



# Five Steps to Keep Kids Safe @ Restoration

## STEP ONE

**SCREENING** is an opportunity to prevent a molester from ever having contact with children and youth under our care.

Our careful screening of employees and volunteers in youth and children's ministries includes:

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 year.
3. Conducting personal and professional reference checks.
4. Conducting face-to-face interviews.
5. Requiring a signature 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 Restoration and learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse.

### Reading Requirements

All members of the clergy, all members of the vestry, and all 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

Every year, our clergy, staff and volunteers who have contact with youth and children must complete Restoration's Child Safety Training. Every two years, vestry members must complete Restoration's Child Safety Training.

## STEP THREE

**INTERACTING GUIDELINES** help children and adults feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

Verbal interactions between clergy, staff, or volunteers and children should be positive, constructive and encouraging. Clergy, staff 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 are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Clergy, staff and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (for example, Facebook's minimum age is currently 13).

Clergy, staff, and volunteers may interact with youth participants via social media sites as long as all communication is public and/or has at least one other adult copied on all messages and prior parental permission is obtained.

Clergy, staff, and volunteers must obtain parental permission prior to communicating with a youth via text or email. It is recommended that leaders copy parents on texting or email communication with a child or youth.

Clergy, staff, and volunteers must obtain parental permission prior to calling a youth. Phone conversations should never be the primary (or a major) mode of communication between adults and youth.

It is not permissible for clergy, staff, and volunteers to engage in real-time electronic communication, such as texting, Skype, or FaceTime, without the parent's knowledge or without another adult present (with the exception of text messaging that is necessary for setting up logistics).

All communication between clergy, staff, or volunteers and youth must be respectful, decent, and appropriate.

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

Children's and youth staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, both adults and peers.

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child and never based on the emotional needs of clergy, a staff member or volunteer. It is the diocesan policy that clergy, 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, but are not limited to:

- Smiles
- Words of encouragement, specifically about a person's heart and mind, character and conduct
- Handshakes, high fives, fist bumps
- Thumbs up
- Side-to-side hugs, always in public and only when initiated by a child
- Pats on the shoulder or upper back

Inappropriate interactions include, but are not limited to:

- Spanking, slapping, or any form of physical discipline
- Shaming or belittling a child or youth
- Meeting alone in a non-public or isolated place
- Swearing in the presence of children or youth
- Engaging in sexually oriented communications with or in proximity to children or youth
- Use, possession or being under the influence of 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 "Facebook" or other social networking sites without parental permission
- Showing favoritism or possessiveness toward a child or youth
- Ridiculing the beliefs of a child or youth's parents or flagrant disregard of a parent's wishes
- Offering children or youth cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
- Allowing children or youth to view pornography or to visit inappropriate internet sites
- Asking a child or youth to "keep secrets" from his or her parents
- Wearing inappropriate clothing

- Staring or taking photographs while others are dressing or showering

## STEP FOUR

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

Our monitoring practices include the following:

- All children and youth activities shall be designated to be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals
- No child will ever be left unattended during or following a church activity
- Clergy, staff and volunteers should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children or youth
- 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 a program structure
- Keeping interactions with children and youth in full view of others at all times. Keeping unused rooms locked where possible.
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas
- An on-site or off-site 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
- Training of Small Group Leaders in the area of child protection

Under our monitoring umbrella, the following restroom policy is in effect during all children's programming:

- Children who require diapering will be changed with the utmost care and respect. Only the child's parent and nursery staff who have a cleared background check and have taken Restoration's Child Safety Training are allowed the change a child's diaper.
- Children in the nursery who are potty-training or who are preschool-aged will be escorted to the restroom by their Kids' Small Group Leader who has a cleared background check and who has taken Restoration's Child Safety Training. Children should be encouraged to do as much for themselves as they can. A child may be assisted in the restroom as necessary. Because bathrooms off the Lower Narthex in the kids' small

group room area are for single use only, when an adult is assisting a child in the bathroom, the door should remain slightly ajar, with the adult's body acting as the door. A shepherd or the Director of Kids' Small Groups should be in the hallway outside the bathroom door helping to monitor.

- Elementary-aged children should be escorted to the restroom by a Kids' Small Group Leader, who then stands in the hallway outside the bathroom door to monitor.

When children are not in kids' small groups and need to use the restroom, we recommend that parents or an older sibling accompany their children to the men's or women's restroom. We recommend 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.

If a child discloses abuse, remember to:

- Respect the child's privacy by finding a private, non-threatening place to talk
- If possible, ask a staff member or trained volunteer to join in listening to the child's/youth's account
- 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 the 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

Remember to:

- Respond to the child victim
- Report the abuse allegation to designated church authorities
- Report to legal authorities

- Internally report to appropriate church leaders as needed [Director of Kids' Small Groups, APEX leader, or a member of the clergy].
- Report to the rector.

VIRGINIA CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE 800.552.7096

ARLINGTON COUNTY CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES 703.228.1500