

POLICIES FOR MINISTRIES WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH

St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church (SMM) is committed to providing a safe and positive environment for all children and youth. To maintain that environment, SMM follows diocesan and local policies. Further, any activities involving children and youth are open to parent observation and participation, and the Rector is always available to discuss ideas for improvement or concerns about our programs.

The complete “Episcopal Diocese of Colorado Policies for Parish Ministries with Children or Youth” is available in the following formats:

- Online at the Colorado Episcopal Church web site. Go to www.coloradodiocese.org, pull down the “forms and resources” tab, and click on “safe church”, where you find a link to the **Policies** at the bottom of the page.
- Online at:
http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc_attachments/public/documents/3152540/cypolicies.pdf.
- In hard copy form, available at the church office.

Highlights of the diocesan policies are listed below, and local policies can be found in this document, beginning on page 3.

Highlights of Diocesan Policy

Requirements for Persons who Work with Children or Youth

Anyone who works with children or youth on a regular or occasional basis is expected to read and to be familiar with the full diocesan **Policies**.

The **Policies** make a distinction between “Regular Workers”, “Occasional Workers”, and “Helpers”. “Regular Workers” are adults who work with children or youth more than five times during the year. “Occasional Workers” are adults who work with children and youth five times or fewer during a year. “Helpers” are those under the age of 21 who have direct involvement with children and youth, whether volunteer or paid.

- Requirements to be a “Regular Worker” with children or youth:
 - must be at least 21 years old
 - must have been an active participant in the church for at least six months
 - must have completed an application including an interview with the Rector or designee
 - must have completed a background check
 - must have completed the Safeguarding God’s Children training within the last four years
 - will not be permitted to work with children or youth if own personal history includes a conviction of child abuse or molestation

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- Requirements to be an “Occasional Worker” with children or youth:
 - must be at least 21 years old
 - must have been an active member in the church for at least six months
 - must have completed an application and been approved by the Rector or designee
 - must have completed a background check
 - must not work with children or youth on more than five occasions during the year
 - will not be permitted to work with children or youth if own personal history includes a conviction of child abuse or molestation

- Requirements to be a “Helper” with children or youth:
 - must always be under the supervision and in the physical presence of an adult designated to supervise children or youth activities
 - must have been an active member in the church for at least six months
 - must be considered participants when calculating appropriate ratios of adults and children and adults
 - will not be permitted to work with children or youth if own personal history includes a conviction of child abuse or molestation

Requirements for Supervision

Sunday School classes must meet **one** of the following two criteria:

1. Two-person rule: each Sunday School class must have a minimum of one regular church worker and one additional regular or occasional church worker who are not related.

or
2. One-person-plus-supervisor rule: each Sunday School class must have at least one regular or occasional church worker. In addition, the Rector or the Rector’s designee(s) must also designate one regular church worker to supervise, and be available to, classes throughout the scheduled activity. This designated individual must not be responsible for a class and must regularly visit each class during the scheduled activity to assist as necessary and assure no reasonable expectation of privacy for each class.

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St. Mary Magdalene Policies for Local Parish Ministries with Children and Youth

As an extension of the diocesan policies, St. Mary Magdalene has addressed the following specific topics as they relate to ministry in the local church:

Worker Responsibilities and Training

In addition to completing the Safeguarding God's Children course, Regular Workers have a responsibility to read and understand the diocesan **Policies** and the **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection in Ministry with Children and Youth** (included in the **Policies**). Occasional workers also have a responsibility to read and understand the diocesan **Policies** and the **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection in Ministry with Children and Youth**. They are encouraged, but not required, to complete the Safeguarding God's Children course.

Workers and Helpers who have volunteered for specific dates and activities have a responsibility to arrive on time, to give sufficient notice if they must cancel, and to interact with children in a positive manner that reflects God's love.

The Rector or the Rector's designee will 1) review the expiration dates of all workers' Safeguarding God's Children Certificates of Completion to assure the dates are current and updated 2) determine how the certifications will be updated and 3) provide regular information regarding current available trainings. It is the Rector's duty to ensure clarity around these issues.

Supervision policies of the diocese will be followed. The ratio of adults to children or youth will be a minimum of 2:1 (2 adults per one child or youth) and up to 2:12, or as dictated by the Rector or the Rector's designee and the vestry. Parents who wish to attend or participate in children or youth functions are welcome.

When emailing youth or children who attend SMM, adults should always copy parents or an additional trained adult. Doing so protects both youth and adults by eliminating private communication. Parental permission should always be obtained before photographing youth or children at SMM.

Nursery

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The two-person supervision rule of the diocese will be followed. Workers in the nursery are not expected to volunteer more than once in a two-month period. They may, however, volunteer additional times if they wish, particularly when higher numbers of attendees are expected, such as during holidays or at special events. Parents who wish to visit and participate in the nursery are welcome.

When parents leave a child in the nursery, they will sign the child in and include a cell phone number so they can be contacted in the event of the child's illness or need to have a diaper changed or to use the bathroom.

The maximum age for children in the nursery will generally be five years and under. Exceptions can be made by the workers in the nursery.

Children and Youth

Children of all ages are welcome and encouraged to participate in worship services! We strive to provide an environment where children can move, talk, and have fun.

Children and youth have a right to participate in a church environment that is free from bullying, disruptive, or inappropriate behavior by other children and youth. Should a child's or youth's behavior become disruptive, the parents of the child may be contacted. SMM reserves the right to restrict participation if the child's or youth's behavior issues cannot be resolved.

If a child needs a diaper change or is not old enough to use the bathroom independently, one of the two adult workers will contact the parent via cell phone or in person. Children who are old enough to use the bathroom on their own, may use it independently. Adults will wait outside the bathroom while the child is using the bathroom.

Responding to/Reporting Problems

Along with Regular and Occasional Workers who are required to do so, anyone who participates in church life at SMM and *observes or has concerns about questionable behavior* (including through social media) that is directed toward children or youth should report these concerns as soon as possible to the Rector or the Rector's designee, who will then determine a course of action.

Along with Regular and Occasional Workers who are required to do so, anyone who participates in church life at SMM and *suspects or knows about* abuse of a child or youth

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(including through social media), whether the abuse may have taken place at church or in another setting, should:

1. Report this information directly to the Rector or the Rector's designee
and
2. Report this information to the Department of Human Services (DHS) or the local police or sheriff in the county where the suspected or known abuse occurred, if known; if the county is not known, the person should contact local authorities. A list of DHS contact information for Colorado is available online or at the church office. The Rector or the Rector's designee is available to assist in contacting appropriate authorities. The contact number for Boulder County is 303-441-1000.
2. Report this information to the bishop and to legal authorities, if the suspected or known abuse is initiated by the Rector

Clergy members are mandatory reporters and, per state statute, must submit a report immediately upon receiving information regarding suspected or known abuse.

The burden of proof regarding suspected or known abuse lies solely with legal authorities, and all information regarding a report should remain confidential pending an investigation.

Vulnerable Persons

The church recognizes that, along with children and youth, other persons may be at risk for mistreatment or abuse because of their health issues, diminished mental functioning, loneliness, age, or other factors. Concerns about the treatment of a vulnerable person, no matter his or her age, should be reported following the guidelines listed above for children and youth. Further, the diocese offers online Safeguarding God's People training regarding the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation of adults.

An Intergenerational Community

All those who participate regularly in the activities of SMM are encouraged to get to know, interact with, and support persons of all ages in our church community.

Resources Used in the Development of this Policy

Episcopal Diocese of Colorado Policies for Parish Ministries with Children or Youth"

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Colorado Revised Statutes, (C.R.S.):

Mandatory Reporting: C.R.S. 19-3-304

Child Abuse: C.R.S. 19-3-301, et seq.

Child Neglect: C.R.S. 19-1-102, et seq.

Adult Mistreatment and Self-Neglect: C.R.S. 26-3.1-101

“Rules Regulating Child Care Centers (Less than 24-Hour Care)” issued by the Colorado Department of Human Services

This policy was developed by Carolyn Kesterson, Niles Oien, and Marty McDanel. 3/10/15