



INCARNATION  
ANGLICAN CHURCH

# Five Steps to Keeping Kids Safe at Incarnation

## 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:

- Reviewing volunteer applications for those working in youth and children's ministries.
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry/Criminal Background checks and renewing them every two years.
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks for employees and personal reference checks for volunteers.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews.
- Requiring clergy, employees, and volunteers to submit a statement certifying that they and other adult members of their households have not been arrested for or convicted of child abuse or diagnosed with certain conditions.
- Requiring that volunteers attend Incarnation for a minimum of six months before 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 Incarnation 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 two years, our clergy, staff, children's volunteers, and vestry members must complete Incarnation's Child Safety Training or other approved DOMA 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.

### **Communication**

Verbal interactions between clergy, staff, or volunteers and children should be positive, constructive and uplifting. 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. Concerns about children should be directed to parents, legal guardians, the appropriate ministry leader, or the clergy.

Clergy, staff, and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

Clergy, staff, and volunteers should avoid engaging in any sexually-oriented communications with children, and should refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with children.

Clergy, staff, and volunteers should report any sexually-oriented communications involving a child to the appropriate ministry leader or clergy.

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).

Clergy, staff, volunteers, and participants in youth and children's ministries should refrain from the use, possession, or being under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol, or any illegal drugs while in church facilities, while traveling with or in the presence of children or their parents, during church-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children.

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

### **Social Media**

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.

Clergy, staff, and volunteers may interact with youth participants via social media sites as long as all communication is public, appropriate, and infrequent.

### **Photography**

Photos of children will not be used contrary to parental wishes. Incarnation will refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior parental permission. Images shared publicly will respect the dignity of every person in them.

### **Physical Interaction**

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.

This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In some circumstances, physical restraint may be used to prevent self-injury by the child and/or harm to others or to property. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents, the Lead Children's Catechist, and clergy.

Those who serve, whether as clergy or lay workers, paid or volunteer, maintain a powerful relationship of authority and trust with the people to whom they minister. Betrayal of that trust through violation of sexual boundaries causes great emotional and spiritual harm. Such misconduct is a denial of our calling as Christians and may be a violation of the law. We must take every step to prevent it, and to respond with swift justice should misconduct occur.

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.

The following standards of interaction with children shall be carefully followed at all times:

Appropriate physical affection between clergy, staff, or volunteers and children is important for children's development, and is generally suitable in the church setting.

Appropriate physical interaction includes, but is 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
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Holding or picking up nursery-aged children

Inappropriate physical interaction includes, but is not limited to:

- Meeting alone in a non-public or isolated place
- 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
- 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

**Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden.** Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to (1) an immediate supervisor; and (2) the Rector and wardens.

**Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places.** It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.

**Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing.** The personal behavior of clergy, staff, or volunteers must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.

**Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child.** A child’s preference not to be touched must be respected at all times.

**Clergy, staff, and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, including adults and peers.**

### **Restroom Use: Nursery-Aged Children and Children With Special Needs**

Because nursery-aged children and children with special needs may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff and volunteers will observe the following policies:

#### *Diapering*

- Only the child's parent or a screened and trained female nursery volunteer will change a child's diaper.
- Children who require diapering will be changed with the utmost care and respect and within plain sight of other nursery volunteers.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing a soiled diaper.

#### *Toilet Training*

- Only screened and trained nursery volunteers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- Children in the nursery who are toilet training or who are preschool-aged will be escorted to the restroom by a screened and trained volunteer. Children should not be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Children should be encouraged to do as much for themselves as they can. A child may be assisted in the restroom as necessary. When children are assisted in bathrooms, the stall door will be left partially open. If at all possible, another screened and trained volunteer should be in the hallway outside the bathroom door helping to monitor.
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and assisting him/her in changing his/her diaper or underwear and clothing.

### **Restroom Use: Elementary-Aged Children**

- Elementary-aged children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. If no assistance is needed, then a screened and trained adult volunteer should watch the hallway between the atrium and the restroom. A same-age, same-sex peer buddy system may also be used.
- Staff members and volunteers should take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom. If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her.

If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

When children are not in atrium 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 because restrooms are the most likely place for abuse to occur in an institutional setting.

### **First Aid and Medication**

If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parent. Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer as authorized by the parent. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over-the-counter medication.

When medically necessary, medication or first aid may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer. Parents should be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.

### **The Release of Children**

Any time that a child has been entrusted to church staff members or volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Staff and volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that staff and volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact their immediate supervisor before releasing the child.

### **Transportation**

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when transporting children:

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the church copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- It is understood that the adult driving the child must have undergone a background check including a DMV record check. Use of child safety seats that meet federal standards is required. Drivers and passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines. Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 18 be allowed to drive children/youth as part of an event.
- At no time shall there be one adult and one child traveling in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). Automobiles will contain either one driver and two or more participants or two adults and any number of children (within seat belt limitations of the vehicle; seatbelts are ALWAYS required). If there is an extenuating circumstance causing only one adult and one child to travel together in an automobile, permission must be obtained by a parent or legal guardian of the child. This permission should be

written and signed by the parent/guardian or documented by the volunteer if only verbal consent is available. The child or youth should be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.

- No cell phones, including hands-free devices, may be utilized by the driver while driving children and youth, unless in an emergency.
- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks should be done as a group. Staff and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No one under the age of 25 may drive vehicles rented by a church unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement.

## 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 20 or 21 of the DOMA policy, shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children
- Ongoing training of child and youth volunteers in the area of child protection

## 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, if helpful, 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. Ask children, "Is there anything else you want me to know?"
- 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. Discussion about the information should be limited to appropriate church and legal authorities.

Remember to:

- Respond to the child victim
- Report the abuse allegation to designated church authorities
  - Internally report to appropriate ministry leaders as needed [Lead Children's Catechist or a member of the clergy].
  - Report to the Rector
- Report to legal authorities

### **COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

Child Abuse Hotline  
800.552.7096

### **ARLINGTON COUNTY**

Child Protective Services  
703.228.1500

**ALEXANDRIA CITY**

Child Protective Services  
703.746.5800

**FALLS CHURCH CITY**

Child Protective Services – reports to Fairfax County  
703.324.7400  
or call  
Falls Church City Police  
703.248.5053

**FAIRFAX COUNTY**

Child Protective Services  
703.324.7400