



# Five Steps to Keep Children Safe at Christ the King

## STEP ONE

**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 include

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 signatures 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 attendance rule for all volunteers serving in children's and youth ministries.

## STEP TWO

**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 to Christ the King, and learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse.

### Reading Requirements

All members of the clergy, vestry, 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 Policies on the Protection of Children and sign an acknowledgement form.

### Workshop Attendance Requirements

All clergy, vestry, staff, and volunteers who have contact with youth and children must complete a DOMA-approved workshop on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention. Thereafter, every two years staff, vestry, and volunteers must attend a DOMA-approved workshop or the online Sexual Abuse Prevention Course and pass the follow-up test provided by Ministry Safe.

## STEP THREE

**INTERACTING GUIDELINES** help children and adults feel safe in ministry and help trainees detect problems before they become incidents of abuse.

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 avenues and technology may be important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Church-related communications with youth should only be made directly through an institutional social media account. Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting personally with students on social media.

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

Children's Ministry staff 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 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 may include

- Smiles
- Encouragements
- Hand-shakes, high fives, fist bumps
- Thumbs up
- Side-to-side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- An arm around the shoulder
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Holding or picking up children who are 4 years old and younger

Other Christ the King interactions that are appropriate may include

- Time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management.
- Returning children to their parents if behavior is repeatedly inappropriate.

Inappropriate interactions include

- Spanking, slapping, or any form of physical discipline
- Shaming or belittling a child or youth
- Meeting alone in non-public or isolated places
- Swearing in the presence of children or youth
- Engaging in sexually oriented communications with or in proximity to children
- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol, or any illegal drugs when in the presence of children or youth
- Wrestling
- Tickling
- Sitting in laps (except for nursery-aged children)
- Kissing on the lips
- Full frontal hugs or “bear hugs”
- Commenting on children’s bodies
- Forcing unwanted affection
- Being nude in front of children
- Contacting or “friending” a child or youth on social networking sites
- Showing favoritism or possessiveness
- Ridiculing the beliefs of a child’s or youth’s parent
- Allowing a child or youth to do things against the wishes of the parents
- Offering children or youth cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
- Allowing children or youth to view pornography or to visit inappropriate websites
- Asking a child or youth to keep “secrets” from his or her parents
- Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- Staring or taking pictures while others are dressing or showering

## STEP FOUR

**MONITORING** allows us to detect problems before they turn into incidents of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse when none have occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. **Vestry, clergy, staff, and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising child and youth activities in all settings at all times.**

Our monitoring practices include the following

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

Restroom policies are program-specific. Please refer to the Supervisory Plan for nursery, toddler, Children's Church, or Sunday School for more information on restroom policies.

When children are present in the sanctuary, we ask that parents accompany their children (elementary aged or younger) to the restroom or send them with a sibling or "buddy." We ask this knowing that restrooms are the most likely place for abuse to occur in an institutional setting.

## STEP FIVE

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

**The two BEST things you can do for victims of abuse are:**

- 1. Believe them**
- 2. Tell them it is not their fault**

If a child discloses abuse, remember to

- Respect the child's privacy by finding a private, non-threatening place to talk (Convergence Library or other room with a windowed door).
- 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 helpful, that they were brave to disclose.
- 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 disclosed. This information can be used in filing a Report of Suspected Abuse Form for the Diocese and the CPS report, if warranted.
- Be careful afterwards not to discuss the information with or in front of other people who do not need to know what happened.

**Suspected abuse must be addressed in a timely manner. Within 24-hours of a child disclosing abuse, we have a legal obligation to:**

1. Respond to the child victim.
2. Report the abuse allegation to designated church authorities (Director of Children's Ministry, Pastor, or Vestry Warden).
3. Report to the child's parents (if not the abusers).
4. Report to Legal Authorities.
5. Internally report to appropriate church leaders as needed (Children's Ministry Director, Pastor, or Vestry Warden).

VA CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE NUMBER

1-800-552-7096