

February 2, 2019

Policies for Safe Church Ministries - FAQ

From The Episcopal Church

What are they?

An updated and expanded set of policies, recommended practices and resources designed to foster healthy and sustainable ministry with vulnerable people in The Episcopal Church (TEC). The purpose of these policies is to create safe and welcoming space for the minors, elders, and people with disabilities in and those engaged in ministry with them, in all of the congregations, institutions, organizations, schools and agencies of each diocese.

Why are they needed?

In response to the mandates of 2015 General Convention resolutions A073 and A074, these policies reflect what The Episcopal Church (TEC) has learned from using the 2004 Model Policies and Safeguarding training materials. In addition, they include updates reflecting contemporary concerns such as social media, mission trips, pilgrimages, camp and conference center programs, and other overnight events, as well as experiences of LGBTQ+ and non-binary persons.

Who needs to read, mark and inwardly digest the Model Policies?

All clergy, and lay people who minister with minors and vulnerable adults need to know the model policies and comply with their screening and training requirements; parents, caregivers and vestry members are encouraged to understand the policies and exercise leadership in their implementation.

What's in them for me?

Look for a concise statement of theological and ethical foundations for safe church practices, useful definitions, ****behavioral standards**** designed to ensure that vulnerable people and all who engage in ministry with them are treated with dignity and respect in all settings, ****standards for screening, training and monitoring**** lay and ordained ministers working

with vulnerable people, **processes for responding to concerns, expectations for local (diocesan) policy implementation and audit**. In addition, these model policies include entirely new practices and guidelines for the use of **social media and electronic communication**.

From the Episcopal Diocese of Albany

When do the Model Policies take effect?

They are available for your use right now, and every parish, worshipping community, institution, organization, school, and agency of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany must adopt the policies in 2019.

Where can I find the new policies?

Go to the Episcopal Diocese of Albany Safe Church webpage. Here is the link: [<https://www.stpaulstroy.org/safe-church.html>]

Relevant documents can be downloaded from this page:

1. There are two new policies that need to be adopted by vestries:
 1. The Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth
 2. The Policy for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults
2. There is a general sexual misconduct policy and covenant agreement that is required for clergy and volunteers to sign.
3. There are sample Safe Church Forms available.
4. There are also two links to approved third-party vendors for public record checks.
5. In both of the new policies there is chart (Appendix A) which lists appropriate Screening and Training Protocols. Please follow the chart in determining the type of training (Universal and Specialized) and public records checks church workers need in their positions.
5. Finally, there is a link to the New York State website concerning the new anti-harassment law.

Is Safeguarding Training still useful?

The Safeguarding training materials we have used previously remain useful for introducing church ministers, leadership, and congregations to the basics of child sexual abuse prevention. Safeguarding Training materials are available from Church Publishing here <https://www.churchpublishing.org/products/safeguardingodschildren>

What are the new Safe Church Audit requirements?

Every Episcopal Diocese of Albany parish, worshipping community and organization is required to conduct a Safe Church Self-Audit annually to confirm compliance with the safe church policies, and to report such audit information to the Bishop's office every three years.

- 1) The procedures to be confirmed by audit include:
 - a) Public records checks, application forms, records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;
 - b) Records of compliance with Screening and Training Protocols.
 - c) Procedures for responding to concerns and incidents; and evidence of compliance with "safe space" requirements.

What is the New York State Anti-Harassment Law?

Please be aware that beginning in October 2018 all employers in New York State (NYS) must adopt a sexual harassment prevention policy and training, or use a similar policy and training that meet or exceeds the new law's minimum standards. Here is a link to the NYS website with a model policy that your church may adopt along with associated information and training resources [<https://www.ny.gov/combating-sexual-harassment-workplace/employers>]

Is there diocesan training for the New York State Anti-Harassment Law?

Yes. The EDOA Online Training Program has new NYS law compliant anti-harassment training modules. The NYS law applies to all employers (regardless of the number of employees), and all employees need to be trained on an annual basis by no later than October 9, 2019.