Abuse Policy

Revised 2022

This policy supersedes: “Abuse Policy 2020”

“Supplemental Policy Statement, Criminal Background Checks for All Employees of the Diocese of Fairbanks and for Volunteers Who Work With Children”
Respect for all members of the Church community is very important to our Diocese. We undertake to ensure that our Church community is a safe and holy environment for all whom our ministry affects. Special care must be taken to safeguard children and those members of our faith community who, due to advanced age, or mental or physical disabilities, are more vulnerable than others. “Vulnerable adults” are not only those who are typically recognized as vulnerable by the state, “who, because of physical or mental impairment, [are] unable to meet [their] own needs or seek help without assistance.” A.S.47.24.900(16).

“Vulnerable adults” are also otherwise healthy adults who are vulnerable because of recent life experiences, for example: those in or recovering from abusive relationships, those grieving the death of a loved one, suffering job loss or career difficulties, experiencing separation, divorce, family or marital discord, financial difficulties, or facing sudden illness of those for whom they are responsible. Persons 60 years of age and older may be vulnerable simply due to the cumulative effects of age. It is important to recognize that all of us are vulnerable to varying degrees at different stages of our lives.

Abuse or exploitation of vulnerable adults or children can occur during ministry when persons in a position of trust or authority intentionally or unintentionally misuse their position to further their own desires or fail to act in the best interests of the person to whom they are ministering. This abuse or exploitation can take many forms, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse and financial abuse. It is the policy of this Diocese that all who participate in ministry, whether by giving or receiving, shall be treated respectfully and honestly, and that safeguards shall be established to protect vulnerable adults during the period of their vulnerability.

Where one individual holds power over another due to position, age, size, gender or for any other reason, the potential for abuse exists. An imbalance of power may be real or merely perceived, but where it exists, the person in the position of relative power must be responsible for ensuring that abuse does not occur. We must recognize that by agreeing to specific ministries, staff and volunteers may themselves become vulnerable to manipulation and abuse by others. As much as possible, people in positions of trust must take precautions to avoid compromising situations. By recognizing and avoiding these compromising situations, people in ministry can protect others from abuse, protect themselves from abuse, and protect themselves from misunderstandings that may lead to allegations of abuse.

Because of the intimate nature of ministry, people in positions of trust may suspect or become aware of situations of abuse or neglect by third parties against those to whom they minister. When these situations involve children or “vulnerable adults” as defined in state law, a person may be required by law to inform the local police, State Department of Administration, or State Department of Health and Social Services. (See A.S.47.24.010 et. seq). In cases of neglect or abuse involving adults, the ministering person should encourage the abused person to seek necessary help and support to stop the abuse and should themselves secure such help for the abused person where possible.
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Introduction:
The Diocese of Fairbanks is committed to providing a safe environment for children and youth. This commitment is expressed in these policies for the protection of children and youth.

We believe… That God’s people have the right to healthy ministry and to quality pastoral care. At the heart of this ministry is a relationship with God, a desire for holiness, and a commitment to live in right relationship with God’s people.

We believe… That the protection of those children and youth entrusted to the Church’s care is of paramount importance. That those who work in the Church have grace-influenced power to do great good for children and youth. When that grace-influenced power is misused, it can result in great harm and unspeakable pain.

We believe… That when a representative of the Church commits child sexual abuse, a unique type of emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological damage occurs.

We believe… That the Church must continue to reach out to those who are victims of child sexual abuse with the very compassion of Jesus Christ.

We recognize… Our responsibility to provide avenues of healing for those who are victims and for their families.

We recognize… Our responsibility to observe the requirements of civil law regarding immediate reporting of suspected child sexual abuse and to willingly cooperate with civil authorities.

We recognize… There are instances where the state may not prosecute an alleged child abuser even though a credible allegation has been made. Our standard requires us to take appropriate action to promote the safety of children and youth.

We recognize… Our responsibilities as an employer. Church personnel are entitled to fair treatment under Church and civil law.

The Diocese of Fairbanks will produce a healthy and nurturing environment for our children and youth. We will strive to make our Church a safe environment for them. We will exclude from ministry, employment, and volunteer service anyone whom we know poses a danger of child sexual abuse. We will ensure that victims are offered quality pastoral care and counseling. We will affirm the efforts of people who provide appropriate and loving outreach to the children and youth of the Diocese of Fairbanks.
Abuse Policy

Application

This policy applies to all parishes, schools, institutions, programs, and ministries operating under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Fairbanks.

Definitions

The following definitions apply for purposes of this policy:

“Abuse of Vulnerable Adults” means unjust or improper use of a vulnerable adult, or that person’s resources, for one’s own profit or advantage. It includes causing physical or mental injury, and spiritual, sexual, or financial abuse or exploitation.

“Child Pornography” shall include, but is not limited to any kind of image, text, writing or audio in any medium, including images that are simulated, computer-generated, altered, or animated that depict nudity, actual or simulated sexual acts or an explicit description of sexual subjects involving children or youth under the age of 18.

“Child sexual abuse” means conduct adversely affecting the health and well-being of a child under the age of 18 by infliction of sexual abuse or exploitation, including but not limited to all sexual offenses against children defined by state law.

“Children and Youth” includes all persons under 18 years of age.

“Church personnel” includes bishops, priests, and deacons with faculties to function in this Diocese, seminarians of the Diocese, those enrolled in the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program, men and women religious working in the Diocese, employees, and volunteers.

“Financial Abuse or Exploitation” means the use of undue influence to solicit funds or property of value for personal gain or as contributions to any group or agency, including the Church.

“Indecent Exposure” means knowingly exposing one’s genitals in the presence of another person or showing pornography material with reckless disregard for the offensive, insulting or frightening effect the act may have.

“Mental injury” means fear or mental distress.

“Older Persons” are those 60 years of age and older.

“Physical injury” means a physical pain or an impairment of physical condition.
“Pornographic Material” shall include, but is not limited to any kind of image, text, writing or audio in any medium, including images that are simulated, computer-generated, altered, or animated that depict nudity, actual or simulated sexual acts or an explicit description of sexual subjects.

“Sexual abuse” means sexual contact, sexual exploitation, or sexual penetration.

“Sexual contact” means knowingly touching, directly or through clothing, the victim’s genitals, anus, or female breasts, or knowingly causing the victim to touch, directly or through clothing, the offender’s or victim’s genitals, anus, or female breast. However, “sexual contact” does not include acts that may reasonably be construed to be normal caretaker responsibilities. Neither “sexual contact” nor “sexual penetration” includes acts for the purpose of administering a recognized and lawful form of treatment that is reasonably adapted to promoting the physical or mental health of the person being treated.

“Sexual exploitation” means allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in sexual contact or sexual penetration with anyone, or allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in lewd exhibition of the child’s genitals, anus or female breast.

“Sexual penetration” means genital intercourse, cunnilingus, fellatio, anal intercourse, or an intrusion, however slight, of an object or any part of a person’s body into the genital or anal opening of another person’s body.

“Spiritual Abuse” means imposing one’s own values or morals on another.

“Vulnerable adults” are persons 18 years of age or older who, because of physical, mental or emotional impairment, or the effects of recent life experiences are presently unable to exercise a normal adult’s degree of physical or emotional independence or mental insight and judgment.

Expectations

All priests, deacons, religious, and diocesan and parish employees are to review and acknowledge the Code of Professional Conduct on an annual basis upon completion of annual safe environment training.

All church personnel will have access to the diocese’s Abuse Policy and be made aware of the procedure and expectations of reporting any suspicions of abuse to civil authorities and the diocese. Information for making reports will be posted in the principal language in which the liturgy is celebrated.

Screening

The Diocese of Fairbanks is committed to healthy ministry, and seeks to engage competent, qualified people. To protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults, Church personnel will be screened for their fitness to work with vulnerable populations. This is a two-part screening process. First, background checks, including a criminal history check, will be required for all Church Personnel whose ministry involves children or vulnerable adults. Second, they are required to complete safe environment training, through Safe and Sacred, before providing service. Priests, deacons, religious, and diocesan, parish and school employees will complete annual training, whereas volunteers will renew training once every five years.
Reports of Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse, including the acquiring, possessing, distributing, or producing of child pornography, is a violation of state law. Some diocesan personnel (e.g. school personnel) are mandatory reporters under state law (Alaska Statute 47.17.020). All Church personnel of the Diocese of Fairbanks who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered harm as a result of sexual abuse or involvement with child pornography, by anyone shall immediately report the harm to the Office of Children’s Services, State of Alaska (OCS) and local law enforcement. (See Appendix 1, Telephone Numbers for Reporting Child Sexual Abuse)

Abuse or neglect of vulnerable adults is usually a violation of state law. Some Church personnel (e.g. clergy) are mandatory reporters under state law (Alaska Statute 47.24.010). All Church personnel of the Diocese of Fairbanks who have reasonable cause to suspect that a vulnerable adult has suffered harm because of abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any church personnel shall immediately report the harm to the Department of Administration or Department of Health and Social Services, State of Alaska. (See Appendix 1, Telephone Numbers for Reporting Abuse). Additionally, Church personnel are encouraged to report neglect of persons 60 years and older who reside in long term care facilities or residences to the Long Term Care Ombudsman. (Alaska Statute 44.21.232). Those who report in good faith are shielded from civil and criminal liability for reporting. (Alaska Statute 44.21.236: 47.24.120).

If such a report is made, and the suspected abuser is one of the Church personnel, a report must also be made immediately to the bishop.

There is a special situation with the clergy-penitent privilege. A priest or deacon is not required to report information he acquired in a privileged conversation. A priest is absolutely prohibited from revealing, in words or in any manner for any reason, information acquired from a sacramental confession. This confidentiality is recognized under Alaska law. (See Appendix 3, Alaska Rules of Evidence 506) Nevertheless, clergy are encouraged not to accept confidential communications concerning child sexual abuse or abuse of vulnerable adults outside of a sacramental confession.

Present abuse. Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that any type of abuse involving Church personnel is a present or recent concern must report the suspected abuse directly to civil authorities and should also notify the bishop. Church personnel shall encourage such direct reporting.

Past abuse. The Diocese seeks to promote healing and reconciliation for those who have suffered abuse by Church personnel in the past. Such persons are encouraged to contact the Diocese’s Victim Assistance Coordinator. The Diocese will provide, counseling, pastoral, or other assistance when appropriate on a case-by-case basis. The Diocese of Fairbanks will provide transportation and lodging as necessary to enable individuals living in rural areas to access counseling services. Cancelations that are not caused by weather or emergency circumstances should be kept to a minimum. Persistent elective cancellations may result in the diocese being unable to provide transportation and lodging. If a survivor is living outside the State of Alaska, a referral will be made to the Victim Assistance Coordinator in the diocese where the survivor currently is living.

The Diocese encourages complainants to report directly to civil authorities about suspected child sexual abuse or abuse of vulnerable adults. Nonetheless, if the Diocese should receive information providing
reasonable grounds to believe that abuse may have been committed by anyone, the Diocese will report this to civil authorities in all cases.

Response to a Sexual Abuse Report

A sacred relationship exists between the Catholic Church and its members, whether they are children or adults. Abuse of any kind is of gravest concern. Knowledge of such abuse calls for a special response so that the safety of the abused and the community is assured, and healing can take place.

The first response must always be immediate and direct reporting to the proper civil authorities. If the alleged violator is one of our Church personnel, a report should also be made to the bishop. The next response should be assistance to bring healing and pastoral care wherever that is possible. The Diocese of Fairbanks has designated a special Victim Assistance Coordinator to coordinate response in situations of reported sexual abuse of minors by Church personnel.

When the Diocese is informed of allegations of abuse by any of its personnel, and after ensuring the allegations are reported to civil authorities, the Diocese must address the needs and rights of all involved – the person alleging abuse, the accused, and the parish/school community affected. The Victim Assistance Coordinator will respond promptly to persons who contact the Diocese concerning child sexual abuse and will offer to meet with the caller. If the report concerns present abuse by any Church personnel, the caller will be encouraged to report the suspected abuse directly to civil authorities. As appropriate, the Victim Assistance Coordinator will offer whatever outreach programs or other assistance that will best promote the healing and reconciliation of the person suffering abuse. This outreach may include professional counseling, spiritual assistance, or other services.

After this call/meeting, the Victim Assistance Coordinator will contact designated Diocesan officials to review the information provided by the caller. If the allegation is subject to reporting under A.S. 47.17.010-.020 or A.S. 47.24.010-.900, and the caller has not already done so, the Diocese will make a report to an appropriate authority under that statute. The Victim Assistance Coordinator will inform the complainant that a report was made to civil authorities.

The Diocese will cooperate fully with civil authorities in their investigation of the charges. To ensure that there will be no interference or perceived interference in the investigation by civil authorities, any internal investigation by the Diocese will be coordinated with civil authorities while the civil or criminal investigation is pending.

Implementation and Duties

To ensure the full implementation of this policy and to provide a vehicle for accountability, the following positions will be created and filled with qualified persons:

Victim Assistance Coordinator. A Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC) will be designated by the bishop to receive and coordinate the response to allegations of child sexual abuse against Diocesan personnel.
Safe Environment Coordinator. The bishop will appoint a Safe Environment Coordinator (SEC) to assist parishes and schools in implementing the child sexual abuse policy and developing “safe environment” programs. At the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, the Safe Environment Coordinator may also serve as Victim Assistance Coordinator.

Parish/School Safe Environment Coordinators. Each parish and school will designate one person to coordinate and ensure implementation of the policies and procedures required by this policy (e.g., background checks, training for personnel, etc.). The Pastor or Director of Schools, if not the designated person, is responsible for implementing child abuse policies at the parish/school.

Review Board. The bishop will establish a Review Board. The Review Board will assist the bishop in assessing allegations and fitness for ministry of priests or deacons accused of abuse. The Review Board will regularly review Diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. The Review Board may also advise the bishop on other related matters, at his request.

The Review Board shall review reports of abuse involving diocesan personnel and all actions taken by the Diocese to ensure the integrity of the process for responding to reports of all forms of abuse. The Board shall offer advice regarding investigations and all other responses required for implementing this policy. The Board shall oversee the Diocese’s handling of all such cases. In order to assist the bishop in reducing and preventing incidents of abuse, the Review Board may examine policies and procedures and make recommendations for changes or the creation of new directives. The Review Board may act prospectively or retrospectively on these matters.

The Board shall be composed primarily of lay people who reflect the diversity of the Diocese, but a majority of whom are not in the employ of the Diocese. The members of the Review Board will be selected on the basis of their maturity, credibility, and ability to exercise independent judgment. At least one member shall be a priest, one member shall have particular expertise in the treatment of victims of abuse, and the entire board will receive special training in order to provide appropriate advice. To avoid any conflict of interest, neither the Victim Assistance Coordinator nor Safe Environment Coordinator (s) are eligible to be a voting member of the Board.

The Review Board will review Diocesan policies on abuse at least every two years.

Procedure When Clergy Are Accused of Abuse

When an accusation is made against a cleric, and after civil authorities have been notified, a preliminary investigation of the accusation will be made by an Investigator delegated by the bishop. If it has not already occurred, and unless civil authorities request otherwise, the accused individual also will be informed of the allegation by the Bishop or his Investigator and will be given every opportunity to respond to the charges. A priest or deacon who is accused of sexual abuse of a minor will be given the presumption of innocence during the investigation and will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel.

In the case of a cleric, member of a religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office, the bishop will ordinarily place the person accused of sexual abuse on administrative leave and will encourage an outside professional assessment of the person accused. Should this be a cleric, canon law will be followed. (These
three categories of persons are singled out because of their unique relationship to the bishop or superior and because they are subject in a particular way to canon law. Decisions regarding such individuals will be guided by procedures of canon law.)

The Investigator shall obtain information about the cleric’s file or background, make appropriate inquiries about the allegations, and make a report of all available information for presentation to the Bishop and the Review Board.

The Review Board shall evaluate allegations of any abuse by priests or deacons in order to advise the bishop on whether or not there is reasonable cause to suspect that the accused cleric engaged in such abuse. On the basis of that evaluation, the Board shall make recommendations to the bishop about the following:

1. If the cleric has already been temporarily withdrawn from ministry pending inquiry, whether such withdrawal should continue; if the withdrawal should not continue, whether any restrictions should be imposed on the cleric returning to ministry.

2. If the cleric has not been temporarily withdrawn from ministry, whether he should be withdrawn, whether he should continue in his assignment and, if so, whether any restrictions should be imposed upon him.

3. Whether the preliminary actions taken by the Investigator were appropriate and whether further action by the investigator is required.

4. Whether the file may be closed at this stage of the proceedings or held open pending further action by civil authorities, further inquiry by the Investigator, or further action by the Board.

5. If the cleric’s conduct does not constitute abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, but is otherwise inappropriate, the Board may recommend further action to be taken by the bishop.

Upon receiving and considering the recommendations of the Review Board, the bishop is required by canon law to make an independent determination of whether it is probable that an accused cleric has committed abuse to a vulnerable person. If he decides that it is probable, he shall transmit the matter to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which will advise him on how to proceed further. The Congregation alone holds the authority to institute or direct the bishop to institute a trial to determine, with moral certitude, whether the cleric committed abuse, and whether he shall be subjected to expiatory penalties, including dismissal from the clerical state.

Procedure When Lay Professional Employees or Volunteers Are Accused of Abuse

An accused employee or volunteer who is not a cleric, member of a religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office may be placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the internal and/or civil investigation or may be terminated. Diocesan officials will coordinate with the accused individual’s supervisor on this decision. The Investigator designated by the Bishop and the Review Board will proceed as in the case of allegations against a cleric, except that the bishop will make the final decision on whether or
not the lay person accused has probably committed abuse to a child or vulnerable adult, and, if so, will terminate the person’s employment or volunteer service.

Outreach Offered in All Cases

When allegations of abuse have been made and pending the results of the investigation into those allegations, the Diocese will reach out to persons affected. The Victim Assistance Coordinator will keep in contact with the victim/accuser (or the parent or guardian of a minor), and his or her family, if appropriate. Psychological counseling and/or pastoral care may be offered in the spirit of Christian justice and charity. When counseling is paid for by the Diocese, the therapist must be one authorized by the Diocese. Whenever possible, the therapist will be one who specializes in the treatment of victims of abuse.

Within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputations of the individuals involved, the Diocese will deal as openly as possible with members of the community, providing assistance, and support to communities directly affected by alleged ministerial abuse.

Since the need to protect the vulnerable who may be at risk and the safety of the community are always paramount, the bishop, at his discretion and according to the norms of civil and canon law, may take further action to ensure safety when there has been an allegation of abuse. The bishop will also consider the rights and reputation of the person accused.

Possible Outcomes of Child Sexual Abuse Report

There are three possible outcomes of the civil and/or internal investigation and assessment process:

1. The allegation may be substantiated or found credible, either through the admission or lack of denial by the perpetrator, through the investigation, or through the evaluation process.

If an allegation of abuse toward a child or vulnerable adult is substantiated or found credible, the person accused will have been reported to a governmental authority and will be subject to the sanctions of criminal and/or civil law. Then any cleric, member of religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office is found guilty under secular law of abuse (or when it appears that an allegation of abuse against such a person is true), the bishop shall proceed according to the norms of canon law. An offending priest or deacon will be permanently removed from ministry and if warranted, dismissal from the clerical state. The offending priest or deacon will be offered therapeutic professional assistance for the purpose of prevention and for his own healing and well-being. In an effort to maintain transparency and accountability, said offender’s name would be added to the list of perpetrators on the Diocese website at the bishop’s discretion.

When any employee or volunteer of the Diocese who is not a cleric, member of a religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office is found guilty of abuse, or when it appears that an allegation of abuse against such a person is true, the individual may be terminated from employment, volunteer service, or any other position of responsibility within the Diocese if termination has not yet occurred.
Additionally, when an allegation of abuse is substantiated or appears to be true, the Diocese may seek repayment from the offender for the cost of therapy provided to the victim, and for other costs related to the abuse.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator will inform the parties regarding the outcome of the investigation. Arrangements for the ongoing psychological and pastoral care of the victim may be made.

2. The allegation may be unsubstantiated, disproved or found not credible.

If an allegation of abuse is unsubstantiated, disproved, or found not credible, the Victim Assistance Coordinator will inform the parties of the outcome of the investigation. Continued efforts will be made to maintain the good name of the accused and provide for his or her well-being. The accused will be supported and assisted by the Diocese in efforts to restore his or her good name. If there are any steps that can be taken to assure a return to normal relationships in the parish, school, or entity involved, the Victim Assistance Coordinator will consider these steps.

3. The evidence supporting the allegation may be inconclusive to support a finding either way.

If the evidence is inconclusive as to the validity of an allegation of abuse, or it is determined that the conduct complained of does not constitute abuse, two factors must be balanced. First, the safety and wellbeing of the alleged victim and the community must be assured. Second, the rights of the accused must be considered.

Depending upon the charge and the nature of the evidence, lay employees or volunteers may be required to take corrective action or may be terminated according to the personnel policies of the Diocese in effect at the time. Clerics may be issued a warning as understood in canon law. It lies within the prudential judgment of the bishop or his delegate to require psychological evaluation and treatment of the person accused.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator will inform the parties involved of the outcome of the investigation and shall make efforts to minimize the impact on the alleged victim and the community. In these cases, the Victim Assistance Coordinator may recommend that the alleged victim receive follow-up pastoral care or psychological counseling, as appropriate.

Whenever an investigation under civil or canon law raises questions of the continued fitness for ministry of a priest or deacon, the matter will be referred to the Review Board for further review and recommendation to the bishop.

Transfer of Clergy

No priest or deacon who has committed an act of abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, will be transferred for ministerial assignment to another diocese/eparchy or religious province. Before a priest or deacon can be transferred for residence to another diocese/eparchy or religious province, his Bishop/eparch or religious ordinary shall forward, in a confidential manner, to the local Bishop/eparch and religious ordinary (if applicable) of the proposed place of residence, any and all information concerning any act of abuse by the priest or deacon, and all other information that tends to show he has been or may be a danger to children, young people or vulnerable adults. (CF. National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Conference
Prevention and Education

The Diocese of Fairbanks is committed to preventing and fully addressing child sexual abuse by any diocesan personnel, and to recognizing and responding to signs of child sexual abuse in the children it serves. The following steps shall be taken:

**Screening.** Any cleric or religious applying for or proposed for assignment to ministerial services in a church, school or other entity operated by the diocese must complete an application process which conforms with the guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for such clerics and religious. All diocesan personnel whose ministry involves children or vulnerable adults, must successfully undergo a criminal background check through the diocese. Further background checking (including fingerprinting) is conducted through the State of Alaska for various daycare and pre-kindergarten positions, teachers, and administrators. Ordinarily, this screening will be initiated on or before the beginning date of conditional employment or volunteer service.

**Education.** All volunteers who minister to children or vulnerable adults are required to complete training dealing with the recognition of and reporting requirements for abuse every five years. All diocesan employees, priest, deacons and religious will complete annual training on topics related to safe environment through the on-line company Safe and Sacred.

All children participating in activities, ministries, sacramental preparation, or other programs sponsored by the parishes in the Diocese of Fairbanks must be given the opportunity to see and discuss age-appropriate child protection training materials on an annual basis. An attendance sheet for the children who attend training and opt out forms, signed by parents who do not wish for their child/ren to attend, must be forwarded to the Safe Environment Office. Parents who do not want their children to receive child protection instruction from the parish are to be offered materials for at home instruction. If parents refuse to accept materials, this needs to be noted on the opt out form and signed by two other adults.

**School Curriculum.** The diocese shall include in the curriculum of the schools it operates, a component to teach children about safe touch, appropriate boundaries with adults, and other issues related to child physical and sexual abuse.

**Safe Environment Coordinator.** A Safe Environment Coordinator will be available to assist parishes and schools in implementing the Abuse Policy and developing “safe environment” programs.

**Distribution of Policy Statement.** This policy statement will be distributed to all diocesan employees. It will also be available to all interested parties on the diocesan website and from the Safe Environment Coordinator. Copies shall be available at all churches in the diocese.
Guidelines

Those who purposely abuse others usually seek out places where they can be alone with their victims. They encourage their victims to maintain secrecy and may attempt to limit their contact with others. Keeping this in mind, it is important to avoid situations involving extreme privacy and/or secrecy wherever possible. Consequently, as much as possible, ministry should be performed in public places, open to observations by others. Also, people should not minister in isolation. They should be supervised and supported in their ministry. When working in isolation, judgment can become skewed, boundaries may be crossed, and abuse may occur.

While the principles stated above and the guidelines below should be followed whenever possible, circumstances will arise in a church environment where these principles and guidelines cannot be applied. It is likely that there will be times when people will request private, confidential pastoral care in closed settings. There will also be times when individual home visits to vulnerable adults will be necessary. These types of ministries should continue and not be discouraged; however, the people involved should be aware of the inherent risks in these situations and should minimize the possibility of compromising situations.

**General Guidelines:**

It is preferable to meet with a group rather than be alone with an individual.

It is preferable to have more than one adult present when working with vulnerable people. If another adult cannot be in the same room, it is desirable to have him or her in the same building.

It is preferable to meet in an open, public space rather than in a closed, private room. A church hall is better than a secluded room. A church office is better than a person’s home. A living room is better than a bedroom.

When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door; a door with a window is better than a solid door.

When involved in ministry, it is always wise to make others aware of your activities and your whereabouts.

It is best to schedule regular meetings with your pastor or supervisor to discuss the nature and progress of the ministry.

Elderly vulnerable adults often hold clergy and other church ministers in extremely high regard, particularly if they were taught at an early age not to question the Church. Extra caution must be taken to avoid unduly influencing such persons, especially in the area of financial giving.

It is diocesan policy that all donors contemplating significant financial contributions should seek independent financial and legal counsel before doing so. People should also be encouraged to speak with family members before making any significant contributions. Except where the purpose of the visit is stewardship or planned giving, ministering persons should not accept gifts or donations from vulnerable adults. Encourage the person to make any donations directly to the church if they so desire.
If the person insists on giving you something while you are there, provide a written receipt. Explain that the diocese will issue an official receipt at the appropriate time.

**Guidelines for Home Ministry:**

Always arrange the visit in advance. Establish a starting time and approximate ending time, as well as a clear purpose for the visit, so the individual knows exactly what to expect.

Make another person (secretary, spouse, colleague) aware of where you are going and when you expect to return.

Be respectful of people’s time and do not overstay your welcome. When visiting a shut-in or someone who is ill, be particularly conscious of how they are feeling and avoid overtiring them.

Always keep the ministerial purpose of your visit in mind. Do not attempt to unduly persuade or influence the person, particularly if he or she seems confused. Never offer advice about medication or medical treatment and avoid arguing with or agitating the person you are visiting.

Stay in the most public areas of the home – the living room, family room or kitchen. Avoid a person’s bedroom unless absolutely necessary (as where the person is bedridden) and unless a third person is present in the home.

Choose a seat a comfortable distance from the person. Avoid sitting next to the person on a couch or sofa. Do not invite, initiate, or tolerate any inappropriate physical contact.

Ministering persons should never engage in any form of sexual impropriety with those whom they are visiting. Sexual impropriety includes all forms of suggestive or seductive speech, gestures, jokes, and behaviors, as well as sexual contact. This would include possessing, viewing or transmission of any pornographic material.

Do not agree to meet anyone in his or her home if you sense your personal safety might be compromised, or if you feel that a boundary of appropriate conduct may be crossed. If a person whom you do not know well asks for a meeting, arrange to meet with him or her at church offices, a coffee shop, or other public place.

When first arriving at a person’s home, assess the situation for anything that may be out of the ordinary. Do not continue a visit if a person is inappropriately dressed, is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or if the person or an animal on the premises acts aggressively.

If a person acts strangely and says or does things that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, excuse yourself, document what happened and report the incident to your pastor or ministerial supervisor. Do not stay in a potentially dangerous or compromising situation.
If you become involved in a situation where a boundary of appropriate conduct is violated, or something occurs that is out of the ordinary or subject to misinterpretation, immediately report it to your pastor or ministerial supervisor.

Those engaged in Church ministry must treat all information and communications received from those ministered to, as strictly confidential and should not disclose such information except where required by law, where the communicating person has given written consent for disclosure, or the continued well-being of the person is in jeopardy.

Be aware of signs that vulnerable adults may not be caring for themselves as they should, and may require additional community resources to assist them. Signs of personal neglect include, but are not limited to, a decrease in personal hygiene, wearing stained or soiled clothing, periods of confusion, disorientation, or loss of memory.

If you become concerned about the well-being of a person whom you are visiting for any reason not requiring a report to civil or Church authorities, speak to your pastor or supervisor about initiating contact with a family member of the vulnerable adult to discuss the situation and decide appropriate action. Keep in mind that conversations of this nature, although necessary, may be perceived by the vulnerable adult at a betrayal of trust or a breach of confidentiality. Discretion is essential in these situations.

Persons who make in-home visits to the same person regularly should be aware of their own level of qualification and competence and should avoid offering advice in areas in which they are unqualified.
# Appendix 1

## Reporting Child Abuse

Reporting Abuse to the Office of Children Services & Civil Authorities

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<th>Emergency Reports</th>
<th>911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Children’s Services State of Alaska</strong></td>
<td><strong>1-800-478-4444</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska State Troopers</td>
<td>(907) 451-5100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aniak</td>
<td>(907) 675-4377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrow/Utqiagvik</td>
<td>(907) 852-6111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethel Police Department</td>
<td>(907) 543-3781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevak/ScammonBay/Hooper Bay/</td>
<td>(907) 543-2294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Junction</td>
<td>(907) 895-4452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmonak/Alakanuk/Kotlik/Nunam</td>
<td>(907) 543-2294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks Police Department</td>
<td>(907) 450-6500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galena</td>
<td>(907) 656-2177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotzebue</td>
<td>(907) 442-3222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Village/ Piot Station/ Marshall</td>
<td>(907) 543-2294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenana/Healy/North Pole</td>
<td>(907) 451-5100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nome/Teller/Little Diomede</td>
<td>(907) 443-2835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Mission/Kalskag/Holy Cross</td>
<td>(907) 543-2294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s</td>
<td>(907) 438-2200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stebbins/ St. Michael</td>
<td>(907) 443-2835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toksook Bay/ Nightmute/ Tununak/ Chefornak/ Newtok</td>
<td>(907) 543-2294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanana/Nulato/Koyukuk/Huslia</td>
<td>(907) 451-5100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unalakleet Police Department</td>
<td>(907) 443-2835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Alaska Police Dept.</td>
<td>(907) 474-7721</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Report Vulnerable Adult Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Reports</th>
<th>911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Protective Services</td>
<td>(800) 478-9996 or (907) 269-3666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman</td>
<td>(800) 730-6393 or (907) 334-4480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Report Abuse to the Diocese of Fairbanks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim Assistance Coordinator Cynthia Klepaski</th>
<th>(907) 750-1132</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX 2
LOCAL RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE

LEGAL RESOURCES:
Lawyer Referral Services: 1-800-770-9999
Alaska Bar Association

(You may wish to contact an attorney who will inform you of your legal rights in this matter. Some attorneys offer initial consultation free of charge.)

COUNSELING RESOURCES:

**Barrow/Utqiagvik:**
Arctic Women in Crisis
852-0261

**Bethel:**
Tundra Women’s Coalition 543-3444
YKHC Behavioral Health Clinic 543-6100

**Emmonak:**
Emmonak Women’s Shelter 949-1443

**Fairbanks:**
Alaska Behavioral Health 371-1300
Resource Ctr. For Parents and Children 456-2866
Tanana Chiefs Counseling Center 459-3800
Interior Alaska Center for Non-Violent Living 452-2293

**Galena:**
Mental Health Clinic 656-5305

**Hooper Bay/Scammon Bay/Chevak:**
Bay Haven DV/SA Shelter 758-4711

**Nome/Kotzebue:**
Norton Sound Mental Health Clinic 443-3311
Bering Sea Women’s Group 443-5492
Maniilaq Family Crisis Center 442-7879
Rule 506. Communications to Clergymen.

(a) **Definitions.** As used in this rule:

(1) A member of the clergy is a minister, priest, rabbi, or other similar functionary of a religious organization, or an individual reasonably believed so to be by the person consulting the individual.

(2) A communication is confidential if made privately and not intended for further disclosure except to other persons present in furtherance of the purpose of the communication.

(b) **General Rule of Privilege.** A person has a privilege to refuse to disclose and to prevent another from disclosing a confidential communication by the person to a member of the clergy in that individual’s professional character as spiritual adviser.

(c) **Who May Claim the Privilege?** The privilege may be claimed by the person, by the person’s guardian or conservator, or by the person’s personal representative if the person is deceased. The member of the clergy may claim the privilege on behalf of the person. The authority so to do is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

(Added by SCO 364 effective August 1, 1979: amended by SCO 1153 effective July 15, 1994)
APPENDIX 4

Diocese of Fairbanks - Employment Agreement

Safe Environment Office

By signing this statement, I, _______________________________ acknowledge that I have access to the following:

☐ Abuse Policy
☐ Code of Professional Conduct Policy
☐ Safe Environment Training – Protecting our children, youth, and vulnerable adults

Further, by signing this agreement, I ________________________________ understand that:

☐ I am required to renew my Safe Environment Training on an annual basis.
☐ I am required to get a background check through the Safe Environment Office every five years.
☐ I am required to follow all provisions as stated in the Abuse Policy, Code of Professional Conduct Policy & Safe Environment trainings.
☐ Failure to comply or adhere to these policies and Safe Environment trainings can result in termination, separation, or reassignment.

I, __________________________________ hereby attest that I have never been convicted of nor pled guilty anywhere to any charge involving child abuse, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or any existing or former similar offense. I further certify that I have never been discharged from employment or from a volunteer position because of any child abuse, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or related offence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
I agree that I have been given the opportunity to read and ask questions about the above referenced policies and guidelines. I understand my legal and moral duties as a faithful lay, professional, spiritual, or volunteer minister serving under the Diocese of Fairbanks and its affiliates.

_________________________________________  ______________________
Individual’s Signature:                        Date signed:

_________________________________________  ______________________
Witness Signature                            Date signed:

Revised 10/2021
APPENDIX 5 – for off-line locations only

Permission to Procure an Investigative Report (Background Check) – Updated 02/16/2021

Please type or print legibly name as it appears on your driver's license or Tribal ID.

LAST ____________________________ FIRST ____________________________ FULL MIDDLE ____________________________

STREET ADDRESS ____________________________________________________________

CITY_____________________________________ STATE___________________________ZIPCODE_________________

Please list other names used and dates of name change in the last ten years:

FULL NAME_____________________________________________________________ DATE _____________________

FULL NAME_____________________________________________________________ DATE_____________________ 

*Date of Birth: ________-________-_________*Social Security Number___________ -_________ - __________

DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER: __________________________________________STATE: __________________

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? _____ If yes, please provide details of all convictions and locations of all convictions. (A yes answer will not necessarily disqualify you from employment.)

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

RESIDENCES: Please list residences in the last 10 years

State:____________________ City: _____________________County: _________________Years: ______to______

State:____________________ City: _____________________County: _________________Years: ______to______

DISCLOSURE REGARDING CONSUMER AND/OR INVESTIGATIVE CONSUMER REPORT , The Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska, its affiliated companies, and/or its agents (collectively, herein after referred to as “Company”) may obtain information about you from CICS Employment Services and its subsidiaries, PO Box 6499, Portland, OR 97228, Phone: 541-994-8027 / 800-660-0507, Fax: 541-994-7159 / 888-247-3683, Website: https://www.criminalscreens.com (the “AGENCY”) for purposes permitted under the Fair Credit Reporting Act 15 U.S.C.1681 et seq., including employment purposes (e.g. regular employment, contracted labor, vocational or educational training, or volunteer work), a business transaction initiated by you, or upon your written instructions. For information about AGENCY’s privacy practices see https://www.criminalscreens.com/resources/docs/privacypolicy.pdf. A “consumer report” and/or an “investigative consumer report” may be requested which may include information regarding your character, general reputation, personal characteristics and mode of living, whichever are applicable. The report may also contain information relating to your criminal history, motor vehicle records such as driving records, social security verification, verification of education or employment history or other background checks. This may involve personal interviews with sources such as neighbors, friends or associates. You have the right, upon written request made within a reasonable time after receipt of this notice, to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report from the Company. The scope of this notice and authorization is not limited to the present and, if hired or engaged to transact business with the Company, will continue and allow the Company to conduct future screenings for retention, promotion, reassignment, access to the Company’s or its customer’s premises or for a continuing relationship with the Company, unless revoked by you in writing.

Signature: _____________________________ Date: _____________________________

Witness: _____________________________ Date: _____________________________

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