

## **Respecting the Dignity of Adults:**

Standards on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Adults in  
All Entities of The Diocese of Arkansas  
(adopted by Executive Council on September 27, 2011)

It is the policy of the Diocese of Arkansas that the sexual exploitation of adults will not be tolerated.

- The diocese (including all its entities) will do everything in its power to prevent the occurrence of sexual exploitation.
- The diocese (including all its entities) will provide training and other opportunities to raise awareness of issues surrounding sexual exploitation.
- The diocese (including all its entities) will respond appropriately to alleged incidents of sexual exploitation.

### **Sexual Exploitation of Adults**

Sexual exploitation is the development or attempted development of a sexual relationship between a person in any ministerial position, lay or ordained, and an individual with whom he/she has a Pastoral Relationship.

A Pastoral Relationship is a relationship between a cleric, employee, or volunteer and any person to whom such cleric, employee, or volunteer provides counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance, or from whom such cleric, employee, or volunteer has received confession or confidential or privileged information.

Sexual exploitation includes but is not limited to the following actions:

- Verbal: such as sexual innuendo, indecent proposals, sharing sexual stories, jokes or fantasies, or making inappropriate comments about someone's appearance.
- Behaviors: such as inappropriate touching, sending or posting communications with sexual content (e.g., correspondence, e-mail, text messages, instant messages, photographs, attachments, phone conversations, voice mail, etc.)
- Sexualizing or attempting to sexualize a Pastoral Relationship or relationship between a clergy or lay person and anyone to whom he or she provides ministry.
- Stalking a person with the intent of sexual exploitation or voyeurism.

Some appropriate interactions in Pastoral Relationships and other ministries with adults, as long as they are welcomed by the recipient, include:

- brief hugs
- pats on the shoulder or back
- kisses on the cheek
- handshakes
- holding hands during prayer

Some inappropriate interactions in Pastoral Relationships and other ministries with adults include:

- inappropriate or lengthy embraces

- kisses on the mouth
- touching sexual areas of the body
- showing affection while in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- any form of unwanted affection
- comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to a person's body or appearance that are at all suggestive.
- giving gifts or money to favored individuals
- repeated and/or private meetings with individual adults, especially meetings that occur away from church property and during non-business hours
- repeated electronic communications, such as email or texts, especially those that contain personal disclosures or solicitations of an intimate relationship
- seeking excessive private time with a specific adult
- providing a specific adult with personal access such as one's personal e-mail address or cell phone number if that is not the norm

## **Mandated Standards for Preventing Sexual Exploitation of Adults**

### **1. Screening and Selection**

Any and all persons who have Pastoral Relationships shall be screened and selected using the following tools and procedures:

- a. **Background Screening:** An application form (Appendix A to this policy) completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background screening and reference checks.
- b. All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not the person is appropriate to engage in Pastoral Relationships.
- c. Persons who have Pastoral Relationships must have a personnel file that is kept where other records are kept.
- d. Criminal records checks and sexual offender registry checks will be conducted every five (5) years on Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships.
- e. Persons who have Pastoral Relationships who transfer within the Diocese of Arkansas and apply for or are asked to or who do undertake a position in which they have Pastoral Relationships are required to undergo the same screening and selection process specified above. This requirement may be met through a transfer of a copy of their personnel file to the new congregation, school, agency, or program together with completion of a new application, individual interview and reference checks with the congregations, schools, agencies or other programs for which the applicant has had Pastoral Relationships since the screening was last done as shown in the applicant's personnel file.

## **2. Education and Training Requirements**

Before any persons engage in Pastoral Relationships they are required to complete training approved by the diocese on the prevention of sexual exploitation of adults. Within each five-year period of employment the persons must renew their training.

## **3. Settings where Pastoral Relationships take place:**

- should, whenever possible, be places where casual monitoring by others is convenient.
- in open, visible spaces or in closed spaces that have windows that remain unobstructed by closed blinds, furniture, plants, or other adornments.
- should convey safety and comfort without the use of couches, loveseats, beds, futons or other furniture that would encourage close seating between the persons in the Pastoral Relationship.

## **4. Complaint and Investigation Procedures**

The entity will have a procedure to make complaints about alleged sexual harassment, exploitation, misconduct or abuse. Once a complaint has been made, the leader, rector, senior warden, or another person is assigned to investigate the complaint. Once a conclusion has been reached, the maker of the complaint is notified of the conclusions reached and whether or not disciplinary action will be taken. All actions regarding the complaint should be documented in writing for the future. Complaints regarding members of the clergy will be handled in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church and of this diocese.

## **Dating by Persons Engaged in Pastoral Relationships**

Romantic relationships between single clerics and other single persons with whom the cleric has a Pastoral Relationship are always complex and subject to later interpretation. While they may appear consensual, these relationships may not truly be mutual because of the imbalance of power between the cleric and the parishioner.

Any cleric contemplating a romantic relationship with a person with whom the cleric has a Pastoral Relationship must seek discernment with the bishop or a person appointed by the bishop and with representatives of the congregation or other place of ministry. In addition, care must be taken in such a situation that pastoral care for the parishioner is available from another priest. If a complaint is made regarding such a relationship, the diocese will investigate it according to this policy.

Just as importantly, romantic relationships between lay people, employees or volunteers (including licensed Catechists and Evangelists) who engage in Pastoral Relationships, are similarly complex. Any member of the clergy or employee who contemplates such a romantic relationship is to seek discernment with that person's bishop, priest, or employer. If a complaint is made regarding such a relationship, the diocese will investigate it according to this policy.

## **For Further Information**

Persons in local congregations and other entities are encouraged to seek clarification and assistance from the bishop's office as to the interpretation and/or application of this policy. The contact person for this information is:

Jason Alexander  
501-372-2168  
866-887-1114 (toll free)  
[jalexander@episcopalarkansas.org](mailto:jalexander@episcopalarkansas.org)

# Appendix A

## Diocese of Arkansas Background Screening Authorization Form

*Applicant should complete all relevant information and sign and date the form.*

**Applicant's Full Name (Printed):** \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden Name or Other Names Used: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

\*NOTE: The above information is required for identification purposes only, and is in no manner used as qualifications for employment, internship, or service as a volunteer. Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas abides by all applicable state and federal employment laws.

**ADDRESSES (for the past 10 Years)**

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

How Long at Present Address? \_\_\_\_\_

Former Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

How Long at Former Address? \_\_\_\_\_

Former Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

How Long at Former Address? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all other states and counties of residence since turning age 18:

---

(Please circle any of the following states in which you have lived: CA, CO, DE, LA, MA, SD, VF, WV, WY)

I, hereby authorize the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, credit history, adult criminal or police records, and motor vehicle records including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my Application and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my qualifications for service now and, if applicable, during the tenure of my employment or service with Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas.

**I release Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas and its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims or law suits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used. The name above is my true and complete legal name and all information provided above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge:**

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_