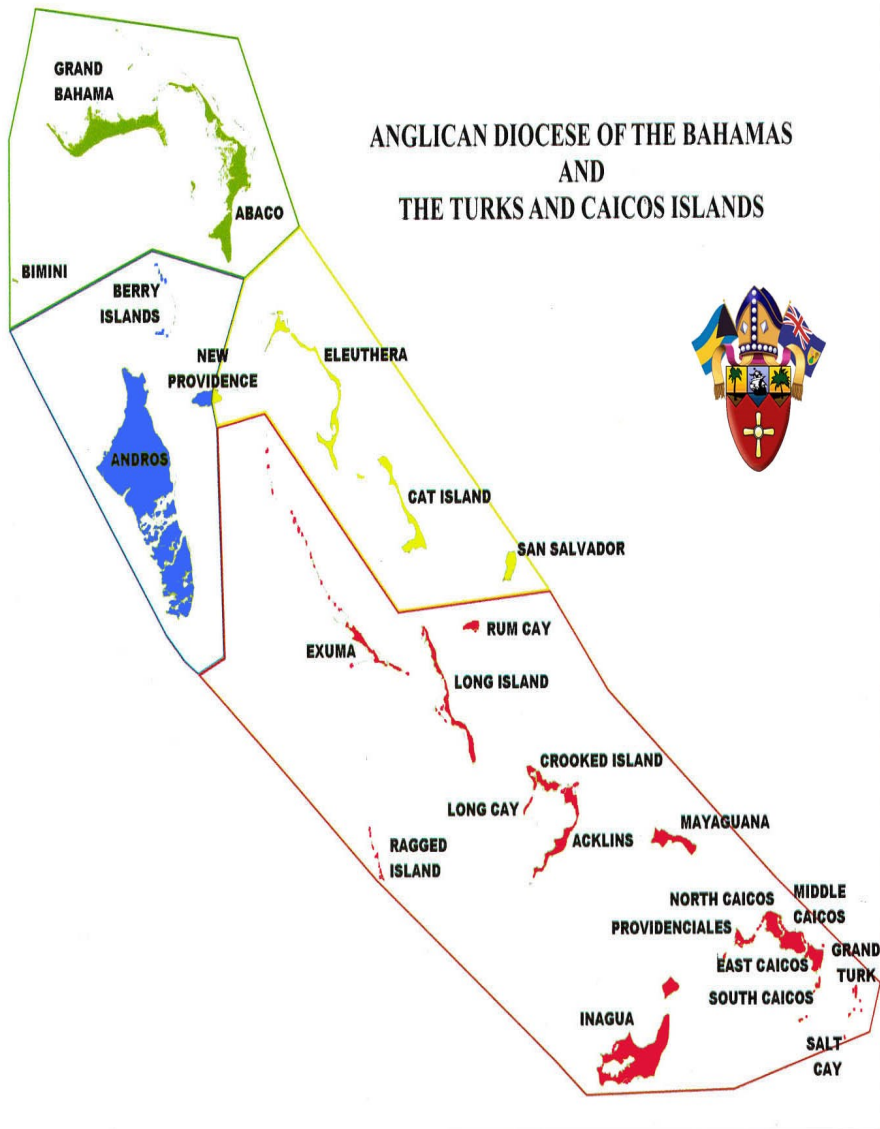




Green - Northern Archdeaconry

Blue - West Central Archdeaconry

Yellow - East Central Archdeaconry

Red - Southern Archdeaconry

Anglican Diocese of the Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands



Child Protection & Health & Safety Policy

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Diocesan Youth Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Anglican Diocesan Youth Department of The Diocese of the Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands to acknowledge the worth and inherent value of young people.

Diocesan Youth Vision Statement

We seek to make our parishes and communities more fully receptive to, and inclusive of young people, while cultivating their faith in God. We seek to respond to the Holy Spirit as young Anglicans, making appropriate use of our time, talent and treasure for the advancement of the churches, communities, countries and the world.

No person should be punished in a manner designed to publicly humiliate or embarrass him or her and no person should be denied food, sleep, rest, shelter safety, clothing or recreation during any activity as a form of punishment.

No form of corporal punishment may be used in any organization. This includes spanking, shaking, pinching, hitting or any form of physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior of a minor.

Whenever a person is sent home for violation of the rules, the parent/guardian should be contacted and an incident report filed.

Incident Report

Whenever an incident occurs a verbal and written report should be filed with the head youth leader/pastor. The main parties in the incident and a witness should sign off on the report. Should the report involve a minor a copy of the report should be given to the parent/guardian.

Young people should always be supervised in a vehicle whether stationary or during transit: adult chaperones should be assigned to each vehicle. Hitchhiking with young people is not allowed and vehicles should not be allowed to carry more people than the legal limit for the type of vehicle. A leader or chaperone should not drive alone with a young person except with explicit parental consent.

Only persons holding the appropriate license and insurance should be driving and transporting young people and drivers should not use cell phones while driving. Persons who are drunk or have been drinking alcohol or are visibly distressed or impaired should not be allowed to drive a vehicle that will be transporting young people.

Overnight Activities

During overnight activities males and females are not allowed to sleep in the same room, bed, sleeping bag/mat; and youth leaders and volunteers are not to share the same space with young people. It is preferred that adults sleep in an adjoining room for supervision purposes and when this is not possible that they sleep at the end of the room, preferably near the entrance.

Punishment

It will sometimes be necessary to undertake disciplinary measures for breaches of rules or gross misbehavior. Acceptable disciplinary measures will respect the dignity of each person and may include suspension from activities, denial of privileges, removal from office and suspension of membership. In each case, any measures taken should include appropriate counselling.

DIOCESE OF THE BAHAMAS CHILD PROTECTION **POLICY STATEMENT**

When Jesus said *“Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these”*- Matthew 19:14, he gave children a unique status and upheld their innocence; we are to welcome them generously and with all the protection and loving concern their vulnerability demands of us. To keep faith with our Lord’s injunction, the Diocese of the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands requires the following principles to be upheld at all times by those ministering in its name in whatever capacity:

The welfare of the child is paramount in all circumstances.

Concern for the interests of any adults is always secondary to this.

The Church and its workers, whether ordained or lay, paid or voluntary, must act towards children responsibly, with integrity and with proper regard for current legislation. The interests of both workers and children must be safe-guarded by well-informed good practice so that their trust is not open to abuse.

No exploitation of the relationship of trust for purposes of self-gratification will be tolerated. The highest standards of care are to be maintained in all circumstances, including pastoral care, counselling, worship, education and recreation

Any allegation of abuse or risk of harm to children will be treated seriously, promptly and according to the requirements of Section 10 of the 'Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act 1991'

Children suffering harm, from whatever source and of whatever kind, must be able to look to the Church to discern their distress and save them from it.

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

PRELIMINARIES

All those who work, or seek to work, with children in our church are required to obtain diocesan registration to work with children and young people. By “all” we do mean all: ordained and lay, young and old, new applicants and those who have already given many years of loving service through their work with children. Registration will also be required for holders of any other office who have regular contact with children in the course of their duties.

The application form for such registration calls for references: these will be taken up. The rector, churchwardens or vestry members are available to give references for long-standing helpers with impeccable records.

Everyone who works with children in the Diocese should receive a job description which states their responsibilities. Ensure that leaders read, understand and adhere to the guidelines contained in this policy and agree to the terms set out. The rector and the vestry should be held accountable if this is not done. Volunteers should also read this policy and agree to the terms set out.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Illegal Drugs

All Diocesan Youth Ministry activities are drug free, smoke free and alcohol free. The possession and or use of these will not be allowed in or around the primary venue. Staff, volunteers and participants will not be allowed to have these items or paraphernalia associated with the use of these items in their possession at any activity.

Alcoholic beverages will not be allowed at any activity organized by or primarily targeted at young people. This includes activities targeted at young people where adults will also be present. Fermented□home□brewed drinks will be considered alcoholic and not allowed; further, Communion wine will be stored in such a manner that it is not accessible to young people other than as part of the sacramental rite.

Persons who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be permitted to participate in activities and will be asked to leave the premises.

Transportation

It is preferred that parents/guardians transport their children/wards to and from activities; however there are times when it will be necessary for the organizers of an activity to arrange transportation. Whenever, this is done, an appropriate vehicle must be used with participants seated and seatbelts worn as required by law and as a safety mechanism. A buddy system should be used to facilitate ease of accounting for each individual. If multiple vehicles are used, they should gather at a designated point and move in a convoy. At least one chaperone should be assigned to each vehicle.

Recognition of child abuse is rarely easy or straightforward, but a number of factors may arouse suspicion:

- ◆ You may observe injury or bruising, and receive different explanations from the child and parent/caregiver.
- ◆ You may notice a general deterioration in the child's physical or emotional well-being; frequent periods of distress, or changes in behaviour unusual for that child or a child of that age, may be suspicious
- ◆ A child may become wary, show a lack of trust in adults and relatives, or display inappropriate sexual behaviour.

It is important in such circumstances to consider what you know about the child and its circumstances, and to be clear in your own mind just what it is that is causing you concern.

A relaxed or simple question to the parent or child about visible injuries should reveal your care and concern, not your suspicion. Asking another worker about their perceptions of the child may help.

Safe Environments

The diocese commits to ensuring that the Diocesan Youth Ministry operates in a safe environment and will hold its staff and volunteers accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards of behaviour. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that young people are not exposed to harm while in our care nor come to harm as a result of contact made while in our care.

Throughout this document we use the term “youth worker” to mean anyone working with, caring for or leading children in a church or in the wider diocese. A “child” means any “minor” under the age of 18 as defined in Section 2 of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act 1991.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH WORKERS

Although the following guidelines are primarily for the protection of the children and young people in your care, they are also for your own protection. The policy is to organise the youth work in such a way as to minimise not only the possibility of child abuse occurring but also the possibility that you as a youth worker become vulnerable to accusation of abuse.

GENERAL

Be open about the possibility of abuse to children and young people and accept the need to minimise opportunities for its occurrence.

Treat all children with the respect and dignity that befits their age, paying attention to their language, tone of voice and body language.

Be receptive. Listen to what young people have to say. You must be willing to listen to complaints, without prompting or leading, even when the complaints are embarrassing, seem improbable or relate to someone who is trusted and respected. Always report complaints and obtain advice from the head youth leader or priest.

Never allow anyone unknown to you or your colleagues to have unsupervised access to children or young people.

DO NOT:

- ♦ invade the privacy of children whilst they are in the restroom
- ♦ engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games swing children about or expect them to do the same
- ♦ make sexually provocative comments or gestures, even in fun
- ♦ engage in inappropriate or intrusive touching of any form (see heading on Touching) ridicule, reject or make a scapegoat of a child.

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

Get to know the children in your group. The more time you invest in getting to know them, and them to know you, the better. Learn their names and at least one special thing about them - e.g. a pet, hobby, favourite school subject or other interest.

Try to give each child in your group a fair share of your attention. Avoid doing things that may be interpreted as favouritism.

Establish your leadership by helping children to understand that you have responsibilities for the group.

Never give a lift to a child in a car without specific parental consent. Never take a group of children off the premises with fewer than two adults.

Avoid expecting children to walk along dark, unsupervised paths to and from the premises.

CHILD ABUSE

What is child abuse?

There are four categories:

Neglect - the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or failure to protect a child from any kind of danger

Physical injury - actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury

Sexual abuse - the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend and to which they are legally unable to give informed consent

Emotional abuse - persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection.

RECOGNISING ABUSE

You are not responsible for diagnosing abuse: this must be left to qualified professionals. Nonetheless, all those who work with children have a responsibility to be aware of and alert to signs that all is not well with the child. If there is cause for concern then professional help must be called in.

After first aid has been given, a written first aid report must be prepared: one copy should go to the head youth leader, one to the parent and a copy placed on file.

ACTIVITIES OFF THE CHURCH PREMISES

Children aged under 18 are considered to be in our care on behalf of their parents. This responsibility extends to all aspects of our care for their child. It is our responsibility *in loco parentis* (to act as a wise and caring parent) as well as normal considerations of safety and prudence that make it vital that any activity off church premises is well planned and carefully organised.

Written parental consent is an absolute requirement if groups are taken off the premises. Parents must be given full and accurate information about the proposed activity before their consent is sought.

All leaders must know exactly what is happening and what is expected of them, and the children, for each activity.

At least two adults should accompany any child in a car. If it is unavoidable for there to be only one adult, another adult should know of the trip and the reason for it; in the car the child/children should occupy the rear seat.

Do not arrange to meet a child anywhere off the church premises without another registered adult being present. Do not invite a child or young person to your home without another registered adult being present, and then only for a recognised parish activity for which you have obtained parental consent.

DISCIPLINE

Learn to control and discipline children without using physical punishment or abusive language. Under no circumstances is physical punishment of children permitted.

Do not hesitate to call in help from another group or person, to take an individual child who is being disruptive. To call for help is not failure. As a last resort, parents may be asked to remove their child.

TOUCHING

Touch and the display of affection between team members and children is a sensitive issue. You must take care not to do anything which can be misunderstood by children or their parents. Do not put children on your lap or carry them on your shoulders.

Younger children are often especially affectionate. Be careful not to encourage too much affection, yet not give any sense of rejection. Each child in your group must feel special, safe and secure. (Some will positively dislike any physical contact!)

Pray for discernment in this area. Look out for each other on the team. It is the joint responsibility of each of the teams to advise each other if it appears someone is out of line.

But do not be over-cautious. Many children (and adults) are starved of loving touches. The Bible encourages touch as an expression of love (*Jesus took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them* - Mark 10:16): yet it is wrong for us to use children to meet our need to be loved. So do not keep children at arms' length, but limit your affection - holding a hand, or a quiet hand on a shoulder, is often sufficient to get across to children that you care.

RULES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADER/ CHILD RATIOS

Best practice is that groups of up to ten children should have at least two adults, of whom preferably at least one should be female and the adults should not be man and wife or from the same family: for larger groups there should be three or more adults.

If for whatever reason a child or group of children is in the charge of one adult only, it is essential that there is always another adult available within earshot who can be readily summoned, either by the worker or the child. It is unacceptable for an adult to be alone with a child or group of children in a room which is out of general view, earshot or ready access.

It follows that normally at least two adults should be present with a group when it is the only activity taking place on the premises. Where an adult and young person need to be alone together, say for counselling or teaching, another should be made fully aware of the meeting and be readily available until the meeting ends.

Best practice is to avoid so far as possible the situation where a single adult takes a single child to the lavatory. Where a parent is available they must be contacted in preference. Encourage the children to go to the lavatory before they come to your group. You must never leave your group without a leader or with only one leader/adult present.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Use of buildings - make sure that any potential hazards are removed from the room or space you are using.

Please treat the premises as if they were your own home and encourage others to do likewise, and to leave them clean and tidy.

Fire procedures - the church buildings and grounds are a designated “no-smoking” area. Please ensure everyone, children and adults, observe this.

Never give children matches or permit them to play with fire. Make sure you know where the fire extinguishers are.

In the event of a fire your first responsibility is the safety of the children and colleagues, not the building or property. When asked to leave the building, do so by the nearest fire exit. Walk quickly; do not run. A leader should always be the last to leave. Assemble your group outside the premises and stay together until all are accounted for. Do not re-enter the building until told to do so by the main leader.

First aid - know where to find the first aid kit. Group leaders should be aware of any special medical conditions or allergies of the children in their group, and know what to do in the event of a medical emergency.

First aid should be given only by those trained to do so. Know who these people are. Only give first aid if no trained help is immediately available.