



Suggested Safe Church Guidelines for Mentors

Each organization in the Episcopal Church recognizes the potential for harm when a priest, lay employee, or volunteer engages in sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse in one of its churches or institutions. The one-on-one relationships encouraged by and created through mentoring can develop strong, trusting relationships between the mentor and the mentee, but they also can create an opportunity for exploitation.

Provided below are some suggested guidelines for parishes that want to establish mentor-mentee relationships in their Christian formation programs. All churches that establish mentoring programs should take into account their individual and diocesan Safe Church/Safeguarding God's Children policies and practices while creating and implementing their own programs. Each parish should establish their own policies and procedures, and make parents/guardians aware of them.

Mentor Qualifications, Screening & Training:

- All mentors should be 21 years of age or older.
- Before establishing a mentoring relationship, each mentor should undergo background checks as required by all state and federal laws.
- Before establishing a mentoring relationship, each mentor should undergo all Safe Church/Safeguarding God's Children and child abuse awareness training, as required by dioceses and parishes.
- All mentors should undergo an opening training session during which they are oriented with the goals of the program, policies, and procedures.

Mentoring Session Locations:

- Sessions should take place in public locations. Most of the lessons in the Meaningful Mentoring series take place in public areas.
- If the session must take place in a private home, it is advised that another mentor/mentee pair be invited to join in the session. If this is not possible, the mentor should make the parents/guardians of the youth and another adult in the church aware of the session location.
- It is recommended that there always be two adults present in a meeting location at any given time.

Transporting Youth:

- Adult mentors are advised to avoid transporting their mentees to and from sessions, if possible.
- At times when one-on-one interactions are unavoidable, it is recommended that another adult be present in the car during travelling.
- If a mentor must transport a student alone, they must make at least one other trusted adult aware of travel plans at a minimum.
- It is also recommended that youth call or text their parents/guardians before beginning travel to the destination, as well as contacting them upon arrival.

Communicating with Youth:

Communicating via phone, text, or email is an important part of the mentor/mentee relationship. When communicating with youth, mentors should take the following into consideration:

- Communications to youth should follow the “home phone rule:” communicating with youth should not happen at a time when you would not normally call their home phone (*for example, before 8:00 AM and after 9:00 PM*).
- When reaching out to youth via email, a mentor should always copy another adult on the message (*preferably a parent or guardian*).
- Transcripts of all digital conversations should be saved and available for presentation.
- Video chatting with students is strongly discouraged.
- Mentors are encouraged to implement privacy settings and personal boundaries on all methods of communication.
- When communicating with youth, phone conversations and face-to-face meetings are preferred methods of communication.
- All digital communication should include facts and not feelings.

Mandatory Reporting

It is understood that the mentor/mentee relationship is built on trust and that mentees may report life events or circumstances to their mentor. Conversations between the mentor and the mentee are understood to be confidential, unless circumstances require otherwise.

All mentors must be trained in and abide by all state and federal laws regarding mandated reporting. Any issues relating to pastoral care or concern should be reported to clergy or other church leadership.

For more guidelines based on the Diocese of Pennsylvania’s policies, visit: www.diopayouth.org/safe-church.html

