ABBREVIATED

POLICIES, STANDARDS, AND PROCEDURES
OF THE

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America

Approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops at the Fall 2013 Holy Synod Meeting

The following is a condensed version of the Policies, Standards, and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct for Parish use in meeting Compliance requirements in regard to the recruiting and supervision of Volunteers working with youth.

For more detailed information on the definition of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment, as well as the procedures for reporting and investigation of sexual misconduct allegations, please refer to the full version of the PSPs.

Recruiting and Selecting Parish Volunteers Working with Youth

All individuals who apply to work with youth in the Church must be screened (PSP 11.02). Anyone who has "more than incidental contact with minors in connection with the Church's ministries or programs" must go through a screening process commensurate to that particular role of the volunteer.

Screening of Applicants who wish to work with youth - Church/Sunday School Teachers, Camp Counselors, Church School Director, Youth Mentor and Advisors, and Chaperones, etc. - must go through the following process[1]:

a. The volunteer should be in good standing in the church and have been a consistent member of the parish for at least one year.
b. **Application**: A prospective Volunteer who will be working with or have unsupervised contact with youth must fill out a written application which can be found in the Youth Application Packet at www.oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct
c. **Interview**: The applicant must be interviewed by either the parish rector or volunteer recruiter designated by the parish rector. The Youth Application Packet has interview questions that can be asked.
d. **References**: The applicant must provide **three** references. A written record of each contact with the referees must be made showing the date and method of contact, the person making the contact, the person contacted, and a summary of the information received. The reference contact sheet can be found in the Youth Application Packet. Each church in which the applicant has indicated prior experience in working with children or youth should be contacted.
e. **Criminal history background check**[2]
f. **Child abuse / neglect clearance**
g. **Training** on sexual abuse prevention (Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children or other approved program) should occur **before** the volunteer starts his/her new position as a youth volunteer. Once completed, the volunteer should print out the certificate and give it to the rector to be placed in his/her file.

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[1] **Exemption**: Church school teachers/directors who have been in their role for **2 years or more (as of June 2015)** are exempt from the interview and reference checks. The rector of the parish must sign the exemption form (below) stating that he vouches for the character of the individual and place it in the volunteer's file. The volunteer needs to fill out the rest of the application packet as is applicable.

[2] Criminal history background checks are required for other leadership positions as well. For more information, please refer to the revised **Guidelines on Background Checks** which can be downloaded at www.oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct.

Supervision of Church Workers and Children (PSP 13.01)

Whenever possible, youth involved in Church ministries or programs should not be left in the care of or under the supervision of a single adult. Two or more **unrelated** adults should be present, except for necessary brief absences, during any Church activity involving children. All overnight activities involving youth shall be supervised or chaperoned by at least two (2) unrelated adults, and if youth participants are both male and female, then supervisors or chaperones must be male and female.

Except for emergencies, in any circumstances where a one-on-one interaction with youth is required in connection with a Church ministry or program, the adult to be involved shall first notify another adult of the circumstances, and shall identify the youth and the place and approximate time of the expected interaction.

Prior written permission from a parent or guardian must be obtained for any youth to participate in any youth event or activity sponsored by a parish away from parish premises.

Open-Door Policy (PSP 13.03)

If a parish would like to sponsor or participate in any closed activity or event involving youth, they must get the written permission of the Rector. Clergy, parents, staff, and members of the parish have the right, at any time, to observe any youth activity or event, and are encouraged to do so.

Doors on any rooms in a parish where parish-sponsored youth activities or events are held shall be left at least partially open unless the doors have reasonably sized glass windows, or unless there is adequate adult supervision in the room.

Transportation Policy (PSP 13.05)

Each Bishop shall require each parish in his diocese to adopt and implement a written policy on transportation of youth to parish-sponsored youth activities or for events away from the parish premises. Such a policy shall, at the minimum, (1) require the use of drivers who are reasonably older than the youth they are transporting, and who do not have adverse driving records and (2) prohibit the driver from being alone in a vehicle with one youth unless the driver has the advance approval of the Rector or a youth ministry supervisor.

Training and Education (PSP 14.01)

All youth workers, church school teachers, and clergy (priests and deacons) are required to receive training on the prevention of sexual abuse of children (PSP 14.01). The Holy Synod of Bishops approved the use of the training program *Stewards of Children* which is produced by the non-profit organization Darkness to Light. It is recommended that individuals receive the training every three years. The program is free to all those who register through the ORSMA. Please contact the ORSMA Coordinator, Cindy Heise, at cheise@oca.org or your parish priest to obtain instructions on how to register for the training.

Reporting Sexual Misconduct (PSP 8.01)

Anyone who perceives or believes that a lay worker or clergyman is engaging in sexual misconduct must immediately report it to the parish rector or head of institution (e.g., seminary, school, camp). If the parish rector is suspected of misconduct, the report can be made directly to the Ruling Bishop and the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA) (by emailing cheise@oca.org or calling 516-922-0931).

Any suspected abuse involving children (younger than 18 years of age) must notify local law enforcement immediately, as well as the parents of the child (if the parents are not the suspected perpetrators). Then notify the Ruling Bishop and ORSMA.

Remember, reporting sexual misconduct or suspected sexual misconduct is not the same as accusing someone of sexual misconduct. Reporting means you believe some activity should be investigated by the proper authority to determine if misconduct occurred. If you suspect sexual misconduct, report it. It is not your job to investigate. Your responsibility is only to report concerning behavior.

Registered Sex Offenders (PSP 15.01)

A registered sex offender must disclose to the parish rector his/her status prior to attending the church (PSP 15.01). It is the expectation within the parishes and institutions of the OCA that any registered sex offender will disclose this fact to the church leaders before ever attending any church event. Failure to do so will result in church members not being able to trust the offender within the community and may result in additional community and liturgical restrictions being imposed on him/her.

When a layperson learns of a person's sex offender status, he/she must immediately inform the parish rector. A registered sex offender may not hold any position of leadership or work with youth in any capacity. Please refer to the Registered Sex Offenders Guide for Parishes for more information; it is available online at www.oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct.

The below acknowledgement must be signed by parish council members, provided to and filed by the parish rector in a secure location.

Acknowledgement of PSPs

I, _____, hereby certify that I have been provided a copy of the abbreviated Policies, Standards, and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct, that I have read and understand the duties and obligations set forth therein, and that I will fully and at all times comply with and perform those duties and obligations.

_____ _____

Printed Name and Signature Date