

DIOCESE OF KOOTENAY

Origin: Diocesan Council  
Status: Policy and Procedures  
Distribution: All Parishes  
Subject: Sexual Assault, Abuse, Exploitation or Harassment

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## EPISCOPAL AUTHORITY

It is hereby acknowledged that the Bishop of a Diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada has, by virtue of the Office of Bishop, ecclesiastical jurisdiction, authority, and power of discipline over Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Lay members of the Anglican Church of Canada within the Diocese or otherwise under the jurisdiction of the Bishop.

Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted as impairing, diminishing or affecting in any way that authority.

## POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Regarding Sexual Assault, Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation  
or Sexual Harassment of Persons  
in the Diocese of Kootenay.

## THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

In the beginning God created human kind and breathed into them the breath of life giving all persons a significant role in creation. The Divine Vision of human persons living together in harmony and peace, enjoying the gift of their human sexuality, male and female and the balance of nature in the whole creation was marred as human kind chose to glorify self instead of The Creator.

Despite this set back the Holy One has continued to call people to live out the Vision. Eucharist prayer 3 in the Book of Alternative Services sums it up by saying "We give thanks to you Lord our God for the goodness and love made known to us in creation, in calling Israel to be your people, in your word spoken through the prophets, and above all in the word made flesh Jesus your Son."

It is Jesus the Christ who affirms for the Christian the eternal dignity and worth of the whole creation especially that of human persons. Male and female, sinner and sinned against are the recipients of the Divine Call, mercy and grace.

By the word enfleshed among us, Jesus the Christ and "through the truth of his word and the example of his life, through his obedience by which he overcame temptation, through his dying by which he overcame death" and through his being raised to life again in which we are raised to the life of the kingdom, the eternal value and worth of all human kind is affirmed.

As we commit ourselves to the vision of God, we make a promise to strive for justice and peace and to uphold the dignity of every human being or "to keep God's holy will and commandments, walking steadfastly in the way of Christ." We are obligated as followers of Jesus to "seek and serve Christ", the image of God, "in all persons" and, like him, we are called to defend, protect, and provide for those who are weaker and more vulnerable to harm in our society.

In the light of this, sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of any kind is contrary to the will of God. To abuse, assault, harass or exploit sexually is to crucify the Christ again.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When anyone is sexually abused, whether assaulted, harassed, or exploited, by a Christian, not only is that person harmed each time it happens but the Church is also harmed. Each time this happens some will find the Church less attractive and the Gospel more difficult to believe. When the act of abuse is perpetrated by a clergy person, lay church employee or volunteer leader the results are often more hurtful and affect a wider circle of people. Whether we like it or not there is a higher standard to which people in leadership roles are always subject.

When such cases occur the Church must respond with a concern for justice and healing. The following guidelines set out the Policy and Procedure of the Diocese of Kootenay in order to ensure, as far as is possible, that people are dealt with fairly; that justice and healing can be found by those who have been abused and that abusers may find treatment.

It is our policy that sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, of any kind whether to an adult, adolescent or child, male or female, by or to any clergy person, lay church employee or volunteer leader will not be tolerated.

It is wrong for clergy, lay church employees, or volunteer leaders to abuse the authority of their position by engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Sexual involvements which may seem consensual cannot truly be so in a relationship in which one of the participants has economic, professional, or spiritual authority over the other.

Allegations of sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation by clergy, lay church employees or volunteer leaders, will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly.

Children and young people are especially vulnerable and are therefore of particular concern in cases of sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation.

An accused person will be presumed innocent until proven otherwise.

The Bishop and a Diocesan Response Team, appointed by the Bishop, will be committed to seeking justice and providing support for both the stated victim and the alleged offender.

In cases of sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation in which legal charges may arise, the Bishop and a Diocesan Response Team appointed by the Bishop will encourage investigation and the determination of responsibility, cooperating fully with civil authorities.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **A: DIOCESAN RESPONSE TEAM**

- 1: The Bishop shall appoint a Diocesan Response Team to advise the Bishop, or in the Bishop's absence, the Commissary, with regard to allegations of sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation by clergy, lay church employees or volunteer leaders. The areas of responsibility will be investigation, pastoral response, and adjudication.

The Diocesan Response Team may make recommendations about dealing with all aspects surrounding such allegations, including but not limited to recommendations concerning the alleged victim, the family and friends of the alleged victim, the alleged offender and the family of the alleged offender, the congregation immediately involved, and the other clergy and members of the Diocese.

- 2: The membership of the Diocesan Response Team will be three persons: a) a senior priest of the diocese, b) a lawyer who is knowledgeable in the area of sexual abuse law, and c) a person who is knowledgeable in the field of human relationships including sexual abuse. After consultation with Diocesan Council, the Bishop will appoint the members for a three year term. Members will be eligible for re-appointment. When required an alternate may be appointed by the Team in consultation with the Bishop.
- 3: When a complaint of sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or sexual harassment by a clergy person, lay church employee or volunteer leader becomes known to any member of the diocese, that person shall report such complaint to the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary.
- 4: The Bishop will then consult with the members of the Diocesan Response Team to determine whether or not more information is needed, and what, if any, action needs to be taken.
- 5: Should a complaint of sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation be made against the Bishop, the Metropolitan will be informed and asked to consult with the Diocesan Response Team to determine whether or not more information is needed and what if any action needs to be taken and to follow the procedures as outlined below.

## **RESPONSE TEAM MANDATE**

- 1: To investigate allegations of sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation to a point beyond which it is the scope of criminal or child welfare or human rights investigation.
- 2: To cooperate where necessary/possible with other civil and Ecclesiastical authority.
- 3: To appoint others when needed to act on its behalf.
- 4: To recommend appropriate courses of action; such as Ecclesiastical trial, pastoral care, resolution of cases, reintegration, etc.
- 5: To offer support and help to victim and offender by encouraging and assisting in arranging pastoral and therapeutic care.
- 6: To offer support, education and information to the Church across the Diocese regarding sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and sexual harassment.

The Response Team will report its actions to the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, to the Bishop's Commissary.

## **B: EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES**

- 1) References will be required for all clergy, lay church employees, and volunteer leaders and will be checked via direct conversation with those named re: strengths and/or weaknesses.
- 2) Clergy and lay church employees or volunteer staff working with children shall be asked to give permission for a check of the child abuse registry in their home province.
- 3) Successful applicants will agree to abide by this policy and follow the procedures.

## **C: PROCEDURE FOR CHILDREN:**

- 1: All persons are obligated by law to report knowledge of children under 16 years of age in need of protection to the civil authorities. This includes cases of sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation. (appendix 1 and IV)

In the case of allegations against clergy, lay church employees, or church volunteers, members of the Diocese after reporting to the civil authorities are asked to report to the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary.

In the case of persons between the ages of 16 and 18, the reporting requirement is somewhat grey. If the accused was in a position of authority over them or the victim is mentally or in some other way incapacitated (see Appendix I) it must be reported.

In the case of the Bishop, the report should be made to the civil authorities, then to the Metropolitan, and the Dean of the Diocese or the Bishop's Executive Assistant. The Dean and/or the Executive Assistant after consultation with the Metropolitan shall engage the Diocesan Response Team and request the Metropolitan to follow the procedures outlined below.

In the formal Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) the right of a child for protection and the right of the penitent to the priest's silence conflict. The decision of the priest to disclose the abuse or not to the proper authorities is that of the conscience of the individual priest, but due weight must be given to the obligation to protect the helpless.

The seal of the confessional, a long standing tradition within the church supported by common law, is not a right codified in Canadian law. Usually the court system will seek a way around a priest testifying to the content of a confession. If you are called to testify, contact the Bishop and Chancellor immediately for counsel and advice.

There is no privilege of silence in Canadian law for confidential information received in a counselling session.

- 2: The Bishop and Response Team will assist the secular authorities in all appropriate ways in their investigation.
- 3: Unless prohibited by police or court procedures; when allegations are made the Response Team or its delegates shall attempt to meet with the child and its parents or guardian to reassure the child that she/he is safe from the offender; to encourage the victim and family to obtain appropriate therapeutic services and pastoral care and give help in finding the same when requested.

### **Procedures for Children (continued)**

- 4: Although the accused's innocence will be presumed until proven otherwise, should the initial investigation lead to further investigation or to prosecution the Response Group will inform the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, and recommend that the accused be inhibited from the practice of ministry, (Canon XVIII:25 General Synod: Appendix II), until the investigation is completed and a decision made. The relevant parish or faith community, at the discretion of the Bishop, shall be informed of this action.
- 5: When an accused person is found "not guilty" in a criminal court and the Response Team is satisfied that professional sexual ethics have not been violated they shall recommend a public statement exonerating the accused be made by the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, and distributed as widely as possible, and that the Bishop end the inhibition. Should pastoral relations be damaged beyond the point of restoration the Bishop shall seek on behalf of the exonerated, a new position within the Diocese or wider Church or assist in enabling the exonerated to retrain for an alternative career. If neither option is possible the Diocese shall make a financial offer of an amount up to one year's stipend and benefits.
- 6: If the Diocesan Response Team, regardless of the outcome of criminal investigation or court of law, concludes professional sexual ethics have been violated, it may recommend trial before Diocesan Court or disciplinary action according to Canon XVIII General Synod. (see Appendix II)
- 7: If the accused is found guilty by a court of law the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary shall proceed according to General Synod Canon XVIII. (see appendix II)
- 8: When the Diocesan Response Team is satisfied no sexual ethics have been violated or when the accused is exonerated by Diocesan Court, it may recommend that a public statement to this effect be issued by the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, and distributed as widely as possible, and that the Bishop end the inhibition. Should pastoral relations be damaged beyond the point of restoration the Bishop shall seek on behalf of the exonerated, a new position within the Diocese or wider Church or assist in enabling the exonerated to retrain for an alternative career. If neither option is possible the Diocese shall make a financial offer of an amount up to one year's stipend and benefits.
- 9: The Response Team will encourage the offender to accept appropriate therapeutic services and pastoral care and will help the offender find the same.
- 10: If deemed appropriate the Response Team may recommend that the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, inform the parish of the circumstances of the complaint and the subsequent action that has been taken. The Bishop will also arrange, if necessary, appropriate means to help the parish and diocesan community deal with the situation.

## **D: PROCEDURE FOR ADULTS:**

- 1: Allegations of sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation by clergy, lay church employees, or volunteer leaders from adults should be reported immediately to the Bishop or, in the absence of the Bishop, the Bishop's Commissary, who will then engage the Diocesan Response Team. (appendix I)
- 2: Allegations against the Bishop should be reported to the Metropolitan, the Bishop's Executive Assistant and/or the Dean. The Executive Assistant and/or the Dean shall, after consultation with the Metropolitan, engage the Diocesan Response Team and request the Metropolitan to follow the procedures as here outlined.
- 3: When allegations come from an adult the Response Team will request a written complaint. Either the Response Team as a whole, or its delegate, shall attempt to meet with the complainant to hear the story. The complainant may have an advocate present at the meeting. The complainant will be assured that it is not necessary to meet the accused face to face. Such a meeting may be arranged if requested by the complainant, and in the case of criminal charges, agreed to by the complainant's lawyer, police, and court authorities.
- 4: Unless prohibited by police or court procedures, the Response Team, or its delegate, will meet with the accused to reveal the written complaint and to hear the accused's response. The accused may have an advocate present at the meeting.
- 5: Although the accused's innocence will be presumed until proven otherwise, if the Response Team thinks it possible that an abuse has occurred the accused, at the discretion of the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, may be inhibited from the practice of ministry until the Team's investigation is completed and a decision made. The relevant parish or faith community, at the discretion of the Bishop, shall be informed of this action.
- 6: After consideration, the Response Team will make its final recommendations to the Bishop or, in the absence of the Bishop, the Bishop's Commissary. Several options are possible:
  - a) Dismiss the case and report to the complainant.
  - b) Provide for further investigation.
  - c) Recommend disciplinary action (Canon XVIII:9 of General Synod, see Appendix II).
  - d) Advise that secular authority be involved.
  - e) Recommend trial before Diocesan Court.
  - f) Other.

### **Procedure for Adults (continued)**

- 7: When an accused person is found "not guilty" in a criminal court and the Response Team is satisfied that professional sexual ethics have not been violated they shall recommend that a public statement exonerating the accused be made by the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, and distributed as widely as possible, and that the Bishop then end the inhibition. Should pastoral relations be damaged beyond the point of restoration the Bishop shall seek on behalf of the exonerated a new position within the Diocese or wider Church or assist in enabling the exonerated to seek retraining for an alternative career. If neither option is possible the Diocese shall make a financial offer of an amount up to one year's stipend and benefits.
- 8: If the Diocesan Response Team, regardless of the outcome of criminal investigation or a court of law, concludes professional sexual ethics have been violated they may recommend disciplinary action according to General Synod Canon XVIII (appendix II) or trial before Diocesan Court.
- 9: When the Diocesan Response Team is satisfied no professional sexual ethics have been violated or when the accused is exonerated by Diocesan Court, it may recommend that a public statement to this effect be issued by the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, and distributed as widely as possible, and that the Bishop end the inhibition. Should pastoral relations be damaged beyond the point of restoration the Bishop shall seek on behalf of the exonerated a new position within the Diocese or wider Church or assist in enabling the exonerated to retrain for an alternative career. If neither option is possible the Diocese shall make a financial offer of an amount up to one year's stipend and benefits.
- 10: If the accused is convicted of an indictable offense, the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary shall proceed according to General Synod Canon XVIII. (see appendix II)
- 11: The Response Team will encourage both the victim and the offender to obtain appropriate therapeutic services and pastoral care and to provide help in finding the same if requested.
- 12: If deemed appropriate the Response Team may recommend that the Bishop or, in the Bishop's absence, the Bishop's Commissary, inform the parish of the circumstances of the complaint and the subsequent action that has been taken. The Bishop will also arrange, if necessary, appropriate means to help the parish and diocesan community deal with the situation.

## Appendix I

### SEXUAL ASSAULT

**DEFINITION:** (under the Criminal Code of Canada, Bill C-127, 1983 and Bill C-15, 1988)

"Assault" means any intentional use of force or threat of use of force against another person without his or her consent. The law does not specifically define the term "sexual assault". It is however any form of assault involving some form of sexual activity. Kissing, sexual contacts, fondling, or sexual intercourse with another without his/her consent is simple sexual assault. (The judge or jury decides whether in a particular case there was sexual assault.)

There is also the category of "aggravated sexual assault" which includes bodily harm, assault with a weapon, threats, threat to a third party.

Other categories of sexual assault include intercourse with a female under age 14, intercourse with a female age 14-16, incest, anal intercourse (buggery), bestiality and gross indecency.

Further sexual offences against children include; sexual interference, invitation to touching, sexual exploitation of a young person, parent or guardian procuring sexual activity of a child, exposing genitals to a child, juvenile prostitution, corrupting children, indecent acts. (From "Canada's Law on Child Sexual Abuse - a Handbook")

**NOTE:** Consent is understood as non-coercive. If a victim agrees to any assault under threat, or if consent is obtained by fraud or by the influence of a person in authority over the victim (eg. counselor, pastor, guardian), it will be deemed to be no consent. An accused may show "honest belief" of consent and may not be convicted. However, it is always no consent for children under age 12; under specific circumstances with peers for children age 12-14, and with young persons age 14-18 consent is not valid if the accused was in a position of authority over them. Also there are further provisions for mentally or otherwise incapacitated or vulnerable children, adolescents and adults. (from National Office Policy A.C.C.)

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**DEFINITION:**

Several kinds of behaviour with a sexual connotation, if unsolicited and unwanted, and especially if repetitive, can be forms of sexual harassment. Examples are: suggestive looks or leers, obscene gestures, sexual remarks, comments, teasing or telling jokes with a sexual content, letters, telephone calls or materials of a sexual nature, imposed touching, closeness, invitation to touch or view sexually explicit materials, pressure for dates or activities with a sexual overtone, or offer to use influence in return for sexual favour.

(from When Christian Solidarity is Broken W.C.C. 1992)

This Item	Replaces
File: 7.6.10	7.6.10
Date: Mar. 98	Oct. 93

## Appendix II

### General Synod Canon XVIII – Discipline

Please refer to the Handbook of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada (16<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2010) , pp. 85-93.

This Item	Replaces
File: 7.6.10	7.6.10
Date: Mar. 98	Oct. 93

### Appendix III

Please refer to Diocese of Kootenay Canon 11 (Revised May 2009), pp. 32-36

## Appendix IV

### **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AN ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE**

- 1) Contact either the R.C.M.P. or Ministry of Social Services and Housing.
- 2) Simply record the statements of the child and pass on.
- 3) Do not ask leading questions.
- 4) Support the child before and after the disclosure.
- 5) Be open - inform the child you will be sharing the news with the Ministry of Social Services and Housing - Family Services.
- 6) Do not notify or question parents. Leave it to Ministry investigators.
- 7) Assure the child that it is "OK" - they have done nothing wrong - they are loved by God and many others.
- 8) If the alleged perpetrator is a clergy person, church employee or volunteer leader, after taking the steps above, notify the Bishop or, in his absence, the Bishop's Commissary.

The church like other organizations must face the reality that more attention needs to be directed especially to treating healthy attitudes and safe spaces for the people in its care. We are concerned about those members most vulnerable to abuse like children, youth and adults with limited abilities, even seniors. Therefore, it is important to have structures in place to ensure accountability and to safeguard against those who would harm others. It is important to remember that while we are more aware of the problem of abuse, it is **not** common in our churches. Most volunteers are genuine and sincere about the love and care they offer in their ministry. The Diocesan Council has approved the attached application and declaration for use in each parish. It is important that we have a **uniform** approach to volunteers and the background checks necessary to safeguard our weaker members.

It is sometimes difficult to ask longtime volunteers to complete new forms and for criminal record checks but to ensure that everyone is treated equally, it is imperative that **all** volunteers who work with these vulnerable groups complete the forms. To assist you, an explanation is written right into the declaration and it is made clear that the completed forms are kept confidential unless their disclosure is necessary. Please note that criminal record checks do not have to be obtained for everyone, but a consent must be obtained. Record checks should be obtained where new volunteers are coming on board but is discretionary in those cases where the volunteer is a twenty year veteran of teaching Sunday School. Yet, even in those cases it might be wise to have the checks completed. The law requires that everyone working with children must have a criminal record check completed.

To guarantee the effectiveness of this process, it is important that the cleric or lay person in charge of these forms do the follow up indicated in the applications. Reference checks must be made or the form will be of little value. Also attached to this form is a document entitled **Healthy Attitudes - Safe Spaces**. These are protocols for parishes. To some they may seem too harsh, for others too lenient - if they are followed, they will provide some measure of safety. Remember, the reason for these forms is to help safeguard our weakest, most vulnerable members, not to protect the church or parish from legal action.

Appendix V

Application and Declaration  
for work with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults  
in the Parish of

Thank you for volunteering to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults in the Parish of . The church, like many other organizations which work with children, youth and vulnerable adults (like seniors), is realizing that it has to be more intentional in its efforts to ensure a safe and healthy environment As Christians we value, honour and protect the weak. To do this it -is important to have structures in place to ensure accountability and to safeguard against those who would harm others. It is important to remember that while we are more aware of the problem of abuse, it is not common in our churches. Most volunteers are genuine and sincere about the love and care they offer in their ministry. However, we realize that abusers can operate in every institution, including the church, and the impact of abuse is severe and exceedingly harmful. Therefore we ask those who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults to complete a form indicating their background and past experience with these groups and perhaps to undergo a criminal records check.

All of our helpers are being asked to fill out this form whether they have been a member of the Parish for two years or twenty. All personal details will be held in confidence unless cause for concern is raised by your activities within the church or by the people you are working with. Unless cause is shown, this form will be reviewed only by the Incumbent, or if there is none, the Incumbent's Warden and kept in a secure place in the Diocesan office.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you lived at this address? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please state your occupation or employment since leaving school. Indicate your special areas of interest, skills, and experiences which lead to your interest in working with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Organization/Parish</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Amount of Time</u>
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_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

3. Former Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

How long since you attended there? \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Incumbent/Minister: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you willing to undertake training about the detection and prevention of abuse?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please provide the names, addresses and phone numbers of three people who have known you for at least two years and who would provide a character reference and comment on your ability to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you ever been charged with an offense under the Criminal Code of Canada, the Narcotic Control Act, the Controlled Drug and Substances Act, the Food and Drug Act (or which would have been, if committed in Canada, an offense under the above mentioned Acts)?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what was the offense(s) charged? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the date of the alleged offense(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the outcome of the proceeding(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you ever been charged with any driving or liquor offenses under any Provincial Statute in Canada (or which would have been, if committed in Canada, an offense under these Acts)? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what was the offense(s) charged? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the date of the alleged offense(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the outcome of the proceeding(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you suffer, or have you suffered, from any illness or disease which might endanger the people under your care? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please give details:

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9. Have you ever had a child, young person or vulnerable adult removed from your care or placed under supervision by a local or provincial authority? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please give details:

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I hereby consent to a criminal records check and to the police releasing the results of the check.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

References checked: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## HEALTHY ATTITUDES - SAFE SPACES

The church like other organizations must face the reality that more attention needs to be directed to creating healthy attitudes and safe spaces for the people in its care. We are especially concerned about those members most vulnerable to abuse like children, youth and adults with limited abilities, even seniors. As Christians we honour, value and protect the weak. One means of showing this is to have structures in place to ensure accountability and to safeguard against those who would harm others.

It is important to remember, though, that despite our heightened awareness of the problem of abuse, it is not common in our churches. Most of our volunteers are genuine and sincere about the care and love they offer in their ministry. However, we realize that when abuse occurs, its impact is severe and very harmful.

Therefore it is important to have policies and screening methods in place to minimize the potential for abuse. We cannot completely safeguard our parishes from abusers or violators so it is best to implement various safeguards and then to continue to assess and monitor them. To be effective the parish must be consistent. Age, church attendance or member status should not exempt participation in the screening process.

1. The doors to the clergy, youth workers, Christian education directors and organist/choir director's offices should have windows in them.
2. All meeting spaces should be open, public and accessible. The volunteer coordinator should periodically visit groups under their direction. Parents should always feel welcome to visit groups at any time.
3. Training workshops should be provided by each parish who uses volunteers. This workshop is to consist of material about abuse and responses to suspected or disclosed abuse. This is important and all volunteers are required to attend.
4. One year rule. Ensure all volunteers are part of the church community for at least one year before they serve as a volunteer in children's, youth or vulnerable adults ministries. This is difficult but perhaps the parish can find other ways for them to offer their gifts until the parish and the new member get to know each other better.
5. All volunteers are to fill out the Application and Declaration form. To be effective, the Incumbent, Warden or person responsible must check the references. The application contains a consent for a criminal records check and a copy of the summary sheet must be received by the designated contact before the volunteer begins work. The parish may, in limited circumstances, allow the volunteer to proceed in the ministry on the condition that this will be reviewed upon the summary sheet being made available by the police.

6. If the volunteer has recently moved from another parish, contact the incumbent of the former parish for a reference check.
7. Ensure those under the age of 18 involved with ministry to children, youth or vulnerable adults are adequately trained and supervised. When abuse occurs it is too late to remember that the parish was "going to do something about training". Minimally a young volunteer must have attended and "passed" an accredited baby-sitting course. An adult member of the team should check in with the group at least once a session. No matter how mature and capable an 18 year old may be it is unfair of us to be placing them in potentially vulnerable circumstances.
8. When possible, all classes, groups and visits should be team-led. This helps to ensure the safety of all children, youth or vulnerable adults in our care and to protect the volunteer from false accusation. Placing a child, youth or vulnerable adult alone for a prolonged period of time with a volunteer is a high-risk situation. Youth group and children's camping trips and recreational outings led by one leader are also considered high-risk.
9. All activities which take a group off church premises should require written parental permission.

*Indebtedness for a lot of the contents of this paper and the revised Application is acknowledged to the Human Resources and Program Resources, Children's Unit of the Diocese of Toronto.*