



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

ADOPTED BY THE MISSION COUNCIL SEPTEMBER 10, 2016

PREAMBLE

The ECCT is committed to safe ministry for all persons across the lifespan. These policies apply to all employees and volunteers who minister on a regular basis to vulnerable adults. This policy is intended to provide guidelines for care that honors adults' abilities to self-advocate and that support them when they are in positions of vulnerability.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, Vulnerable Adults includes:

- a. Elders, defined by state law as anyone who is 60 years of age or older
- b. Anyone who is ministered to in their home (i.e. Eucharistic Visitors, Pastoral Care Visitors)
- c. Anyone over the age of 18 who is dependent on another person for care

SCREENING AND SELECTION FOR MINISTRY WITH ELDERS AND IN HOME SETTINGS

Parishes are required to screen all employees and volunteers who regularly minister to vulnerable adults by conducting the following four steps:

- a. Written application
- b. Interview
- c. Reference checks
- d. Public records check

Parishes shall use a company designated by ECCT to conduct public records checks. ECCT will conduct background checks on all clergy who are canonically resident or licensed to officiate in ECCT.

Volunteers should not be permitted to work with vulnerable adults (including home visitations) until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months.

Parishes shall ensure that all people who minister to vulnerable adults receive training as to the scope, accountability and responsibility of the ministry before engaging in such ministry.

BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR MINISTRY WITH ELDERS OR IN HOME SETTINGS

In addition to the behavioral standards for Ministry with Children or Youth, lay and ordained ministers working with vulnerable adults shall:

- a. Take care not to unduly influence a person to whom they minister. Ministers are mindful that a person to whom they minister has less power than they do in the ministerial relationship and may lack capacity to disagree with the minister due to this power imbalance which may be exacerbated by age, intellectual disability or other source of vulnerability.
- b. Accept only token gifts from those to whom they minister. Ministers given gifts should report those gifts in writing to the ordained minister and/or senior warden to encourage transparency.
- c. Decline to accept loans of any kind from those to whom they minister.
- d. Decline to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of anyone to whom they minister.
- e. Inform parish clergy of anything that causes concern for the safety or wellbeing of the person to whom they minister. Clergy may develop a clearer picture of a person's circumstances by hearing concerns from a number of different ministers. Clergy shall refer issues of mental health, substance abuse, and domestic abuse concerns to licensed health providers and comply with legally mandated reporting requirements. (See Guidelines for Ordained Ministry)

MONITORING PROGRAMS AND INTERACTIONS WITH ELDERS AND IN HOME SETTINGS

All people who minister to vulnerable adults should receive ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability and responsibility of the ministry. Each person engaged in such ministry should know who serves as their supervisor and how to contact the supervisor at all times.

While not required, it is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults or in the homes of others to do so with another adult minister. Those engaged in such ministries should minister in pairs any time a minister would feel more comfortable doing so.

It is also best practice for ministers to document their visits, including time, place, and any observations of concerns. Such documentation is reviewed by the ordained minister and/or senior warden and kept private among clergy and lay ministers. This documentation promotes continuity of care across visitors and transparency in ministry.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Parishes are urged to send parish employees and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults to training offered by ECCT on how to protect vulnerable adults and promote healthy boundaries in ministerial settings. Individuals should be re-trained every three years. Each parish should maintain a record of those who have attended such training. ECCT will maintain records of clergy who have attended the training.

Parishes should adopt safe church policies that are either consistent with the requirements in this policy or more restrictive. Parish policies should be clear, posted, and should be given to all adults who regularly work with vulnerable adults, as well as to the recipients of the ministries. Parish policies should include the names and phone numbers of the ordained minister parish priest, senior warden, and contact person in the Bishop's office.

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the ordained minister and senior warden.

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies by a clergy person shall immediately report the violation to the Bishops' office or an Intake Officer.

Anyone who has reason to suspect that elder abuse has taken place at church or in another setting, is strongly encouraged to tell their parish priest, another member of clergy, or to make a report to Protective Services for the Elderly, Department of Social Services. All mandated reporters suspecting such abuse or neglect shall report it to the appropriate civil authority.

Clergy hearing 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 volunteer ministry with the church.

The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by adults 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.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Protective Services for the Elderly at the Department of Social Services (DSS) can be reached during business hours at the toll-free line: 1-888-385-4225 or Infoline at 211 (after business hours, weekends or state holidays). Out of State call Infoline at 1-800-203-1234.

Office of Protection & Advocacy receives reports of suspected abuse or neglect of adults with intellectual disability between the ages of 18 and 59 and can be reached at (860) 297-4300 or (800) 842-7303

Bishops' Office:

- Ian Douglas, Bishop Diocesan, itdouglas@episcopalct.org, 203.639.3501 ext. 111
- Laura Ahrens, Bishop Suffragan, lahrens@episcopalct.org, 203.639.3501 ext. 109

Intake Officers for reports of clergy misconduct: Contact either

- The Rev. Terry Marie Wysong, revtw@cox.net or her home phone at 860-426-1856 or
- Mr. Chester Fairlie: attycf@gmail.com or by cell at 860-501-2131.

Canon for Mission Integrity and Training: Robin Hammeal-Urban, rurban@episcopalct.org, 203.639.3501 ext. 122.