

**Grace Episcopal Church
133 School Street
New Bedford, MA 02740**

Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth

Volunteers, staff, and clergy will have access to, be familiar with, and agree to follow the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts' Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth, found here: <https://www.diomass.org/inside/docs/safe-church-policies>

Volunteers, staff, and clergy will have access to, be familiar with, and agree to follow the Diocese of Massachusetts Good Use Guidelines for Digital Communication and Social Media, found in Appendix B1 of the Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth, and here: <https://www.diomass.org/sites/diomass/files/webfm/Digital%20Communication%20and%20Social%20Media%20Guidelines.pdf>

The appointed volunteers, staff, and clergy that oversee the church school and youth ministries will be responsible for the monitoring and supervision of the parish's programs for children and youth.

Education, Training, and Background Checks

Volunteers and staff that minister with Children and Youth will:

- be given access by their ministry leader to all Safe Church Training Protocols available through the Diocese of Massachusetts.
- complete the Safe Church training modules needed for their level of ministry and renew the training according to diocesan guidelines.
- submit the forms needed to complete a CORI and/or other public records check to their ministry leader and agree to renew this records check as needed according to diocesan guidelines.

Clergy will regularly complete background checks and Safe Church Training through their required diocesan training.

Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

All volunteers, staff, and clergy will be familiar with and agree to follow the policies and guidelines in section VI of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts' Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth, including but not limited to the items specifically outlined here under the following underlined headings:

Unrelated Adults Required

There shall be at least two unrelated adults (at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth. If unanticipated

circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to the Supervisor as soon as possible.

One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

Examples include:

- Planned or unplanned on-site conversations can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws. See the **Responding to Concerns** section below for more information.

Inclusiveness

No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class.

To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible. The Episcopal Church seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their transgender status confidential. They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity. Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).

'DOs' and 'DON'Ts' when working with children and youth:

- DOs
 - Adults are encouraged to:
 - Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
 - Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;

- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include: • high fives and fist bumps; • hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer; • brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms; • “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision; • brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and • Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.
- **DON'Ts**
Adults shall not under any circumstances:
 - Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
 - Arrive under the influence of alcohol, marijuana (even though consumption is legal in some cases in Massachusetts), illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
 - Consume non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
 - Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
 - Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth; or
 - Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in the section **Responding to Concerns**, below.

Off-Site Programming, including Camps and Retreat Centers

Volunteers, staff, and clergy will have access to, be familiar with, and agree to follow the Diocese of Massachusetts policy on Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming and Camps and Retreat Centers as outlined in section VI, items H and K of the Diocese of Massachusetts’ Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth, linked above. This includes Prior Approvals; Registration, Waiver and Release forms; First Aid & Medications; Supervision; and Insurance.

Overnight Programs

Adults will ensure that the Diocese of Massachusetts’ Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth is followed for overnight programs involving children or youth, as outlined in section VI, item I of the policy, which is linked above. This includes ensuring participant privacy; maximization of social integration of all participants; minimization of stigmatization of any participants; equal opportunity to participate; and safety of all participants. Other guidelines include: the safe use of restrooms & showers; providing safe, supervised sleeping arrangements; access to three substantial meals and water for each full day; the opportunity for

7 hours of sleep for each 24 hour period; time set aside each day for rest or free time; and (hotel) one child or youth per bed including (cots, pullouts or hideabeds, and rollaway beds).

Transportation

For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed:

- For events that originate and/or terminate at Grace Episcopal Church or other Diocese of Massachusetts facility or organization, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory RMV records check.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from events. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

Travel

Volunteers, staff, and clergy will have access to, be familiar with, and agree to follow the Travel policy as outlined in section VI, item L of the Diocese of Massachusetts' Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth, linked above and including best practices for chaperones and leaders; travel insurance, and international considerations.

Responding to Concerns

All staff, volunteers, and clergy will have access to, be familiar with, and agree to follow section VII of the Diocese of Massachusetts' Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth. Due to the importance of this information, we have included the text of section VII here in its entirety:

A. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth

Any adult who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place, is strongly encouraged, and all mandated reporters are required to contact the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families immediately:

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/report-child-abuse-or-neglect>

In addition, persons who suspect abuse or neglect may notify local law enforcement and/or the Office of the Child Advocate: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-child-advocate>

In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place within this parish, any facility or program of the Diocese, or one of its congregations or affiliated organizations, should immediately inform one of more or the following:

- The Bishop Diocesan or the Canon to the Ordinary in the case of the Diocese;
- Member of the Clergy in charge or the senior warden in the case of a congregation;
- The director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or
- The Intake Officer in case a Member of the Clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation, or any other form of misconduct

B. Suspected Violations of this Policy

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person and to the Office of the Bishop. The Bishop or the Bishop's designee receiving reports of violations of this policy shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the Diocese. If the Responsible Person is a lay person, they are responsible to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all. Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a Member of the Clergy shall immediately report the violation to the Office of the Bishop and/or the Intake Officer. Anyone can make a report to an Intake Officer. The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by laity at diocesan events, shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action, as provided by Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons and/or termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the Diocese.

C. Local Resources for Response

The parish and Diocese shall provide a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate this policy. Such resources include:

- The Reverend Melissa Howell, Bridge Priest of Grace Church: revmelissahowell@gracechurchnb.org
- Jean Pitcairn, Senior Warden of Grace Church: chaserdah@aol.com
- The Reverend Canon William C. Parnell, Diocesan Canon to the Ordinary: bparnell@diomass.org
- The Right Reverend Alan M. Gates, Bishop of Massachusetts: agates@diomass.org
- Diocesan Intake Officers:
 - Starr Anderson: starrkanderson@gmail.com
 - The Reverend Thea Keith-Lucas: revthea@gmail.com
 - Ema Rosario-Nordalm: erosero@bu.edu
- Massachusetts Department of Children and Families: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/report-child-abuse-or-neglect>

Policy Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

Grace Church will perform an annual self-audit in accordance with the guidelines set out in section VIII, Item C of the Diocese of Massachusetts' Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth. The self-audit will occur every January and will be performed by the Church School and Youth Ministry leaders, clergy, and administrative assistant of the parish.

This policy will be reviewed by the Church School and Youth Ministry leaders and the clergy of Grace Church annually and will be updated as needed.