation. If the suspected abuser is not a parent, the church may report the suspicion of abuse to the victim's parents. The church may also defer this contact to the appropriate civil authorities.

Consult with legal counsel

The church should promptly notify and consult with an attorney regarding civil law issues and questions that could arise. It is recommended that individual parishes establish a relationship with an attorney who can assist with such issues before an abuse incident occurs. Alternatively, the church should consult with the Archdiocese Department of Human Resources.

²⁶ If mandated reporters (see "Mandatory Reporting" below) make reports anonymously, it is recommended that they do so in the presence of a witness who can verify the reporter's identity, as this may become important if the reporter later is charged with negligence for failing to make a report.

²⁷ See *Appendices D (US) and E (Canada): Sample Reporting Forms* for a copy of the report which must be submitted to the Archdiocesan HR Department.

Notify insurance company

Each parish within the Archdiocese is required to carry sexual misconduct insurance coverage. The church should consult with legal counsel about whether and when the alleged abuse should be reported to the insurance provider pursuant to its policy.

Further Details about Reporting

Purpose of reporting

Making a report to authorities is not an accusation of abuse. It is merely informing law enforcement of the **possibility** of abuse and a request for the helping process to begin. It is the job of law enforcement to investigate and determine next steps.

Necessity of reporting

If for any reason a person feels unable or uncomfortable about informing the suspicion of abuse to a supervisor or senior pastor, he or she must still report the suspicion of abuse directly to legal authorities and the Department of Human Resources. In most states Youth Workers are mandatory reporters. Err on the side of caution to protect both the youth and yourself.

Although it may be uncomfortable to report someone you know and trust to authorities, it is better to err on the side of caution than to let children be victimized and do nothing about it. Failure to report suspicion of abuse could mean that child or other children suffer future abuse from the same abuser and such failure to report can have legal consequences for the church and the adult with knowledge of the incident. Mandatory reporters must report the reasonable suspicion of abuse to legal authorities.

What should be reported to legal authorities?

Although the church leadership should not conduct its own investigation into suspected abuse, the following basic information if known should be reported:

- What is the name and home address of the child involved?
- Who is the suspected abuser and what is their relationship to the child?
- What happened in the incident of abuse (if known)?
- Was there injury? If so, please describe.
- When and where did the alleged incident occur?
- Names of witnesses or others who may possess information.

The reporting party will describe facts as witnessed or as recounted by the abused youth or witness(es). The reporting party shall not interrogate the youth beyond obtaining basic information. No one shall contact the suspected perpetrator.

Reporting immunity

Note that in all 50 states, a person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is **generally** immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice. Regardless, if you are a mandatory reporter you have a legal obligation to report the

alleged abuse. It is the responsibility of each parish to know and understand the reporting requirements of the municipality in which they are located.

Obligation to cooperate

All Youth Workers must cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or any internal investigations conducted pursuant to the policies of the Archdiocese.

Mandated reporters

All states and provinces designate people in certain professions as “mandated reporters” who are legally obligated to report suspected child abuse to legal authorities. A majority of states designate clergy as mandated reporters.²⁸

There is also a trend among states to make **all adults** mandatory reporters.²⁹ **In most states, a mandatory reporter’s failure to report suspected abuse of youth is a crime.**³⁰ And whether or not it is a crime, failure to report abuse can also result in liability in civil lawsuits. Therefore, it is important to educate all adults in a parish and those involved in youth activities in particular of the need to report suspicions of abuse and the mandatory timelines for making the report. In Canada under the Children’s Welfare Laws every person has a duty to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

While most of the rules and practices in this Policy focus on the prevention of sexual abuse, for purposes of mandatory reporting, almost all states define reportable abuse to include acts or failure to act that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation. It is crucial for mandated reporters to know their state or Province’s definition of abuse and become familiar with signs of all forms of child abuse and neglect.

A directory of US State and Canadian Province designations of mandated reporters can be obtained at:

- www.childwelfare.gov/resources/states-territories-tribes/
- www.mandatedreporter.com/child-abuse/
- <https://cwrp.ca/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>

²⁸ As of 2023, 29 states designate clergy as mandated reporters: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Fourteen states designate directors, employees, and volunteers at entities that provide organized activities for children, such as camps, day camps, youth centers, and recreation centers as mandatory reporters.

²⁹ Even if they are not mandatory reporters, all Youth Workers are obligated under this Policy to report suspected abuse.

³⁰ Clergy privilege – In some states, clergy are excused from the duty to report abuse if they learn of the abuse in a conversation covered by the clergy-penitent privilege (e.g., confession). Please consult with a local attorney to determine your state’s law.

Information and resources from the Government of Canada on identifying and reporting child abuse can be obtained at <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/fv-vf/ca-me.html>.

Disciplinary Measures

Suspension from service. All persons who are alleged to have committed acts that warrant reporting to authorities, including staff and volunteers, must be immediately suspended from participating in any Youth Programs and all activities related to youth. Depending on the circumstances, the senior pastor, in consultation with the Archdiocese Department of Human Resources/Office of Sexual Misconduct Review may also decide to suspend such persons from all church activities and church attendance, pending the results of investigation by law enforcement.

If the investigation results in a criminal arrest, the suspension must be continued pending the outcome of the case. Depending on the circumstances, the senior pastor may, in consultation with the Archdiocese, terminate the alleged perpetrator from any staff or volunteer positions immediately. It is recommended that legal counsel be consulted before terminating anyone from employment.

Reinstatement. Reinstatement of the person to staff or volunteer positions may occur only after all allegations have cleared to the satisfaction of the senior pastor and Youth Protection Coordinator in consultation with the Archdiocese Department of Human Resources and Office of Sexual Misconduct Review.

Failure to Report. All Youth Workers, as well as all who are required under this Policy to have a background screening, who fail to report an incident of abuse of which they have firsthand knowledge, are subject to discipline, including termination from employment or volunteer positions.

Minor offenses. Youth Workers in a parish must report any inappropriate behaviors or violations of the Code of Conduct committed by any parishioner to the Youth Protection Coordinator or senior pastor, even if such does not rise to the level that should be reported to authorities. At the Archdiocese or Diocese level violations must be reported to the Department Head, Bishop or coordinator of the event and the Archdiocese Department of Human Resources for further action.

For a first offense, the priest or Youth Protection Coordinator alerts the parishioner of the violation and cautions them against future violations. For further offenses, the pastor or Youth Protection Coordinator must warn that future violations can result in being prohibited from engaging with any youth, or more serious penalties, including expulsion from the parish, event or future activities.

Speaking openly about the Code of Conduct violations and unsafe behaviors will educate a person who had no intention of hurting a youth or place a potential offender on notice that the person is being monitored and the intent is to minimize opportunities for abuse.

CONCLUSION

Our churches must commit to creating a safe and nurturing environment where youth can flourish and grow in their faith. By adhering to the rules and principles outlined in this Policy and working together as a community, we can protect our youth from the devastating effects of child sexual abuse and help make sure they are ministered to in the safe environment they deserve

YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, _____(name), acknowledge that on _____(date), I received a copy of The Archdiocese's Youth Protection Policy and that I read it, understood it, and agree to comply with it. I understand that The Archdiocese has the maximum discretion permitted by law to interpret, administer, change, modify, or delete the rules, regulations, procedures, and benefits contained in the Policy at any time with or without notice. No statement or representation by another person, whether oral or written, can supplement or modify this Policy. Changes can only be made if approved in writing by the Archdiocese's Director Human Resources. I also understand that any delay or failure by The Archdiocese to enforce any rule, regulation, or procedure contained in the Policy will not constitute a waiver of The Archdiocese's right to do so in the future.

.....
(Signature)

.....
(Printed Name)

.....
(Date)

APPENDIX A: Sample Certification of Compliance Form



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE

INSTRUCTIONS: Mark whether or not your parish has met the standards for compliance for each of the four Youth Protection Policy components, being sure to note any details regarding non-compliance on the back of the form. Please also attach a physical copy of your parish's Screening/Safety Training List to this form. This Certification of Compliance form must be signed by the Head Priest as well as the Youth Protection Coordinator of your parish. Return this form to Archdiocesan Headquarters with your End of Year Assessment packet. Questions about this Certification of Compliance should be directed to HR@antiochian.org.

Parish Name _____

Parish City, State/Province _____

1. **Our Parish has insurance which includes parish liability for sexual misconduct.**
☐ Yes, we are in full compliance.
☐ No, we are not in full compliance. Details are outlined on the back of this page.
2. **Our Parish holds accurate, up-to-date youth registration records of youth who participate in this ministry year's Sunday Church School and Youth Programs.**
☐ Yes, we are in full compliance.
☐ No, we are not in full compliance. Details are outlined on the back of this page.
3. **Our Parish has ensured that all required individuals¹ have signed an Acknowledgement of having received and read the Youth Protection Policy.**
☐ Yes, we are in full compliance, as evidenced by the attached Screening/Safety Training List.
☐ No, we are not in full compliance. Individuals still needing to sign an Acknowledgement are clearly identifiable in the attached Screening/Training List.
4. **Our Parish has ensured that all required individuals¹ have been background screened through the Archdioceses' Sterling Volunteers Platform.**
☐ Yes, we are in full compliance, as evidenced by the attached Screening/Safety Training List.
☐ No, we are not in full compliance. Individuals still needing a background check are clearly identifiable in the attached Screening/Training List.
5. **Our Parish has ensured that all required individuals¹ have completed youth safety training through the Archdioceses' Sterling Volunteers Platform.**
☐ Yes, we are in full compliance, as evidenced by the attached Screening/Safety Training List.
☐ No, we are not in full compliance. Individuals still needing to complete youth safety training are clearly identifiable in the attached Screening/Training List.

¹ According to the Youth Protection Policy, those who are required to sign a Policy Acknowledgement and complete background checks and youth safety training include the following: all staff and volunteer Youth Workers; ordained clergy: bishops, priests, and deacons; subdeacons, readers, and adult altar servers; parish Council Members; parish employees; anyone with keys (or electronic access) to parish facilities; all other adults, including contractors, who will have more than incidental contact with minors in connection with the parish's ministries or programs.

I certify that the above information is accurate.

Clergy Name

Clergy Signature

Youth Protection Coordinator Name

Youth Protection Coordinator Signature

Date

APPENDIX B: Sample Youth Worker Registration Form

Youth Workers must register at the beginning of every ministry year. The following form outlines information that parishes should collect in that annual Youth Worker Registration.



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

YOUTH WORKER REGISTRATION FORM

Youth Events & Sunday Church School

For Church Office Use Only:

- ☐ Youth Protection Training Completed
☐ Background Check Completed
☐ Approved to Volunteer

Re-screen Date: ____/____/____
day month year

PARISH: _____
Name City, State/Province

DATE: ____/____/____
day month year

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

LEGAL NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____
ADDRESS _____
PRIMARY PHONE _____ ALTERNATE PHONE _____
EMAIL ADDRESS _____
EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PHONE NUMBER _____

VOLUNTEER AREAS OF INTEREST (please select all that apply):

- ____ General Youth Events (Field Trip, Vacation Church School, Special Event Chaperone, Teen Lock-In, etc.)
____ Sunday Church School Classroom Teacher or Assistant
____ Administrative/Non-Classroom Support
____ Creative Festivals
____ Other (If there is a project, special skill, or talent you would like to share), please specify:

AUTHORIZATION FOR BACKGROUND SCREENING

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America works to ensure security for youth by requiring background checks through Sterling Volunteers for all who work/volunteer with youth in youth events and Sunday Church School.
I have read the information contained in this application. I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state in which I work/volunteer with youth that the foregoing is true and correct. I authorize the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America to conduct a background check and to obtain any and all information needed to process my application. I hereby release and hold harmless the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America from any and all liability in obtaining or disclosing such information about my background.

Applicant Signature _____

Date: dd/mm/yyyy _____

APPENDIX C: Sample Youth Registration Form

Parents/guardians must register their youth to participate in Sunday Church School and Youth Programs at the beginning of every ministry year. The following form outlines information that parishes should collect in that annual Youth Registration.



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

YOUTH REGISTRATION FORM

PARISH: _____

Parish Name

Parish City, State/Province

This form helps us maintain records of our Youth Program participants. Please complete for all minors (18 and under) who will be participating in Sunday church school or teen program activities this year.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

____ / ____
Month Year

Parent/Guardian Name(s)

Address

Parent/Guardian Phone Number(s)

Parent/Guardian Email Address(es)

Emergency Contact Name

Emergency Contact Phone Number

Child's Name	Child's Birthdate	Enrolling In: Check all that may apply: Sunday Church School Teen Program	If relevant, please share any food allergies/restrictions, special medical needs, or other considerations it is important for Youth Workers to know.
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

Diapering/Toileting: I give permission for Youth Workers to help my child(ren) listed below with diapering/toileting in emergency situations.

☐ NO ☐ YES

Name(s): _____

Custody Release: Other than the Parents/Guardians listed above, I give permission for my child(ren) to be released from Youth Program events to the individuals listed below:

☐ NO ☐ YES

Name(s): _____

I understand that the parish is not responsible for supervising minors before or after formal Youth Program start and end times. As the parent/guardian of the minors listed above, I understand that I am required to supervise my minors (especially Young Children) at all times outside of formal Youth Program events on parish grounds.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, Youth Registration Form ... August 2024

APPENDIX D: Sample Archdiocesan HR Reporting Form (US) and Definitions



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Reporting Form - United States

To Report Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Department of Human Resources: hr@antiochian.org

REPORTER INFORMATION						
Your Last Name: _____		Your First Name: _____		Today's Date: _____		
Your Position: _____		Your Parish: _____		Email: _____		MI: _____
Address: Street # _____		City: _____	Zip Code: _____	County: _____	State: _____	
VICTIM INFORMATION						
If the victim is a child, list other children in the home. If the victim is an adult, describe disability and how he/she is impaired in the ability to care for or protect self in the DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT section on page 2.						
ADDRESS where the victim is currently located:						
Street # _____		City: _____	Zip Code: _____	County: _____	State: _____	
Cell Telephone Number: _____		Work Telephone Number: _____				
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	DOB	SEX	RACE	SSN	IS THIS PERSON A VICTIM?
(1)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(2)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(3)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(4)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(5)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR ALLEGED ABUSE, NEGLECT, ABANDONMENT OR EXPLOITATION						
NAME	DOB	SEX	RACE	SSN	RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM	
(1)						
(2)						
(3)						

Department of Human Resources 10/2024

Page 1

CONFIDENTIAL



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
Reporting Form - United States
To Report Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation of Minors and Vulnerable Adults
Department of Human Resources: hr@antiochian.org

REPORTER INFORMATION						
Your Last Name: _____		Your First Name: _____		Today's Date: _____		
Your Position: _____		Your Parish: _____		Email: _____		Phone #: _____
Address: Street # _____		City: _____	Zip Code: _____	County: _____	State: _____	
VICTIM INFORMATION						
If the victim is a child, list other children in the home. If the victim is an adult, describe disability and how he/she is impaired in the ability to care for or protect self in the DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT section on page 2.						
ADDRESS where the victim is currently located:						
Street # _____		Street Name: _____	City: _____	Zip Code: _____	County: _____	State: _____
Cell Telephone Number: _____		Work Telephone Number: _____				
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	DOB	SEX	RACE	SSN	IS THIS PERSON A VICTIM?
(1)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(2)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(3)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(4)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(5)						<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR ALLEGED ABUSE, NEGLECT, ABANDONMENT OR EXPLOITATION						
NAME	DOB	SEX	RACE	SSN	RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM	
(1)						
(2)						
(3)						

DEFINITIONS

Many States' law is very specific about child and vulnerable adult abuse and neglect. A few of the definitions are mentioned below.

For CHILD reports:

"Abandoned" or "abandonment" means a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver, while being able, has made no significant contribution to the child's care and maintenance or has failed to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with the child, or both. For purposes of this subsection, "establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship" includes, but is not limited to, frequent and regular contact with the child through frequent and regular visitation or frequent and regular communication to or with the child, and the exercise of parental rights and responsibilities. Marginal efforts and incidental or token visits or communications are not sufficient to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with a child. The term does not include a surrendered newborn infant, a child in need of services, or a family in need of services. The incarceration, repeated incarceration, or extended incarceration of a parent, legal custodian, or caregiver responsible for a child's welfare may support a finding of abandonment.

"Abuse" means any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual abuse, injury, or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child.

"Caregiver" means the parent, legal custodian, permanent guardian, adult household member, or other person responsible for a child's welfare.

"Neglect" occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired. The foregoing circumstances shall not be considered neglect if caused primarily by financial inability unless actual services for relief have been offered to and rejected by such person. A parent or legal custodian legitimately practicing religious beliefs in accordance with a recognized church or religious organization who thereby does not provide specific medical treatment for a child may not, for that reason alone, be considered a negligent parent or legal custodian; however, such an exception does

not preclude a court from ordering the following services to be provided, when the health of the child so requires:

- (a) Medical services from a licensed physician, dentist, optometrist, podiatric physician, or other qualified health care provider; or
- (b) Treatment by a duly accredited practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing in accordance with the tenets and practices of a well-recognized church or religious organization.

Neglect of a child includes acts or omissions.

"Other person responsible for a child's welfare" includes the child's legal guardian or foster parent; an employee of any school, public or private child day care center, residential home, institution, facility, or agency; a law enforcement officer employed in any facility, service, or program for children that is operated or contracted by the Department of Juvenile Justice; or any other person legally responsible for the child's welfare in a residential setting; and also includes an adult sitter or relative entrusted with a child's care. For the purpose of departmental investigative jurisdiction, this definition does not include the following persons when they are acting in an official capacity: law enforcement officers, except as otherwise provided in this subsection; employees of municipal or county detention facilities; or employees of the Department of Corrections.

For ADULT reports:

"Abuse" means any willful act or threatened act by a relative, caregiver, or household member which causes or is likely to cause significant impairment to a vulnerable adult's physical, mental, or emotional health. Abuse includes acts and omissions.

"Caregiver" means a person who has been entrusted with or has assumed the responsibility for frequent and regular care of or services to a vulnerable adult on a temporary or permanent basis and who has a commitment, agreement, or understanding with that person or that person's guardian that a caregiver role exists. "Caregiver" includes, but is not limited to, relatives, household members, guardians, neighbors, and employees and volunteers of facilities. For the purpose of departmental investigative jurisdiction, the term "caregiver" does not include law enforcement officers or employees of municipal or county detention facilities or the Department of Corrections while acting in an official capacity.

"Exploitation" means a person who:

1. Stands in a position of trust and confidence with a vulnerable adult and knowingly, by deception or intimidation, obtains or uses, or endeavors to obtain or use, a vulnerable adult's funds, assets, or property with the intent to temporarily or permanently deprive a vulnerable adult of the use, benefit, or possession of the funds, assets, or property for the benefit of someone other than the vulnerable adult; or
2. Knows or should know that the vulnerable adult lacks the capacity to consent, and obtains or uses, or endeavors to obtain or use, the vulnerable adult's funds, assets, or

property with the intent to temporarily or permanently deprive the vulnerable adult of the use, benefit, or possession of the funds, assets, or property for the benefit of someone other than the vulnerable adult.

(b) "Exploitation" may include, but is not limited to:

1. Breaches of fiduciary relationships, such as the misuse of a power of attorney or the abuse of guardianship duties, resulting in the unauthorized appropriation, sale, or transfer of property;
2. Unauthorized taking of personal assets;
3. Misappropriation, misuse, or transfer of moneys belonging to a vulnerable adult from a personal or joint account; or
4. Intentional or negligent failure to effectively use a vulnerable adult's income and assets for the necessities required for that person's support and maintenance.

"Neglect" means the failure or omission on the part of the caregiver or vulnerable adult to provide the care, supervision, and services necessary to maintain the physical and mental health of the vulnerable adult, including, but not limited to, food, clothing, medicine, shelter, supervision, and medical services, which a prudent person would consider essential for the well-being of a vulnerable adult. The term "neglect" also means the failure of a caregiver or vulnerable adult to make a reasonable effort to protect a vulnerable adult from abuse, neglect, or exploitation by others. "Neglect" is repeated conduct or a single incident of carelessness which produces or could reasonably be expected to result in serious physical or psychological injury or a substantial risk of death.

"Vulnerable adult" means a person 18 years of age or older whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, long-term physical, or developmental disability or dysfunction, or brain damage, or the infirmities of aging.

APPENDIX E: Sample Archdiocesan HR Reporting Form (Canada) and Glossary of Terms



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Reporting Form - Canada
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Department of Human Resources: hr@antiochian.org

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Address: Street # _____		City: _____		Postal Code: _____		Province/Territory: _____	
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NAME	DOB	SEX	RACE	SIN	RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM		
(1)							
(2)							
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FOR REPORTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH, VISIT [WWW.JUSTICE.GC.CA](https://www.justice.gc.ca)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

As listed in the Victim Services Directory, created by the Policy Centre for Victim Issues of the Department of Justice Canada to:

- help service providers, victims and individuals locate services for victims of crime across Canada;
- allow victims to determine which services they may require;
- link organizations and victims; and
- help all individuals access victim services.

Agency information for this Directory has been compiled through the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Victim Services Survey and includes Agencies in all provinces and territories across the country. The list of agencies, however, is not exhaustive. Date modified: 2021-07-07

Types of Victimization

Families of Homicide Victims

The surviving family members of a victim of a murder.

Families of Missing, Abducted, and Exploited Children

The family members of child victims who are missing, who have been abducted, or who have been exploited in any manner.

Families of Sexually Abused Children

The family members of a child victim of sexual abuse (see Child/Youth Sexual Abuse).

Hate Crime

The victimization of any person who has experienced a criminal offence committed against a person, a group of people, or property which was motivated by that person's or group's apparent belonging to a segment of the population identified by skin colour, race, religion, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

Human Trafficking

The victimization of any person who has been transported, transferred, and/or harboured, both within Canada and internationally, against their will and exploited for use in slavery or slavery-like conditions, sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriages, or for other purposes.

Impaired Driving

The victimization of any person who has experienced bodily harm due to a motor vehicle accident in which at least one driver was under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and/or was legally intoxicated at the time of the accident.

Child/Youth Sexual Abuse

Child/Youth victim

A person under the age of 18 years old who has been involved in a sexual act with a person in a position of trust and authority by age, strength, or intelligence, including acts such as touching, fondling, exposing oneself, participation in prostitution and any participation or viewing of pornography.

Adult survivor of child/youth sexual abuse

An adult 18 years of age or older who was sexually abused as a child.

Child/Youth victim of sexual exploitation

A child who has been taken advantage of and/or manipulated by any person in a position of trust or authority by age, strength, or intelligence, for sexual purposes.

Child/Youth Violence**Physical Abuse**

A child under the age of 18 years who has experienced physical threats or physical violence or whose needs have been neglected or disregarded by a person or persons in a position of authority or in which a relationship of trust exists.

Bullying

A child under the age of 18 years who has experienced unwanted and repeated physical, psychological, and/or sexual assault from another child in their peer group who seeks domination over the victim. This includes online bullying and threats.

Criminal Harassment (Stalking)

An adult 18 years of age or older who has been repeatedly followed, contacted, watched, or threatened against their will in any manner, including electronic (phone, e-mail, instant messaging) contact.

Domestic Violence**Adult victim of Partner Abuse**

An adult 18 years of age or older who has been abused one or more times sexually, physically, psychologically by a current or past partner or spouse.

Child/Youth victim/witness of domestic violence

A child under the age of 18 years who has been abused in any way or exposed to abuse of any kind within a family environment.

Sexual Assault**Adult - female victims**

An adult female 18 years of age or older who is assaulted by another person in a manner which consists of any unwanted sexual act.

Adult - male victims

An adult male 18 years of age or older who is assaulted by another person in a manner which consists of any unwanted sexual act.

Types of Services**Advocacy**

The promotion of the best interests of victims, and the active support of the needs, rights, and services for victims.

Compensation

Assistance in completing forms for criminal injury compensation claims.

Counselling

Short and/or long term crisis intervention, emotional support, guidance and counselling provided by advocates, counsellors, mental health professionals, or peers. Such counselling may occur at the scene of a crime or immediately after a crime or be provided on an ongoing basis.

Court Accompaniment

To go with the victim/witness to court to explain court procedures, answer questions, define legal terms, and provide general emotional support to the victim/witness.

Crisis/Distress Line

A telephone service for victims, often in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing immediate, over-the-phone counselling, guidance, emotional support, information and referral.

Crisis Intervention

The provision of emergency psychological care to victims and the referral of victims to agencies which provide long-term counselling or support services.

Emotional Support

Providing comfort and assistance to victims through listening, providing information, and counsel.

General Information

Information provided by an agency regarding the criminal justice system, services available to victims, and a variety of other services and programs in their community.

Hospital Accompaniment

To go with the victim to a hospital or health clinic in order to receive emergency health care after experiencing victimization, particularly in cases of sexual assault.

Safety Planning/Risk Assessment

Creating an emergency safety plan for women and children at risk of domestic violence or criminal harassment (stalking). Assistance in determining the risk or likelihood of the reoccurrence of domestic violence.

Self-Help Support Groups

A group of people who provide moral support and information to each other on issues relating to a shared experience of victimization.

Services offered in other languages

Services offered in languages other than English or French.

Shelters/Housing/Transition Homes

Temporary accommodation or emergency shelter, usually for victims of domestic violence.

Victim Impact Statements (assistance in preparation)

Support and assistance in preparing written statements made by the victim of a crime which describes the harm done to the victim and, more generally, the effect that the crime has had on his or her life. The statement is provided, in writing, to the court, which uses the statement to determine the type and/or length of sentence the offender will receive.

Victim Notification

A service that notifies victims of information or changes regarding their court case, and/or the status of the accused or offender.

Victim/Witness Preparation

The provision of information and support throughout the criminal justice process, including court preparation and/or Victim Impact Statement preparation.

Population Specific Services for**Indigenous persons**

Persons who identify with at least one Indigenous group (i.e. First Nations, Métis, or Inuit), as well as persons who identify with more than one group, and person who do not identify with an Indigenous group, but who are Registered or Treaty Indians or members of an Indian band.

Children and Youth

Those who are below the age of 18 years old.

Persons with disabilities

Those who have a hearing, visual, or mobility impairment and/or who have a mental health, cognitive, or learning disability.

Senior persons

Those who are the age of 65 years or older.

Members of a visible minority

Persons, other than Indigenous peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.