

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland Standards of Behavior for Those Working With Children & Youth

The following Standards establish high expectations for ministries with children and youth. Some Standards challenged us to rise above what has come to be normative in popular culture and respond in a way that speaks of our commitment to the Baptismal Covenant. Therefore, all those whose lives and ministries are affected by these Standards are invited to engage in dialogue about the rationale behind them — from a legal, moral, and Christian perspective.

1. Those who regularly work with children and youth, paid and volunteer, must have a background check through Oxford Document or by their local parish in accordance with the diocesan *Policies and Procedures Concerning Background Checks* prior to beginning of service. Volunteer adult leaders must be in regular attendance at a parish for at least six months prior to serving in ministries with children and youth.
2. Those who regularly work with children and youth, paid and volunteer, must attend the required diocesan Safe Church workshops or provide documentation that they have completed such a course in the past five years. This training must be completed no later than six months from the beginning of service with children and youth, and be repeated every five years. While Diocesan Policy does not mandate training for unpaid Sunday School Teachers, they are encouraged to comply.
3. There must be at least two adults at each youth gathering. Adult leadership should reflect youth participation, meaning that if there are male and female youth, there needs to be male and female adults. Beyond the first two adults, there must be a ratio of at least one adult per ten youth (i.e. 1-20 youth/ 2 adults; 21-30 youth/ 3 adults; 31-40 youth/ 4 adults; etc.).
4. Adult leaders must be at least 18 years old and at least two years older than the oldest participant. Experienced youth leaders should be included with leaders who are newcomers to youth ministry.
5. Adults are to refrain from giving personal gifts or money to a youth without first consulting the parents, clergy, or the Diocesan Youth Missioner.
6. Physical discipline is never an option. No one is to strike or hit anyone at any time.
7. No adult working with a youth ministry is to ever date a youth or become romantically or sexually involved with a young person who is a participant in the adult leader's local or diocesan program. Compliance with local laws and ordinances regarding age-of-consent are a given and expected.

8. Youth events or meetings are to function with an open-door policy. Clergy, parents, church and staff members have a right to observe any youth activity at any time.
9. Recognizing that there will be times with a youth and adult need to interact one-on-one, another adult must be at least aware of the place of the consultation and who is involved. Every attempt will be made for the consultation to be in a public space, such as a corner of a room, in clear view of others. One youth and one-adult should never be behind a closed or locked door.
10. Adult advisors are to avoid transporting youth during a parish or diocesan-sponsored event without being accompanied by another adult. Families are encouraged to arrange their own transportation. No one under age 21 should transport any minor during a parish or diocesan-sponsored event.
11. Use of alcohol and tobacco is illegal for young people. In order to model safe and healthy behaviors, adults present at youth events will neither use, possess, nor be under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal/illicit drugs.

Standards Safety and Inclusion

- We will strive to respect the dignity of every human being. In doing so, we will welcome every youth regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, origin, ancestry or religion.
- We will ensure that basic human needs of food, shelter, sleep and/or clothing at any parish or diocesan event are met.
- We will do everything in our power to ensure that no staffer attendee of any event, on either a parish level or a diocesan level, is exposed to behavior that is physically, emotionally, spiritually, or sexually abusive or harassing of others. Physical abuse is defined as bodily injury of one person by another.

Emotional abuse is the devaluing of another such as name-calling or indication to another that s/he is worthless. Spiritual abuse is the use of scripture and/or religious beliefs as a tool for coercion. Sexual abuse is any sexual activity between a youth and an adult or between youth when there is an unequal distribution of power, such as when one person is significantly older or larger. In addition, sexual misconduct will not be tolerated. Sexual misconduct includes sexual abuse, exposing a youth to sexually provocative material, inappropriate physical exposure by an adult to a youth, etc. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome advances or repeated requests for social engagements, touching and/or comments made about or to someone about another's physical appearance, or sexually oriented humor.

- Leaders will be intentional about programming and content to ensure that it is developmentally appropriate for the age group and that it *is* specific to the activity/event. Leaders will think ahead about discipline and the age category they will be working with.

- A written incident /notice of injury report should be prepared by youth leaders whenever an injury occurs during a parish or diocesan-sponsored event. Such reports should be kept on file and made available for review by parents.

- Any person who believes that s/he has been exposed to improper behavior is strongly encouraged to report it to an adult advisor and/or the Bishop's office as soon as possible. Any adult advisor who observes or receives any allegation of misconduct or abuse must immediately report it to local Child Protective Services at 410-767-7112 (in accordance with Child Protection Law Article -Family Law, Section 5-704,705) **and** report it to the Bishop within 72 hours. If anyone has questions about a specific situation and whether to report it, s/he is encouraged to report it to the Bishop anyway. If the alleged misconduct occurs at the Claggett Center, the director of the Center must also be notified.