



*Guidelines and Procedures for the Care and
Protection of Children & Youth*

Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe

I. THE CHURCH'S COMMITMENT

Children are embraced by our Lord in special blessing, "for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 19:14). Christians are called to recognize the special status of children, and the responsibility which we all share in their nurture and protection. Within the church, children matter in their own right and are to be taken seriously as full members of the community.

The Episcopal Church, recognizing the immense gift of children to families and to the church community, is committed to provide for their care, nurture, and protection. The following guidelines seek to offer direction and, in certain areas, requirements for the proper care and appropriate attention to be given to children. These guidelines thereby also aim to provide both for the protection of teachers, youth workers, employees and clergy from compromising or dangerous situations.

The church also recognizes the reality of the abuse of children which can sometimes occur within the community. The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe and each of its parishes and missions must therefore play their part together with parents, schools, and other agencies in the prevention of such abuse.

II. DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND

This document should be read as a supplement to the "Guidelines and Procedures for Preventing and Responding to Sexual Misconduct," adopted by the Convention of the Convocation in Florence, Italy, November, 1999. At that time, the diocesan policy of the Diocese in Europe was provisionally accepted, pending the completion and adoption of this document. These guidelines are meant to provide appropriate standards for the general care of children in the church, to define abusive behavior and the necessary response to it, and to provide practical suggestions in meeting these principles.

Although the legal definitions of a child and of child abuse may vary among the various legal jurisdictions in which the parishes and missions are found, for purposes of these guidelines the following definition will apply:

A child (minor) is a boy or girl under 18 years of age.

A responsible adult is anyone aged 18 or older, charged with the supervision of children in a church-related activity, either on or off the church premises.

An abused child is a boy or girl under 18 years of age, who has suffered from or is believed to be at significant risk or threat of physical injury, neglect, emotional or sexual abuse from his or her parents, other persons responsible for the child's care, or anyone who has access to the child.

Sexual abuse is defined as acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors. It includes a broad range of behavior, such as fondling a child's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, and exhibitionism.

Sexual abuse may consist of a single incident or of many incidents over a long period of time. Victims range in age from less than one year through adolescence. Most abuse of children and young people is committed by someone known to them and trusted by them, either within the family, among their friends, or in the local community.

III. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, through its bishops, clergy and people, is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of all the children in its care. It is the policy of the Convocation to safeguard its children from physical, sexual and emotional harm while participating in church activities, and to make their safety and comfort a priority. All persons who have responsibility for children, either clergy or lay, paid or volunteer, are expected to maintain the highest standards in their relationships with children, and to refrain from behavior which might be misunderstood or cause offense.

Many children are part of the church community, and likewise many devoted leaders and helpers, paid and volunteer, give of their time and commitment so that these children may grow in their faith in Jesus Christ. The Convocation is committed to providing a safe and secure environment in which both children and adults may safely work and worship.

In particular:

1. Parishes and missions are expected to abide by those policies identified in this document as mandatory, and to fulfill insofar as is possible those other procedures suggested in these guidelines to provide for the safety and care of children.

2. No abuse of a child by any employee or volunteer or member or visitor to a congregation will be tolerated. Allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and met with an appropriate response.

3. No person will be allowed to work with children if guilty of a previous sexual offense against a child, and except under the conditions set forth in these guidelines.

4. Children are not to receive any form of corporal punishment. Discipline problems or issues should be reported to and discussed with parents.

5. The highest level of confidentiality will be maintained in circumstances in which a child confides in a responsible adult, both in regards to the child and to the suspected abuser; however, under certain circumstances (such as if a child is suffering or is likely to suffer harm), a child should be told that other people will need to know so that the child can be protected.

6. Neither the Convocation nor any of its parishes or missions nor their employees or volunteers will attempt to conduct investigations of allegations of child abuse on their own, instead referring any case to appropriate local authorities.

7. The Convocation and its parishes and missions will collaborate fully with the statutory and voluntary agencies concerned with child abuse.

IV. THE CARE OF CHILDREN

A. Mandatory provisions

1. The Vestry or Bishop's Committee is the responsible body in the local congregation and has a duty of care towards its children. Each Vestry or Bishop's Committee shall appoint a Children's Representative who will monitor the work with children in the congregation, taking responsibility for the implementation of these guidelines. In the case of mission congregations which may not have organized Bishop's Committees, it is the responsibility of the sponsoring parish to oversee their work with children.

2. Congregations should ensure that no activity involving children takes place in an unsafe environment or with inappropriate supervision. Lacking these minimal requirements, activities should be canceled rather than allowed to proceed in an unsafe manner. Specifically:

(a.) Staffing

The minimum number of responsible adults at any activity involving children is two (preferably not a husband and wife), and always with easy access to a telephone. No children's activity should take place with only one responsible adult present, and a gender balance is to be preferred.

Note that for purposes of fulfilling these guidelines, teenagers under the age of 18 do not count as responsible adults, but are themselves children. Exception to this rule may be made in the case of children 17 years old who have received training in child care such as that provided by the Scouting or Guiding organizations (see appendix), provided that they are supervised by an adult present with them.

(b.) Administration

Parents should be asked for a contact number and any specific medical information for each child participating in any church sponsored activity (see Form I). Regular attendees should especially be encouraged to provide this information (particularly if their parents are not on-site during the activity), and visitors or friends if they attend more than two or three times a year.

Parents should always sign a consent form before children are taken off-site for activities (see Form II). Children whose parents have not given such permission should not participate in the event. Older children who attend youth events should also be asked to read and sign a Community Covenant, acknowledging their willingness to abide by its provisions (Form III).

Adequate insurance should cover any activities, on or off-site.

B. Additional suggested guidelines

While some latitude may be necessary in the application of the following suggested guidelines to specific circumstances (such as congregations which do not own their place of meeting), nevertheless the guiding principle must be that an event or activity should not happen if it cannot be held safely without danger to the children involved.

1. Staffing

Insofar as is possible, the following staffing levels are recommended:

0 - 2 years 1 person for every 3 children 1 : 3

2 - 3 years 1 person for every 4 children 1 : 4

3 - 8 years 1 person for every 8 children 1 : 8

8 - 18 years 1 person for the first 8 children 1 : 8

and 1 more adult for every 12 more 1 : 12

2. Premises

Meeting places should be clean, warm, well lit, well ventilated, furnished with child-safe fixtures, and suitably spacious (2.3 square meters per child is an accepted standard for small children).

Toilets should be readily available, with appropriate privacy and sanitation.

Play areas, either indoor or outdoor, should be safe and well supervised.

Fire extinguishers and escape routes should be well known and placed. A fire drill should be held at least once each year for children's groups which meet regularly, such as Sunday School.

3. Health and safety

Food preparation and/or storage should be done in a sanitary, healthful manner, and drinks should always be available.

There should always be access to a telephone on the premises (possibly a mobile).

No smoking, alcoholic beverages, or illegal drugs should be permitted either for children or responsible adults. In the case of events such as a church picnic, where there are a number of children and adults present and alcoholic beverages might be served, the normal discretion of designating safe drivers and supervision should be observed.

No fireworks, firearms, or other weapons should be permitted.

Children should not be allowed to leave the premises unsupervised except with their parent's express permission.

Children's safe arrival and return to church activities should be assured.

A first aid kit should be accessible.

4. Good practice for personal conduct by responsible adults

Treat children with the respect and dignity befitting their age.

Watch your speech, tone of voice, and body language.

Learn to control and discipline children without physical punishment.

Make sure another adult is around if you need to help take a child to the toilet, wash a child or if you need to give First Aid.

Make sure another adult is present nearby if you need to talk with a child privately, and make sure the child knows this.

Make sure that children know they can talk to a responsible adult if they need to do so, or to the Children's Representative.

Always maintain an "open-door" policy, welcoming visits by parents.

Don't invade a child's privacy while washing, toileting, dressing or sleeping.

Don't play rough or sexually provocative games.

Don't be sexually suggestive about or to a child even in fun, or encourage such attention-seeking behavior as "crushes."

Don't touch a child inappropriately or intrusively.

Don't scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child.

Don't show favoritism to a child.

Don't allow children to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature.

Don't give rides to children on their own. If this is unavoidable, the child should sit in the back seat. Always make sure that each child is securely buckled in with a seat belt.

Don't share sleeping accommodations with children.

Don't invite a child to your home alone; always invite a group instead.

Don't permit abusive peer activities, for example hazing, ridiculing, or bullying.

Don't allow unknown adults access to children.

Don't assume that inappropriate behavior can't happen in your group.

5. Responding to inappropriate advances

Children may sometimes make suggestive approaches to an adult. They may have a crush or they may act inappropriately following previous abusive experiences. Sometimes inappropriate physical contact can happen accidentally. In any such circumstances, the responsible adult should:

Make an appropriate apology if the contact is accidental.

Tell the child if their language or behavior is unacceptable, explaining why.

Tell the leader or clergy person of the group about the incident.

Record the incident in a confidential manner.

Decide in consultation with another leader or clergy person what measures should be taken to help the child and prevent a recurrence

V. RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF RESPONSIBLE ADULTS

A. Risk factors

Children are at risk to abusive or inappropriate care in the church, both because responsible adults may be inexperienced or have unpredictable behavior, and because of the easy access to children in a voluntary community. Factors contributing to the risk of abuse include:

Institutional denial.

Failure to respond and/or prosecute.

Fewer built-in barriers than other youth-serving organizations.

Lack of coordinated child protection strategies.

For these reasons, it is imperative that congregations exercise care in the recruitment and training of adults who will be responsible for children.

B. Mandatory provisions

1. Background checks

All church employees and persons working with children should be asked to fill out Section A ("Personal Information and Background") of the personal background and references sheet (Form IV). In addition, all clergy and employees, as well as volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities, should complete Section B ("References") so that background checks can be made. This check will include at the minimum a contact with references, and may also include an investigation of an individual's criminal record.

All church employees and persons working with children will also be required to sign a statement indicating that he or she has received and read this document, and has never been convicted of child abuse nor had such a conviction expunged (see Form V).

These statements should be kept on file in the church office.

2. Training

Clergy who are resident in or licensed by the Convocation shall complete, or produce a certificate to show that they have completed elsewhere, a course in the prevention of child abuse. This certificate shall be kept on file in the Bishop's office. It is the responsibility of the Convocation to provide such training of the clergy.

All employees, and volunteers who regularly work with children, should be given training in their care and protection by a supervisor or member of the clergy who has likewise been trained.

C. Additional suggested guidelines

Given the relatively low risk in such public environments as Sunday schools and nurseries, background checks are not explicitly required of persons working in them. Nonetheless, those who are responsible for staffing such programs should consider the character of persons chosen as teachers and caregivers, remaining alert for any signs of potentially inappropriate behavior.

Persons new to a congregation should not normally be engaged as volunteers with children for at least six months after their arrival.

It is also desirable that persons working with children receive some basic training in first aid, especially those who travel with children off-site or supervise overnight activities.

VI. PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ABUSE

A. Signs of abuse

Church workers and the whole church community should be alert to signs of stress affecting the care and parenting of children. Children and young people with disabilities are especially vulnerable and need special care and protection. Children and young people may themselves also abuse, and will need special help and supervision.

Warning signs in a child of abuse include:

Being withdrawn, hostile, or aggressive.

Not wanting to go to a certain place or be around a particular person, including home.

Showing sexual knowledge or behavior beyond that expected for his or her age.

Engaging in bizarre or fanciful sexual behavior.

Being overly affectionate or seductive with peers or adults.

Having recurring medical problems such as infections or pains in the genital, mouth, or anal areas, or venereal disease.

Showing inappropriate or infantile behavior such as withdrawal, depression, poor peer relationships, or avoidance of physical contact.

Exhibiting physical signs such as bleeding, bruising, or burn marks, especially if they seem to go untreated and are recurring.

Having unexplained gifts or money.

Warning signs in a caretaker of abusive behavior include:

Being extremely protective or jealous of a child.

Encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate behavior.

Having a personal history of sexual or physical abuse.

Having a history of substance abuse.

Lacking a network of friends and relationships.

Frequent changes from one congregation to another, or a too eager willingness to "help" with the youth.

Resistance to fulfilling the requirements of rules such as those provided in these guidelines.

Inappropriately suggestive or crude language.

Recurring desire to "make amends" or to make vague apologies about relationships with children.

B. Responding to suspected abuse

1. Disclosure by a child. Workers with children often get to know the children in their charge very well. The children may feel enough trust to tell such workers about unhappy things that are happening-at home, at school, or at church. Such a confidence is a responsibility which the caretaker or other adult must take seriously, remembering that in the case of abuse, the child may want the abuse to stop but to still love the abuser. The child may not realize that the situation is a complicated one, thinking that the adult to whom he or she confides will be able to stop the abuse without anything else happening.

If a child asks to tell something in confidence, always tell the child that it may depend on the circumstances if the child is in danger. Do not agree to "keep secrets."

Try to have another adult present while the child speaks, but do not prevent the child from speaking if this is impossible.

Maintain eye contact, allowing the child to talk without pressing for information.

Reassure the child that he or she was right to tell, and that they are not to blame for what has happened, and that you will give support.

Let the child know you will have to tell other people so that the abuse can stop. Try to explain what will happen next in a way that the child can understand.

As soon as possible write down as carefully as possible what the child said, how and when they said it, and how they appeared emotionally. Write down what you said in response.

2. Suspicions of abuse. Sometimes persons in the church community may suspect that a child is being abused, without having heard a report of the same from the child. Anyone may report a concern about a child's well-being, provided the report is made in good faith, either to a responsible adult, a member of the clergy, or to local authorities.

3. Action to be taken: whom to contact. Whenever one has heard a complaint from a child, or has sufficient grounds to suspect abuse, it is important to respond promptly. One should not attempt any investigation, but make a report of what has been said or suspected to the appropriate supervisor, either a responsible adult or member of the clergy, or to the local authorities. The rule of thumb is to refer, not to investigate.

If the child needs urgent medical help call the appropriate emergency services or take the child to the nearest emergency medical facility.

Discuss the situation with a group leader or member of the clergy. If the suspected abuser is a member of the congregation, a report should be made to the priest in charge. If the suspected abuser is a member of the clergy, a report should be made to the Bishop.

If after taking counsel with these persons, you are sure you suspect abuse, the concerns should be reported to the appropriate local agency.

Congregations are responsible for having on file information regarding the manner of reported suspected child abuse according to local law (see Section V, "Procedures for Responding to Allegations," of the Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to Sexual Misconduct).

A report of the situation should be made to the Bishop.

In reporting, as much detail should be given as possible (dates, times, descriptions, verbatim conversation), distinguishing between fact and opinion, first-hand observation and hearsay.

Members of a congregation involved in reporting suspected abuse should cooperate fully with any investigation by local authorities.

The pastoral care of the child and suspected abuser should remain a paramount consideration of the congregation.

For appropriate responses to make at a congregational level, refer to Section VII, "Trauma Debriefing," of the Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to Sexual Misconduct

APPENDIX

In addition to the resources listed in at the end of the Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to Sexual Misconduct, the following resources may be helpful in addressing issues of child protection:

TRAINING COURSES

The American Red Cross Community First Aid and Safety Certificate: 9 hours.

The St. John's Ambulance Association First Aid training course: 12 hours.

The American Red Cross Baby-sitting Certificate.

AGENCIES

Christian Survivors of Sexual Abuse (CSSA)

BM-CSSA

London, WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom

Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service

PCCA Christian Child Care

P.O. Box 133

Swanley, Kent BR8 7UQ, United Kingdom

Helpline: 44.(0)1322.660011

PUBLICATIONS

Safe from Harm: A Code of Practice

Publications Unit, Room 1024

The Home Office

50 Queen Anne's Gate

London, SW1H 9AT, United Kingdom

Hilary Cashman, *Christianity and Child Sexual Abuse*, SPCK.

Patrick Parkinson, *Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches*, Hodder and Stoughton.

Kidscape (material on helping children protect themselves)

World Trade Center, Europe House

London E1 9AA, United Kingdom

Questions may also be addressed directly to the Bishop's Office.



**CONVOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN EUROPE
YOUTH COMMISSION**

Personal background and references

Name of congregation:

The Church takes seriously its responsibilities for the care and nurture of children. We believe that our own congregation should provide children with the highest standard of care and that the experience of growing up in the church community should be safe and enriching.

You have been asked to take part in this nurture. It is a responsible but very fulfilling job, and the congregation will support you in your task. To ensure that our children are looked after as well as possible, the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe (of which we are a part) has drawn up guidelines for the health and safety of its children.

You are asked to declare, in accordance with the Convocation policy, whether you have ever been convicted of a criminal offense, and whether you have had a complaint made against you for inappropriate sexual behavior. If for any reason you are unable to make the declaration please discuss it with your minister.

A. Personal Information and Background

Required of all employees and persons working with children.

Name: _____

Maiden or former name:

Current address:

Home telephone: _____

Citizenship: _____

Passport number: _____

Date and place of issue: _____

List the name and address of other churches you have attended in the last five years:

**CONVOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN EUROPE
YOUTH COMMISSION**

List the name and address of your current and previous employer(s):



**CONVOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN EUROPE
YOUTH COMMISSION**

Child Protection Compliance Statement

Required of employees, and all volunteers working with children.

You are asked to read the Guidelines and Procedures for the Care and Protection of Children, which describe good practice with respect to children, and to abide by them. You are also asked to read, complete, and sign the declaration provided below. Please return the completed form to the minister in charge of the congregation who will receive it in confidence and keep it securely:

I, _____ (name), hereby acknowledge that
_____ (name of congregation) has provided me with a copy of the Guidelines and Procedures for the Care and Protection of Children of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe; that I have read the policy; that I understand its contents; and that I agree to abide by the policy.

I further acknowledge that I have not been convicted of a crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, nor have I had such a conviction expunged.

Date: _____

Signature: _____



CONVOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN EUROPE YOUTH COMMISSION

Registration Form: Youth Parental Consent & Medical Form

A. Permission

I give permission for my son / daughter / ward (circle one),

_____ (name)

to attend _____ (event)

in the charge of: _____ (leaders)

and/or _____ (leader/chaperon)

on the day(s) of _____ (date),

and to take part in any special activities. In the event of illness, injury or other emergency, I understand that every effort will be made to contact me. If time is of the essence, or if I cannot be reached, I hereby give the person(s) named above permission to act on my behalf to secure medical treatment as necessary, including, but not limited to: medical attentions, anesthesia, surgery and hospitalization, as the attending nurse or physician may prescribe. I understand that it is my responsibility to pay for any medical services which my child may receive while attending this event. I absolve and hold harmless the Convocation of American Churches in Europe and its designated youth leaders and representatives from any liability in acting on my behalf in this regard.

Date: _____ Signed: _____

B. Medical Information:

Please answer the following questions, and give additional details to any question answered "Yes" below the question. Feel free to add more information on additional pages if necessary.

1. Does the youth suffer from any on-going or recurring illness? Yes / No

Please explain: _____

2. Has the youth had any contagious illness or direct contact with any contagious illness within the last four weeks? Yes / No

Please explain: _____

3. Does he/she take regular medication? Yes /No

If yes, please ensure an adequate supply and instructions.

4. Does he/she have any known allergies (including medications), phobias, or disabilities? Yes / No

Please specify: _____

5. Has he/she been immunized against Tetanus within the last 10 years? Yes / No

**CONVOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN EUROPE
YOUTH COMMISSION**

6. Does he/she have any special dietary requirements? Yes / No

Please specify: _____

7. Is there any personal information of which the organizers should be aware? Yes / No

Please explain: _____

8. In the event of any "homely" medication (e.g. paracetamol, cough mixture, antacid) being required, please state which you will permit to be given:

C. Medical insurance information

Medical insurance company: _____

Policy Number: _____

Insurance company's emergency phone number: _____

Name of physician: _____

Physician's phone number: _____

D: Emergency contact information:

Parent/guardian who may be contacted during the event:

Name: _____

Address (street): _____

Address (postal code, commune): _____

Address (country): _____

Home telephone number (include country code): _____

Work telephone number: _____

Mobile phone number: _____

If not available, alternate contact:

Name: _____

Relation: _____

Address (street): _____

Address (postal code, commune): _____

Address (country): _____

Home telephone number (include country code): _____

Work telephone number: _____

Mobile phone number: _____

This form, as well as a copy of your insurance card and a copy of your vaccination pass must be handed to one of the named leaders on or before the event/camp.