

Five Steps to Keep Children Safe



STEP 1: SCREENING

Screening is an opportunity to prevent a molester from ever having contact with children and youth in our programs.

Our careful screening of employees and volunteers in youth and children's ministries includes:

1. Reviewing signed standard applications for all paid staff and for all volunteers in youth and children's ministries.
2. Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry/Criminal Background checks and renewing them every two years.
3. Conducting personal and professional reference checks.
4. Conducting face-to-face interviews.
5. Requiring a signature to certify that employees/volunteers and other adult members of their households have not been arrested for or convicted of child abuse, or diagnosed with certain conditions.
6. Requiring a six-month minimum CCV attendance rule for all volunteers serving in children's and youth ministries.

STEP 2: TRAINING

Training puts the "power to protect" in everyone's hands and is an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize the warning signs of potential abuse, commit to the safe practices specific for Christ Church Vienna, and learn procedures for reporting suspected abuse.

Reading Requirements

All members of the clergy, all members of the Church Council, and those staff members with direct supervision over youth or children must certify that they have read, understood and accepted the Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic (DOMA) Policies on the Protection of Children, and sign an acknowledgement form.

Seminar Attendance Requirements

All clergy, staff and Church Council members, also all volunteers who have contact with youth and children, must complete a DOMA approved Child Protection Training seminar. Every two years thereafter, they must renew their training by attending another seminar or completing the online Ministry Safe "Sexual Abuse Prevention Course" and passing the follow-up test.

STEP 3: INTERACTING GUIDELINES

Interacting Guidelines help children, teens and adults feel safe in a ministry context, and help identify problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between clergy, staff members, or volunteers and children should be positive, constructive and encouraging. Staff members and volunteers should avoid talking to children or parents in a way that is, or could be, construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Social Media

All social media (e.g., Facebook) can serve as important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Rod Nuñez will be working on a policy to govern social media communications.

Photos of Children

Photos of children will not be used contrary to parental wishes. Christ Church Vienna will refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior parental permission.

Physical Contact

Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child and should never be based on the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. It is the diocesan policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

Appropriate Interactions include the following:

- Smiles
- Encouragements
- Hand-shakes and high fives
- Fist bumps
- Thumbs up
- Side to side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back

Inappropriate Interactions include the following:

- Spanking, slapping, or any form of physical discipline
- Shaming or belittling a child or students
- Meeting alone in non-public or isolated places
- Swearing or cussing in the presence of children
- Engaging in sexually-oriented communications with or in proximity to children
- Allowing children/students to view pornography or to visit inappropriate internet sites
- The use, possession, or being under the influence of illegal drugs
- Offering children/students cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
- Showing favoritism or possessiveness
- Giving gifts to children without their parent's permission
- Ridiculing the beliefs of a child's/students's parent(s)
- Allowing a child/student to do things against the wishes of their parent(s)
- Asking a child/student to "keep secrets" from their parent(s)
- Wrestling
- Tickling
- Sitting in laps (except for nursery-aged children)
- Forcing unwanted affection
- Kissing on the lips
- Full frontal hugs or "bear hugs"
- Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- Being nude in front of children
- Staring while children or students are dressing
- Taking pictures while children or students are dressing or showering
- Commenting on a child's or student's body

STEP 4: MONITORING

Monitoring allows us to detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse, and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse when none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. **Clergy, Church Council members, staff and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising children's and youth activities in all settings at all times.**

Monitoring Practices include the following:

- All children and youth activities will be designed to be supervised by two or more certified adults.
- No child will ever be left unattended during or following a supervised church activity.
- Clergy, staff members, and volunteers will not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children.
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions will occur in a public place or where other people are present.
- Watching for and responding to policy violations.
- An open invitation for parents to visit at any time unannounced.
- Keeping interactions with children in full view of others at all times.
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas during church activities.
- A written onsite or offsite Supervisory Plan, which includes all items detailed on pages 19 and 20 of the DOMA policy, shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children.
- A careful review of new programs and/or significant changes to any program structure.

Restroom Policy

The clergy will work with leaders of the Sunday morning Kids Classes to establish a restroom policy. In the meantime, we are seeking to comply with page 14 of the Diocesan Policy Manual, which includes:

- Children who require diapering
- Children who are nursery-aged and being potty-trained
- Elementary-aged children
- Special needs children

NOTE: Parents are responsible for their children before, during and after the Sunday service, except when they are in supervised Kids Classes. We ask parents to always accompany their elementary-aged children to the restroom, or send them with a same-aged peer buddy or an older sibling, knowing that a restroom is the most likely place for abuse to occur in an institutional setting.

STEP 5: RESPONDING

Responding quickly gives us the power to prevent or stop abuse and gives the child more time to heal.

When a Child Discloses Abuse, it is important to:

- § Respect the child's privacy by finding a private, non-threatening place to talk.
- § Ask a staff member or trained volunteer to join in listening to the child's/youth's account, if possible.
- § Keep calm, listen and avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- § Let the child know that he/she is believed.
- § Assure the child that the abuse was not his/her fault.
- § Tell the child, if appropriate, that they were brave to disclose this.
- § Avoid questions that could make the child feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint the child's recollection and account. Child victims are often vague in their initial disclosure.
- § Write down as accurately as possible what the child discloses. This information can be used in filing the Report of Suspected Abuse Form for the Diocese and the Child Protective Services (CPS) report if warranted.
- § Be careful afterwards not to discuss the information with or in the hearing of other people who do not need to know what happened.

Always Remember to:

1. Respond to the child victim as outlined above.
2. Report the abuse allegation to CCV clergy (Johnny or Corky) and/or a Church Council member.
3. Report it to Virginia Child Protective Services. (See helpful information in Tab B of the Diocesan Policy Manual, pages vii – viii in the Resources Section.)
The statewide Virginia Child Abuse Hotline is **800-552-7096**.
4. Report it to Bishop John Guernsey if a member of the clergy has been accused.
The Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic office is **703-590-5470**.