

CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR THE SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC

Please consider the following Synod of the Mid-Atlantic guidelines that may help in the administration of your ministry. These guidelines are not intended to be inclusive of every protection of the children and youth in your organization but rather to be used as a general program that can be implemented in whole or part. Also, these guidelines are not specific to each state and, instead, are based upon global information obtained through the legal representation of religious organizations. If using these guidelines, please add your own practices or changes according to your faith and beliefs, facility, and state laws.

As you read through this Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program and Social Media Code of Conduct, you may place your institution's name where the SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC appears. Please amend this program to fit your needs and tailor it accordingly. We encourage you to hire counsel in your own state and review other religious organizations' guidelines in your area of the city or county in your process of implementing portions of this program.

Once complete, the program is more effective when it is reviewed and discussed regularly with those involved in your child and youth programs.

**CHILD AND YOUTH
ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM
FOR THE SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR THE SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC: Part 1

Introduction

To help protect children, the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** has adopted the following Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program. It is important that all **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent sexual abuse against children. The following includes the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of Protection and Prevention, and an Acknowledgement to be signed by those people working with children.

Purpose

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in order to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
2. Assist the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Definitions

The following terms used herein and are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid by the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**.
2. *Children/Youth/Minor*: Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. *Adult*: Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.

4. *Volunteer*: Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.
5. *Sexual Abuse*: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
6. *Child Emotional Abuse*: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.

Protection and Prevention

Volunteer and Employee Screening Procedures

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

1. *Employment Application and Volunteer Application*: Any paid staff and volunteers who will work with a minor must complete the Employment Application and/or the Volunteer Application. The release statement attached to the Application must be signed by the individual completing the Application to apply for and qualify for service.

Our Employment Application includes questions regarding:

- Current and previous residence addresses.
- Current and previous employment, including addresses, dates, duties, titles, and reasons for leaving.
- Names and addresses of schools attended and degree(s) earned.
- References from previous employers and organizations that serve children.
- Pending criminal charges (where not prohibited by state law).
- Criminal history information.

Our Volunteer Application includes questions regarding:

- Current address.
- Volunteer experience.

- Criminal history information.
- Personal references.

Applications include a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.

2. Review all statements made in the application, paying specific attention to any gaps in time and irregular employment patterns or unexplained absence. Pursue these gaps with employers listed and in a subsequent interview.
3. Conduct interviews with qualified STAFF applicants.

If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, discuss this information with the applicant. In the event the applicant is ultimately hired or accepted as a volunteer, document the reasons for overriding the prior information.

Whenever possible, the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** will have an associate participate in the interview.

4. **ORDINARILY** Contact all listed references for volunteers. Contact each of the volunteer applicant's references and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.
5. **ORDINARILY** *Contact all listed references and employers for paid staff.* Inquire as to the reason the applicant left and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.
6. *Criminal Background Check:* The **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** will conduct a criminal background check on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All criminal background checks will be updated periodically.
7. *Six-Month Rule:* All volunteers will be required to **HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN THE LIFE** of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** for six months and have reviewed and signed the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program.

Confidentiality

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

Supervision Procedures

Unless an extenuating situation exists, the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**:

1. Will have adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity.
2. Will monitor facilities during activities involving children.
3. **ORDINARILY** will release minors only to a parent or guardian and utilize sign-in and sign-out sheets.
4. Will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on trips and should provide information regarding the trip.
5. Will use "RULE OF THREE" (AT LEAST ONE ADULT AND TWO OTHER INDIVIDUALS) when transporting minors in vehicles. **VARIATION FROM THIS POLICY WILL REQUIRE WRITTEN PERMISSION.**
6. Will require that young children be accompanied to the restroom and the paid staff or volunteer wait outside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the minor.
7. Will encourage minors to use a "buddy system" whenever minors go on trips off of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** property.
8. Will screen all paid staff and volunteers and approve those individuals in advance for any overnight activities.

Behavioral Guidelines for Religious Organization Paid Staff

All volunteers and paid staff will observe the following guidelines:

1. Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
2. To the extent possible, the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** events that are co-educational will have both male and female chaperones.
3. Whenever possible, at least two unrelated paid staff or volunteers will be in the room when minors are present. Doors will be left fully open if one adult needs to leave the room temporarily and during arrival to the class or event before both adults are present. Speaking to a minor or minors one-on-one should be done in public settings where paid staff or volunteers are in sight of other people.
4. Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor

initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.

5. Never engage in physical discipline of a minor. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind.
6. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
7. If one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments.
8. Anyone who observes abuse of a minor will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Report any inappropriate conduct to the proper authorities and officials of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** for handling.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

1. Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.

Sexual Offender at the SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC

The SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC may allow a person known to be a sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation, but they must adhere to specific guidelines. However, first check with the offender's probation/parole officer for any restrictions regarding attending services or other functions where children are present. Ask the probation/parole officer to put any restrictions in writing. If restrictions do not prohibit offender participation, the following additional four requirements **MAY** be implemented and remain in force at all times involving any known sexual offender:

- 1 The convicted sexual offender cannot participate in any of the child or youth programs in any way.
- 2 The convicted sexual offender can only participate in a predetermined service each week.
3. The convicted sexual offender will be asked to report in and be assigned to an escort who will accompany him or her at all times.
4. The congregation needs to be made aware that a convicted sex offender is attending. However, the name does not need to be disclosed.

Response to Sexual Abuse

The **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of sexual abuse. All accusations of sexual abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege sexual abuse and those who have been accused of sexual abuse.

Note: The person entrusted to investigate an allegation should be a leader of your organization. Insert the appropriate title or position where noted.

When an allegation is made involving sexual abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The **SYNOD EXECUTIVE AND STATED CLERK** or an appointed person will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If the **SYNOD EXECUTIVE AND STATED CLERK** is the individual accused of sexual abuse, then the current **MODERATOR OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY** will conduct the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws.
2. Report the matter to the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC's** insurance carrier.
3. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
4. The **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
5. An official of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with **THE GOVERNING BODY** of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
6. An official of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.

7. An official of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
8. During the investigation, an official of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
9. An official of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** (and legal counsel or other consultants) may meet with the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
10. Communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**.
11. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.
12. Hire a consultant or assign a spokesperson to respond to media or prepare a statement for the media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC's** attorney.

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT: Part 2

Social media has been defined in many ways. It includes electronic communications and online activities, such as text messages; email; wikis; and social networking like Facebook, Twitter, and the like; and posting comments, such as on blogs. Because of the blur between personal and professional communications, this Code of Conduct helps explain what is recommended and expected.

1. Remember all internet postings are permanent – able to be duplicated and may go viral.
2. Use your common sense. If you wonder whether or not to communicate or post, don't do it until you consult with the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** leadership.
3. For your protection and the protection of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**, you are prohibited from using internal or external social media channels to discuss confidential items, legal matters, litigation, or the organization's financial performance. Confidential information includes anything labeled as such or information not available to the public. When asked by others to discuss any of these matters, you should relay that "Our social media policy only allows authorized individuals to discuss these types of matters. I can refer you to an authorized individual if you'd like to ask them," and then refer the question to the **APPROPRIATE TEAM OR INDIVIDUAL**.
4. Be open and honest about who you are when you communicate. The **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** trusts and expects you to exercise personal responsibility whenever you use social media, which includes respecting the trust of those with whom you are engaging. However, these policies are not meant to interfere with your legal rights to bargain collectively or engage in concerted or protected activities.
5. Respect your privacy, your coworkers' privacy, and the organization's privacy by not providing personal or confidential information without permission. Also, employees/volunteers are prohibited from sharing anything via social media channels that could violate another employee/volunteer's right to personal privacy.
6. Only those officially designated may use social media to speak on behalf of the organization in an official capacity, though employees/volunteers may use social media to speak for themselves individually. If and when designated persons use social media to communicate on behalf of the organization, they should clearly identify themselves as an employee/volunteer.
7. If you are communicating with youth through any digital or social media, act as you would if you were communicating in person. Specifically, communicate with minors using transparency and in a group **WHEN POSSIBLE**. Do not initiate a one-on-one relationship (such as **REQUESTING TO FRIEND** from a personal profile) with a minor.
8. Do not violate copyright and fair use laws and do not plagiarize another's work. Obtain permission if you wish to use material created by someone else.

9. Do not use the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC's** email address or social media channels for personal use.
10. Harassment, threats, intimidation, ethnic slurs, personal insults, pornography, obscenity, racial or religious intolerance, abuse, and any other form of behavior prohibited by law is also prohibited via social media channels. Do not engage in any such behavior and do not make or comment on any such behavior, comments, or remarks.
11. **NO BULLYING. VERBAL, PHYSICAL, AND CYBER BULLYING ARE PROHIBITED.**
12. If you are not officially authorized to speak on behalf of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**, use a disclaimer saying that what you communicate is your personal opinion and not that of the organization when you are engaging in conversation on the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC's** social media channels. Two sample social media disclaimers include: (1) "I work for the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**, and this is my personal opinion."; and (2) "I am not an official spokesperson, but my personal opinion is" This requirement is not meant to interfere with your rights to bargain collectively or engage in concerted or protected activities but rather to ensure that others can easily distinguish the official position of the organization or the organization's leadership from those of our employees/volunteers.
13. Users should use their best judgment when engaging in social media activities and should be on guard against actions and discussions that could harm the interests of our community, faith, or other persons.
14. Before posting photographs of any person, obtain his/her written permission.
15. **INAPPROPRIATE USE OF CAMERAS, IMAGING, AND DIGITAL DEVICES IS PROHIBITED. WHILE MOST PEOPLE USE CAMERAS AND OTHER IMAGING DEVICES RESPONSIBLY, IT HAS BECOME VERY EASY TO INVADE THE PRIVACY OF INDIVIDUALS. IT IS INAPPROPRIATE TO USE ANY DEVICE CAPABLE OF RECORDING OR TRANSMITTING VISUAL IMAGES IN SHOWER HOUSES, RESTROOMS, OR OTHER AREAS WHERE PRIVACY IS EXPECTED BY PARTICIPANTS.**
16. If you see a violation of this Code of Conduct, report it to **PASTOR/PRINCIPAL/DIRECTOR/ADMINISTRATOR/EXECUTIVE/OTHER** at the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**. If you have questions about the Code of Conduct, please contact **DESIGNATED PERSON**.
17. All of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC's** other policies apply to the use of digital and social media. All communication by employees or volunteers should take into account the organization's values, reputation, and workplace policies.
18. Any violations of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC's** Code of Conduct may result in discipline and/or termination of employment or volunteer opportunities.

Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program Acknowledgment

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. The **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the program and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC** or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC's** Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program and Social Media Code of Conduct. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of the **SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**.

Print Name

Signature

Date