

St. Augustine's
Guidelines for Creating Safe Spaces
September 17, 2012

Adapted from the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee Safeguarding God's Children Policies and Procedures of January 2011

For purposes of this document, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years, a youth is anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old OR a youth may also be 18 years old or older, but still in high school, and an adult is 18 years old or older who is not in high school.

CREATING SAFE SPACES

1. *Visibility:* Church school classrooms and nursery rooms will permit visibility into the room at all times.
2. *Open Door Policy:* All programs and activities will take place under an open door policy, meaning that parents, clergy, staff have the right to visit and observe at any time, unannounced.
3. *Ratios:* We recommend a minimum of 2 adults present during any child/youth activity whether on or off-site except during viewable interactions (see #4)
4. *Viewable Interaction:* One-on-one counseling with children/youth will be done in an open, public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in the full view of others. When one-on-one conversation or pastoral care is advisable between an adult leader and a youth, another adult is to be present, or at least aware of the place of consultation and who is being counseled. There are times when it is appropriate or necessary for an adult leader to be alone with a young person (e.g. pastoral counseling). We advise the adult to arrange pastoral meetings in public places such as restaurants, coffee shops, or a corner away from the action but in full view. Always inform other responsible adults about the appointment or plans. Spontaneous, secluded or secretive activity with a single young person may foster a high-risk situation. Seclusion is to be avoided.
5. *Transparency:* All sanctioned activities will be posted either on the weekly St. A's newsletter and/or published on the website with the contact information for the adult in charge.
6. *Transportation:* Whenever possible, each vehicle should contain 2 unrelated adults. If not possible, at least 2 children/youth should be in a vehicle with an unrelated driver. Drivers should be at least 25 years of age, have a valid, state issued driver's license and insurance certificate for the transportation vehicle.
7. *Release Forms:* signed release forms must be completed prior to participation in church activities. If transportation is involved in the activity, the form should specifically include permission for that transportation.
8. *Nursery:* Children will be signed in to any nursery provided by the chapel and released only to adults specifically authorized by the parent or guardian who signs the child in to the nursery.
9. *Screening and Background checks:* Paid Staff and clergy as well as lead teachers and volunteers must all be subject to appropriate screening and background checks. Training for the Safeguarding of God's people is required for board members, Sunday school teachers, and regular youth volunteers. Our intention is that anyone working with Youth and Children be known by the clergy or ministry leader for at least six months before joining as a volunteer.
10. *Off Site Events:* Arrangements will be made which show respect for the privacy and dignity of children and youth by not putting them in inappropriate unmonitored one-to-one situations. Thus, any site must provide age-appropriate arrangements for sleeping, bathing, dressing, or showering. It is not appropriate for leaders to share exclusive sleeping quarters with youth, thus adults are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, tent, hotel rooms or other rooms with children/ youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all the children/youth present in the beds, sleeping bags, tent, hotel rooms or other rooms. However, multiple adults can sleep in one open space with children/youth.

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SPECIFIC PROHIBITIONS

In all situations on premises or at chapel sponsored events, the following are specifically prohibited:

- Dating, romantic involvements, or sexual contact between an adult and a child or youth;
- Any sexually orientated materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program;
- An adult discussing his or her own sexual activities and fantasies with children or youth, or in their presence;
- Non-sacramental distribution of alcohol to, or use by a child, youth, or adult under twenty one (21) years of age, possession, distribution or being under the influence of illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs by any adult, youth or child.

REPORTING ABUSE

Any abuse must be immediately reported to the Chaplain who is responsible to then report immediately to the Bishop at the Diocesan office (615-251-3322) to inform him of the situation(s). It is imperative that any suspicion or accusation of sexual abuse or misconduct be kept confidential for the safety and protection of the victim(s) and the accused. The Chaplain should consult with the youth minister, Christian Education director, etc. to handle the situation in the chapel as well as reporting it to the Bishop. If the priest is the suspect, the Board Chair must be informed and the report must be made directly to the Bishop.

Report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. Hotline number is: 1-877-237-0004. Tennessee mandates the report of brutality, abuse, neglect or child sexual abuse by ANY person "having knowledge of or called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition which is of such nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect." T.C.A. 37-1-403. The report shall be made to the Department of Human Services, or to the juvenile judge or to law enforcement officials. Included in the report shall be the child's name, address, age, the person responsible for the child, and the facts necessitating the report. Hotline number is: 1-877-237-0004.

All persons making a report of child abuse or neglect or child sexual abuse are assumed under the statute to have made the report in good faith. Thus, they are immune for all damages, both civil and criminal, that otherwise might be imposed for such action. T.C.A. 37-1-410 and 37-1-613.

A similar protection is that the identity of the person making the report and the report itself are made confidential, except when the court finds that the testimony of the reporter is material to indictment or conviction. T.C.A. 37-1-409 and 37-1-612.

ASSISTING THE CHILD/YOUTH AFTER THE REPORT IS MADE:

- Do not share information about the allegations with anyone except the authorities to whom you have reported the disclosure or a therapist or case worker who can answer your specific questions.
- Love and accept the person who has experienced the abuse, and let the child know that this experience in no way affects how you feel about her/him.