

SAINT BARNABAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Falmouth, Massachusetts

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

HIRING

I. Screening of all employees and volunteers

- All applicants for paid or volunteer positions should complete a written application to ensure consistent collection of data
- All applicants and volunteers should sign an application as verification of the data and as authorization to contact references and conduct background checks
- Volunteers should include those who will be working with children, youth, the elderly or disabled or those who will be responsible for handling parish funds. The rector may include other volunteers at his/her discretion

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II. Background Checks

- Conduct background checks on all employees and volunteers, especially people whose work regularly brings them in contact with children
- Reference check provide a means to verify an applicant's and a volunteer's past employment performance and education
 - References should include at least two current church members on all volunteer applications
 - Contact all references with by phone or in person
 - All information gathered should be documented in writing
- Under Massachusetts law any organization "primarily engaged in providing activities or programs to children 18 years or age or less" must obtain criminal offender record information on volunteers "prior to accepting any person as a volunteer."
 - CORI identifies convictions and pending criminal offences that are processed through the Massachusetts Trial Court
 - Call (617) 660-4600 for information. Each parish must apply directly for access to criminal offender record information and designate one person who will submit the requests and receive all reports.
- Any job offer should be contingent upon the results of these investigations.
 - Existing employees should be asked to sign an authorization to allow the parish to conduct a CORI background check

III. Interviewing

- Conduct interviews in person and with more than one interviewer, meeting either together or separately, and compare observations and responses. Care should be taken to phrase questions that do not violate federal laws.
- Note answers to questions in writing and then summarize
- Explore why applicants want to work in the ministry of children; review with the applicants your procedures for mandated reporters; discuss your zero tolerance for abuse of power, and inform applicants about your policy on background investigations

IV. Employment and volunteer safeguards

- Establish a length of time a person must attend church before volunteering to work with children or youth, such as six months. Volunteers should be active enough to demonstrate a commitment to and involvement with a congregation
- No applicant for employment or volunteering should have a history of abusing children.
- Automatic disqualifiers should include applicants with a criminal conviction for sexual offense involving a minor. Other disqualifying convictions include incest, rape and assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, sodomy and physical abuse of a minor.

PREVENTION PRACTICES**I. Space**

- Two adult rule: At least two non-related adults should be present in groups of youth and children. If circumstances arise that a child or adolescent is along with an adult, the adult should remain within sight of another adult whenever possible.
- If door must be closed for the sake of confidentiality, first obtain permission of person involved in meeting. A dated memo about the meeting would be useful and more reliable than memory should that meeting later be questioned. Such a memo would not betray any privacy of a conversation.
- If you have an encounter with a child or youth where you feel there might be a misunderstanding, de-brief the encounter with the rector or supervisor and document the consultation. Where possible, discuss the matter with the child's parent or guardian.
- Meetings should not take place in secluded areas.
- Offices and/or classrooms should have an open door or window.
- Have an open door policy and encourage parents and guardians to stop in at unscheduled times.

II. Events off Premises

- If children are to be taken off premises, two or more adults should accompany them, preferably both men and women.
- Two or more adults should also be present if children are to be driven home or to an outside event.
- When a church program or activity calls for someone to drive children/youth anywhere, ask drivers to complete a transportation form that provides important information about the vehicle operator and the vehicle.
- Written permission: Obtain parental permission in written form for participation by a child or youth in a planned event or trip. Written permission should be date and event specific.

III. Overnight Events

- For overnights (lock-ins, camp, etc) always have at least two adults present (more if the size of the group requires). Make parents/guardians aware of the ground rules which will govern all such events, and whenever possible have the participants sign an agreement to abide by those

rules in advance of the event itself. Be clear about specifying the consequences of any infraction.

- For overnights, whether on church property or elsewhere, be sure that separate sleeping areas are provided for boys and girls, and that privacy is assured for use of bathroom facilities and for changing clothes. Adults should bathe at separate times from children.

IV. Other Precautions

- If children/youth are to be picked up by someone other than a parent or known babysitter, or dropped off somewhere other than their home, the parent or guardian should indicate that persons' name and phone number.
- An adult leader should stay with all children/youth at the conclusion of an activity until every child/youth has been picked up. Never leave a child/youth alone waiting for a ride home.
- Use caution about any movies or videotapes. Many PG-13 rated films contain material that is inappropriate. Many congregations have a policy that R-rated films are never shown to youth/teens. If you question the appropriateness of a film, think about showing it to parents first (even if parents do not take up your offer it is important to have made the offer.)
- It is unwise to single out a child or young person for gift giving. It is best to make gift giving a group activity, to be consistent in giving of gifts and/or to make gifts "from the church" or "from your class".
- Never meet a child or youth in an unplanned way (for example, meeting them at the end of a school day) without clearing it with parents and/or appropriate supervising people.
- Never show youth any material that displays nudity or could by any standard be called pornographic. If such materials is brought by youth, confiscate it at once and consult with clergy, supervisor, trusted adult to establish the fact that it was brought to the event by a participant (and not by any adult leader/teacher).
- Never allow alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs to be brought to, or consumed during, any church-related activity for children/youth.
- If a youth comes to any church program intoxicated (from either drugs or alcohol) arrange to have the youth taken home and consult with the clergy or another authority as to further intervention.

Policy approved by the Vestry
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