

## **Child Protection Guidelines**

### **St. Francis Episcopal Church, Palos Verdes Estates, CA**

1. All adults 18 years and older, both employed and volunteer, who work with minors must undergo a Screening Process including an application for ministry and a criminal background check prior to beginning work. The steps and checklist for the Screening Process are labeled "Appendix A". All records shall be kept in sealed, confidential files in the office of the Finance and Facilities Manager.

2. All volunteers working with children and youth are required to be members or active constituents of St. Francis Episcopal Church for a minimum of six months before they begin their work.

3. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of children/youth or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with children will not be employed and shall not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors.

4. All adults and youth 16 years of age and older, both employed and volunteer, who work with minors must complete an online sexual misconduct prevention training specified by St. Francis Episcopal Church within 30 days after beginning their work.

5. Employees and volunteers who work with children and youth shall observe the "two-person rule" and/or the "open door policy" at ALL times. The "two-person rule" requires that a minimum of two (2) adults shall be present in any setting or activity where children/youth under 18 years of age are present. In cases where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child (i.e., counseling, visitation), all workers shall obtain the written consent of the child's parent or guardian prior to being alone with the child. The "open door policy" requires that when an adult is alone with a child, the door to the meeting room must be open at all times.

6. In cases where the church activity involves outings or overnights where the parent or legal guardian is not present (e.g., day trips, overnights at church, in a parishioner's home, or at a church camp), written consent shall be obtained prior to the event or outing from the child's parent or legal guardian. Overnights also require the prior written permission of the Rector or Associate Rector.

7. At least one adult (age 18 or older) shall be present with any teenage volunteer(s) working in the presence of children. The law does not allow criminal background screening on anyone under age 18.

8. St. Francis Vestry shall appoint one member of the Vestry to serve as Child Safety Officer. Among his/her responsibilities is to oversee implementation as well as periodical review of St. Francis' Child Protection Guidelines.

9. During any activity involving children or youth (on or off-campus), all employees and volunteers working with children are subject to unannounced visits by a member of the clergy or Vestry to monitor implementation of the Child Protection Guidelines. After each monitoring visit, a written report shall be made and reviewed by the Rector and kept on file at St. Francis. Any needed improvements shall be conveyed to the Child Safety Officer for implementation.

10. Guidelines and procedures for reporting suspected incidents of abuse or any behavior which seems abusive or inappropriate are labeled "Appendix B". Instructions on how to report suspected incidents of abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child shall be posted in high traffic areas around the church campus to inform the congregation. Our guidelines and procedures for responding to reported incidents of abuse are labeled "Appendix C".

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

These guidelines and procedures shall be implemented within thirty (30) days of their adoption, with the completion of the initial screening process and background checks within ninety (90) days of adoption. The Vestry will have the responsibility to implement and enforce these guidelines and procedures, including the training of employees and volunteers, maintaining confidentiality of records, and implementing the screening process.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rector

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of the Vestry

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sr. Warden

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date approved by Vestry

## Appendix A

### St. Francis Episcopal Church, Palos Verdes Estates, CA Child Protection Guidelines

#### Checklist for Employees and Volunteers

##### Before starting work:

- Volunteer has been an active member/constituent of our church for at least six (6) months (volunteers only).
- Screener has stressed importance of the “two-person” and “open door” rules, i.e. having a witness present when dealing with children and on rare occasions when an adult is alone with a child, s/he must meet with the child in an open area or leave the door open.
- Employee or volunteer has been given copy of instructions for handling child abuse cases.
- Employee or volunteer has completed application for ministry.
- Screener has checked references and conducted a personal interview (with written documentation).
- Employee or volunteer has completed a criminal background check.

##### Within 30 days of starting work:

- Employee or volunteer has completed online sexual misconduct prevention training.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Screener)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Note: This form to be posted in each worker’s file. No worker is to be assigned until completion of the checklist.

## Appendix B

### St. Francis Episcopal Church, Palos Verdes Estates, CA Child Protection Guidelines

#### REPORTING PROCEDURES

The law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and, in organizations such as St. Francis Episcopal Church to the appropriate individual in charge. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Therefore, all employees and volunteers at St. Francis Episcopal Church must adhere to the following procedures:

In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or violation of the child Protection Guidelines of St. Francis Episcopal Church the employee or volunteer shall immediately notify the Rector or Associate Rector, or in the absence of either of these, the Senior Warden.

In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or neglect, the clergy or Sr. Warden will immediately make a report to the local Child Protective Services (and law enforcement agency if recommended by Child Protective Services). Child Protective Services hotline of Los Angeles County: 800-540-4000.

\* Physical signs of molestation may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

\* Behavioral signs of molestation may include:

- nightmares
- anxiety when approaching the church building or nursery or preschool area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
- nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

\* Verbal signs of molestation may include statements such as:

- "I don't like \_\_\_\_\_."
- "\_\_\_\_\_ does things to me when we're alone."
- "I don't like to be alone with \_\_\_\_\_."
- "\_\_\_\_\_ fooled around with me."

\* *Adapted from Child Abuse: Governing Law and Legislation by I. Sloan (1983)*

2. Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recorded witness.
3. All church employees and volunteers working with minor children will receive training at the beginning of each church administrative year regarding the signs of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the steps to report any and all suspected child abuse.

## **Appendix C**

### **St. Francis Episcopal Church, Palos Verdes Estates, CA Child Protection Guidelines**

#### **RESPONSE PROCEDURES**

1. The official spokesperson for St. Francis Episcopal Church shall be the Rector, or in the absence of the Rector, the previously designated spokesperson (Senior Warden). All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
2. The official spokesperson shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse to the appropriate local Child Protection Services agency of the county, our insurance carrier, the Diocese.
3. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protection Service or law enforcement authorities.
4. We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
5. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker (either paid employee or volunteer), that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained, until allegations are cleared by authorities or until criminal charges are filed.
6. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
7. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the Rector or Associate Rector, or in the absence of either of these, by the Senior Warden, and maintained in a secure and confidential file.