



CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

The Catholic Apostolic Church in North America (CACINA) is a vibrant, faith-filled Catholic Church that came to North America from Brazil in 1949. We are an independent Catholic Church that worships in the Catholic tradition as well as celebrates the seven sacraments. We are followers of Jesus Christ and dedicate ourselves to live authentically and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with ALL God's people, no exceptions.

As a Catholic Church we pledge to continue our long-standing commitment to foster the dignity and sacredness of every human person in our faith communities. It is our fundamental duty as a Catholic Church Community to provide a safe environment within which all members, lay, religious and clergy alike, especially children, youth and vulnerable adults are encouraged to grow, worship and participate in the life of the community.

We pledge to foster a safe, caring, respectful and loving environment for all entrusted to our care be they in parishes, schools, religious education classes, on retreats, at parish social activities, picnics and field trips. Those who come to us from other faith communities having been abused in any way can be assured of our sensitivity and on-going support as they journey toward their healing. We as Church hold a zero-tolerance policy with regard to abuse in any of its forms, especially sexual abuse and in particular any abuse directed to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

In setting forth our promise to continue providing a safe environment wherever people gather, especially with reference to children, youth and vulnerable adults, the following program and its various policies and procedures has been established. We believe that parents and guardians are vital partners in the work we do. We encourage parents and guardians to be the primary educators and influencers of their child/children's moral compass.

We begin with a definition of terms used throughout this document to provide a clear explanation of *what* and *who* is included under our Safe Environment Pledge.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Church and Ministerial Personnel

Regarding this document, Church personnel includes all clergy (deacons, priests, bishops, seminarians), brothers and sisters in religious orders, lay volunteers and any paid persons engaged in ministry/service to church in the diocese, parish, schools and other agencies and ministries

Those who are contracted for service to a diocese, its parishes, schools or other agencies and ministries

Any person offering themselves for a church ministry/activity to which they were not assigned

Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

In keeping with the Code of Canons of the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America, anyone under the age of majority, or not capable of giving consent by reason of a medical disability or mental handicap is vulnerable.

Likewise included in the vulnerable is any person who could be considered frail, or elderly needing any type of care or supervision to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This is especially true where there may be use of coercion or imbalance of power.

Abuse

Physical

Non-accidental injury intentionally inflicted.

Sexual

Any contact or activity of a sexual nature occurring between persons of unequal positions of power. It includes any activity meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the one holding the position of power.

Emotional

Mental or emotional injury to another resulting in an observable and material impairment in another individual's growth, development or psycho-social functioning.

Neglect

Failure to provide for a person's basic needs or failure to protect from harm.

PROCEDURAL COMPONENTS

Screening of Ministerial Personnel

All clergy without exception, all those occupying a ministerial position within the church, a diocese, or a parish or other church-related service shall adhere to the following screening requirements

- An application endorsed by the Conference of Bishops in concert with the Executive Committee of the House of Delegates (HOD) which includes "Authorization of the Release of Information" to conduct a background check
- A criminal record check in the state where the applicant has resided for the last 7 years. (Other states as well when determined by the National Church)
- A search of the sex offender registry in the state of residence or others determined by the National Church
- An interview conducted by the diocesan bishop, or the bishop's designee (in this case at least 2 or more individuals)
- A list of references (3 minimum) including the name, title, location and phone number of each. References should include current employer, a religious source and a personal one. Others may be requested as deemed necessary.
- We will always have the best interest of a child, youth or vulnerable adult in mind when planning and assigning teachers/volunteers to work with a child, youth or vulnerable

adult for learning or other activities. We will partner with the parents or guardian to achieve the best outcome.

- When incardination of a cleric from another diocese or faith dimension occurs, the diocesan bishop is responsible for obtaining all the above-mentioned information to insure compliance with the screening process

TRAINING

All clergy without exception will be required to complete training regarding youth protection, vulnerable populations and/or healthy boundaries, as it relates to interaction with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. Ideally the training should be a program designed by CACINA. Evidence of completion should be sent to the diocesan bishop and should take place before admission to Holy Orders.

Those clerics who have already received Holy Orders are required to submit evidence of having been trained in youth protection, vulnerable populations, and or healthy boundaries within one year of the adoption of CACINA-stated policies. Also required is a written statement of compliance and acknowledgment of these policies and procedures laid out by the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America (CACINA).

Ideally a training program for all will be established by the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America to ensure all members are exposed to the same information regarding abuse, especially sexual abuse, to which all will adhere. **THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Elementary Age Children and Protection

Every effort should be made to avoid being alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult. any interaction should always be located in a place, space highly visible to others.

- Restroom needs: elementary age children may be accompanied to restrooms. If assistance is needed the minimum amount of assistance is to be given based upon child's capability

Avoid being alone with one child in restroom. If necessary, to check on child seek another worker to accompany you or use child same-age buddy system. Generally, any needed assistance should be given child verbally from outside stall

- Releasing children: the person overseeing the children during an activity or religious service is responsible to do so. Child is to be released to parents, legal guardians or others designated by parent/guardian. A **written statement** is required from the parent giving the name of any individual authorized to pick up a child in their absence.
- Transportation: on occasion you may be in a position to transport children and/or youth. All adult volunteer drivers are required to submit to the church copies of a valid driver's license. On the occasions you transport using a personal vehicle, vehicle registration and proof of insurance is also required. Transport children/youth directly to their destination.

Avoid unauthorized stops to a non-public place. Avoid circumstances that leave only one child/youth in transport vehicle with driver. Avoid any physical contact while driving children/youth.

Interacting with Children/Youth/Vulnerable Adults

- Communication: whether verbal or written, positive and encouraging are the two key words. Avoid harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, demeaning and humiliating descriptive.
- Social Media: request parental/guardian permission before contacting on social media keeping in mind **child needs to be 13 years or older**.

Below are examples of appropriate and inappropriate interactions with children, youth and venerable adults. Refer to training materials for detailed explanations of these interaction.

- Appropriate interactions include:
 - High-fives
 - Smiling
 - Handshakes
 - Head pat
 - Pats on the back
 - Fist-bumps
 - Side hugs
- Inappropriate interactions include:
 - Wrestling
 - Tickling
 - Sitting on laps
 - Kissing on lips
 - Full frontal hugs
 - Forcing unwanted action
 - Commenting on children's bodies

NORMS FOR PARISH BASED MINISTRY

Every parish (mission and/or ministry shall establish a set of particular guidelines when developing programs with children, youth and vulnerable adults with the approval of their diocesan bishop. Below are some general guidelines parishes may expand upon.

1. Clergy and lay ministers are prohibited from being alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult where others cannot observe them.
2. Adults 21 years or older are permitted to directly supervise children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
3. Laity are not permitted to design programs for children, youth or vulnerable adults without approval from the pastor or a canonical equivalent. Any requests for new programming must be submitted in writing to the pastor and reviewed by the diocesan bishop for approval.
4. All parish personnel working with children, youth and vulnerable adults must agree to comply with CACINA protection guidelines as well as policies adopted by their individual parish.

5. All activities involving minors (defined by the individual state) require a signed release from said minor's parent(s) or legal guardian prior to participation in programs.
6. Clerics and parish personnel are prohibited from use, possession and distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances or the misuse of prescribed medication while participating in or assisting with programs related to children, youth and vulnerable adults.
7. Clerics and church personnel are prohibited from engaging in discriminatory behaviors or disparate treatment of children, youth and vulnerable adults with regard to race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, age, or socio-economic status.
8. Dating between consenting adults (clergy, religious and lay) is allowed as stated in the Constitution of the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America with appropriate constraint.
9. No form of physical punishment/discipline is acceptable.

RESPONSE TO CLAIM OF ABUSE

When anyone has observed inappropriate behavior(s), behavior inconsistent with CACINA policies which may violate any provisions addressed in this document, they must immediately report their observations to civil authority and then to the pastor.

If the pastor or cleric is observed to have violated these policies, it is to be reported immediately to the civil authorities and then to the diocesan bishop.

Such inappropriate behavior or possible policy violations relating to the interactions with children, youth or vulnerable adults should be reported in any of the following ways:

- If the observed action(s) is in violation of the law such behavior should be reported to the proper authorities as established by the state, then immediately reported to the pastor or canonical equivalent.
- If the observed action(s) is not a violation of law, then a meeting between the pastor and the one engaging in the inappropriate behavior to seek clarification with reference to the observed behavior. Appropriate corrective action should be taken.
- If the observed action(s) were committed by a clergy member then it must be reported to the diocesan bishop who will then call a pastoral conference to determine appropriate corrective action in consultation with the parish council.

CREDIBLE CLAIMS OF ABUSE

ALL claims of abuse are considered credible until investigated by civil authorities and proven otherwise. An abuse claim leads to the immediate suspension of the clergy member involved. In the event of a civil conviction, expulsion from CACINA is automatic.

Every diocese, parish, mission, religious order, and ministry are required to cooperate with any investigation by state, federal and local authorities to the fullest extent appropriate and inform authorities when violations of the law have occurred

MINISTRY TO VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

The Church in the person of the Bishop or his delegate should listen to the victims and their families and be committed to their spiritual and psychological assistance. A diocese is required to reach out to victims/survivors and their families demonstrating a sincere commitment to their spiritual, emotional and physical well-being. The Church has an obligation to reach out to every person who has been the victim of sexual abuse as a minor or vulnerable adult whether the abuse has been recent or in the past. This outreach may include:

- Provisions of counseling
- Spiritual assistance
- Support groups
- Other social services as agreed upon by the victim/family and the diocese

Outreach to the victim/survivor and family is of the utmost necessity and importance. It is incumbent upon the bishop to meet with victims/survivors, to actively listen with patience and the utmost compassion as the victim/survivor relates their experiences as well as concerns. Outreach activity is to be determined on an individual case/situation and should be a pastoral ministry of its own with an on-going duration determined by each diocese. The Church needs to adopt a posture of concern, dialog and serious attempt at reconciliation for the most sacred trust placed in it and its clergy that has been violated at its roots.

MINISTRY TO OFFENDERS

This ministry should include sex offenders who have offended children, youth and vulnerable adults in the Church as well as those offenders within the confines of Church service ministries located within the local community. This includes persons living singly and in group residences, especially the prisons. A ministry of this nature, pastoral and compassionate at its roots, could serve as another means to create a safe environment for all. How this ministry is designed and carried out is to be left to the local bishop in consultation with the College of Bishops.

COMMITMENT STATEMENT

A Commitment Statement from College of Bishops to the policies/protocols/guidelines contained within this document is to be established by the college along with the signature of each of its members.

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