



St. Peter's  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH WESTON

# St. Peter's Weston Safe Church Policy

As approved by the Vestry of St. Peter's  
September 29th, 2015

## **St. Peter's Church, Weston Safe Church Policy**

*By God's grace, we strive to be an inclusive community that invites and supports each person to see Christ in every human being and to live by Jesus' example, through worship, education, parish life, and outreach.*

### **Section 1: Training**

The Diocese offers a Safe Church training program throughout the year at various parishes in Massachusetts. The training includes two four-hour components: an adult misconduct prevention workshop and a child abuse prevention workshop. The training may also be completed in an online module. Safe Church training is required for the following persons: all clergy, the Wardens of the parish, all employees and volunteers who regularly supervise or volunteer to assist with children or youth activities, and anyone who provides pastoral care to parishioners in a private setting on behalf of the parish. The Rector and Vestry of the parish are responsible for the congregation's compliance with these training requirements. A file listing parishioners/employees who have completed the training will be maintained as part of the parish records.

### **Section 2: "Volunteer and Employee Covenant Statement"**

All clergy, the Wardens of the parish, all employees and volunteers who regularly supervise or volunteer to assist with children or youth activities, and anyone who provides pastoral care to parishioners in a private setting on behalf of the parish must read and sign a "Participation Covenant Statement" (Appendix 1). The completed form shall be returned to the CORI Administrator and will be kept in a confidential file.

### **Section 3: CORI Policy and Practices**

In addition to completing the Diocesan Safe Church Training and signing a Volunteer and Employee Covenant Statement, all clergy, paid employees of the church, anyone who regularly supervises or volunteers to assist with children or youth activities, and anyone who provides pastoral care to parishioners on behalf of the parish are required to submit to a "Criminal Offender Record Checks" CORI background check. Subsequent CORIs will be requested on the third anniversary of previously obtained CORIs for all individuals who continue to be involved in parish activities covered by this policy.

The St. Peter's CORI policy (Adopted 9/18/2014) can be found in Appendix 2.

### **Section 4: Church School, Nursery, and Youth Ministry Activities**

The following procedures shall apply to all Church School classes and any other programs and ministries in which children and youth of the parish participate:

A. Only adults who consider St. Peter's to be their worshiping community shall work as volunteers with the children of the parish. They must be recognized and known by other adults in the parish.

B. There shall be a six-month waiting period for new members of the parish before they are permitted to assume responsibility with children or youth in the parish. An individual not in compliance with this policy may work under the supervision of an individual who is in

compliance with the understanding that such individual is never left alone with a child or group of children.

C. Two adults shall be present at all times in all groups of children or youth (exceptions may be permitted by the Rector and Assistant for Christian Formation for Church School classes based on the open nature of the classroom environment). Two or more adults must accompany children when they are being driven home.

D. No adult shall be alone with a child where they cannot be visually observed by others, such as behind a closed door or in a car. Where children or youth meet, doors are to be left open or the area must be visible through windows in the doors.

E. Parents of children of youth being served and clergy shall have access to all meetings of children or youth at random to observe any program or activity.

F. When one-on-one interactions are appropriate and/or necessary, care shall be taken that they are conducted in an environment that provides visibility to others. If at all possible, another adult should have knowledge of the adult person's whereabouts and with whom they are meeting.

G. Under no circumstances is any volunteer, staff member, or clergy to make secret deals with children or young people.

H. Volunteers shall give no gifts to children or youth without the prior knowledge of their parents or clergy.

I. No adult shall take children or youth on an outing off the Parish property or on an overnight outing without at least one other adult with them and the written permission of a parent or guardian.

J. Two or more adults must stay with all children at the conclusion of an activity until every child has been picked up.

K. Children with serious disciplinary problems shall be referred to their parents immediately during Church School classes or youth group events. It is not within the ministry of teachers, youth group leaders or other volunteers to deal with serious behavior problems. Where discipline is called for in children and youth ministry settings, it shall be limited to appropriate reprimands and/or quiet time apart from the class or group and parents shall be notified of what has taken place.

L. Outside of Church School classes and youth group events, a child's parent or guardian shall be responsible to supervise his or her activities on Church property.

M. No convicted sex offender shall be involved with children within the context of Church School classes or any other youth ministries within the Parish.

N. No one accused of child abuse or neglect shall be involved with children while an accusation is pending.

## **Section 5: Discrimination and Harassment**

St. Peter's strives to provide an environment which is free from discrimination and harassment. Discrimination is defined as treating someone differently on account of personal characteristics such as age, citizenship, disability, marital status, political association, race or ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Harassment is conduct that interferes with an individual's quality of life by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive environment. Sexual harassment consists of sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

## **Section 6: How to Report**

### **State Requirements for Reporting Misconduct in a Congregation**

**Mandated Reporters:** All clergy (with the exception of confession within The Reconciliation of a Penitent), and all paid employees who supervise, educate, coach, train or counsel children on a regular basis. All other paid employees and volunteers should also consider themselves reporters. Employees who are mandated reporters must notify the Rector of any report that is filed directly with DCF about suspected child abuse or neglect.

**How to report suspected Child Abuse:** Massachusetts law requires that mandated reporters immediately make an oral report to the local office of the Department of Children and Families when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that there has been suspected or known child abuse or neglect of a child under 18. The report should be made regardless of where the suspected abuse has occurred or by whom. Absolute proof is **not** required.

-Call the local DCF area office Monday through Friday:

Framingham office: 508-424-0100

-Call the Child-At-Risk Hotline after hours, weekends or holidays at 800-792-5200,

-Within 48 hours of the oral report, follow up with a written report. The form for filing the report can be obtained from the local DCF Area Office or downloaded from the web at [www.mass.gov/dcf](http://www.mass.gov/dcf)

**How to report suspected Adult Abuse or Neglect:** Any signs or evidence of abuse or neglect against the elderly should be reported to the Elder Abuse Hotline 800-992-2275. Any signs or evidence of abuse or neglect against the disabled should be reported to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission at 800-426-9009. Any employee or volunteer that files a report of abuse or neglect against the elderly or disabled should notify the Rector.

**Reporting Clergy Misconduct:** Anyone may contact the diocesan intake officer to report concerns about the behavior of a member of the clergy (priests, deacons, bishops). This initiates a process to hold clergy accountable for their behavior. The Intake officers for the Diocese of Massachusetts are **Starr Anderson** [starrkanderson@gmail.com](mailto:starrkanderson@gmail.com) (978-352-2147) and **The Rev. Rainey Dankel** [rdankel@trinitychurchboston.org](mailto:rdankel@trinitychurchboston.org) (617-536-0944, ext. 309). To report clergy misconduct please contact either intake officer by e-mail, phone or in person by appointment.

## **Section 7: Conclusion**

We believe that following this policy, training employees and volunteers about child sexual abuse and adult sexual misconduct and other forms of abuse, following up complaints, incidents, or disclosures according to the guidelines found in this policy, and acting promptly on information about possible misconduct is the best way that we can protect all who participate in the life of our parish community.

*This policy shall be reviewed by the Rector and Vestry during August of each year and is subject to amendment by the Vestry at any time to conform this policy with that of The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and to make any other changes deemed appropriate by the Vestry.*

Approved by the Vestry of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Weston, Massachusetts on 09/29/15.

## St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Weston, MA

### Volunteer and Employee Covenant

In order to keep St. Peter's a safe place for all who participate in activities and programs within the parish, all clergy, employees, and volunteers are required to read the St. Peter's Safe Church policy and agree to this covenant before being able to work with children and youth at St. Peter's Church.

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| 1. Have you read the St. Peter's Safe Church Policy?   | Yes | No |
| 2. Do you agree to observe and abide with all Parish Policies described in the St. Peter's Safe Church Policy?   | Yes | No |
| 3. Do you agree to observe the "two-adult rule" at all time  | Yes | No |
| 4. Do you agree to abide by the "six-month rule" and not invite others to assist you who have not been in the parish for at least six months?                                      | Yes | No |
| 5. Do you agree to participate in the diocesan training provided that is related to your volunteer assignment?   | Yes | No |
| 6. Do you agree to report promptly any abusive or inappropriate behavior to the Rector or CORI administrator in accordance with Parish Policy?                                     | Yes | No |
| 7. Do you agree to inform the Rector or CORI Administrator if you have ever been accused or convicted of child abuse in the past—or if you are accused or convicted in the future? | Yes | No |

I have read this Participation Covenant and agree to observe and to abide by the St. Peter's Safe Church Policy.

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Signature

Date

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Print Your Full Name

## Appendix 2

### **St. Peter's Episcopal Church CORI Policy (Approved 9/18/14 by Vestry, Revised 8/25/15)**

This policy is applicable to the criminal history screening of prospective and current employees, subcontractors, volunteers and interns, professional licensing applicants, and applicants for the rental or leasing of housing. Where Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and other criminal history checks may be part of a general background check for employment, volunteer work, licensing purposes, or the rental or leasing of housing, the following practices and procedures will be followed.

**I. CONDUCTING CORI SCREENING** CORI checks will only be conducted as authorized by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) and Massachusetts General Law (MGL) c. 6, §. 172, and only after a CORI Acknowledgment Form has been completed.

With the exception of screening for the rental or leasing of housing, if a new CORI check is to be made on a subject within a year of his/her signing of the CORI Acknowledgment Form, the subject shall be given seventy two (72) hours notice that a new CORI check will be conducted. If a requestor is screening for the rental or leasing of housing, a CORI Acknowledgment Form shall be completed for each and every subsequent CORI check.

**II. ACCESS TO CORI** All CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential, and access to the information must be limited to those individuals who have a "need to know". This may include, but not be limited to, hiring managers, staff submitting the CORI requests, and staff charged with processing job applications. St. Peter's Episcopal Church must maintain and keep a current list of each individual authorized to have access to, or view, CORI. This list must be updated every six(6) months and is subject to inspection upon request by the DCJIS at any time.

**III. CORI TRAINING** An informed review of a criminal record requires training. Accordingly, all personnel authorized to review or access CORI at St. Peter's Episcopal Church will review, and will be thoroughly familiar with, the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS. Additionally, if St. Peter's Episcopal Church is an agency required by MGL c.6,s.171A, to maintain a CORI Policy, all personnel authorized to conduct criminal history background checks and/or to review CORI information will review, and will be thoroughly familiar with, the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS.

**IV. USE OF CRIMINAL HISTORY IN BACKGROUND SCREENING** CORI used for employment purposes shall only be accessed for applicants who are otherwise qualified for the position for which they have applied. Unless otherwise provided by law, a criminal record will not automatically disqualify an applicant. Rather, determinations of suitability based on background checks will be made consistent with this policy and any applicable law or regulations.

**V. VERIFYING A SUBJECT'S IDENTITY** If a criminal record is received from the DCJIS, the information is to be closely compared with the information on the CORI Acknowledgment Form and any other identifying information provided by the applicant to ensure the record belongs to the applicant. If the information in the CORI record provided does not exactly match the identification information provided by the applicant, a determination is to be made by an individual authorized to make such determinations based on a comparison of the CORI record and documents provided by the applicant.

**VI. INQUIRING ABOUT CRIMINAL HISTORY** In connection with any decision regarding employment, volunteer opportunities, housing, or professional licensing, the subject shall be provided with a copy of the criminal history record, whether obtained from the DCJIS or from any other source, prior to questioning the subject about his or her criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history record is also to be disclosed to the subject.

**VII. DETERMINING SUITABILITY** If a determination is made, based on the information as provided in section V of this policy, that the criminal record belongs to the subject, and the subject does not dispute the record's accuracy, then the determination of suitability for the position or license will be made. Unless otherwise provided by law, factors considered in determining suitability may include, but not be limited to, the following: (a) Relevance of the record to the position sought; (b) The nature of the work to be performed; (c) Time since the conviction; (d) Age of the candidate at the time of the offense; (e) Seriousness and specific circumstances of the offense; (f) The number of offenses; (g) Whether the applicant has pending charges; (h) Any relevant evidence of rehabilitation or lack thereof; and (i) Any other relevant information, including information submitted by the candidate or requested by the organization. The applicant is to be notified of the decision on the basis for it in a timely manner.

**VIII. ADVERSE DECISIONS BASED ON CORI** If an authorized official is inclined to make an adverse decision based on the results of a criminal history background check, the applicant will be notified immediately. The subject shall be provided with a copy of the organization's CORI policy and a copy of the criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history will also be revealed. The subject will then be provided with an opportunity to dispute the accuracy of the CORI record. Subjects shall also be provided a copy of DCJIS' Information Concerning the Process for Correcting a Criminal Record.

**IX. SECONDARY DISSEMINATION LOGS** All CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential and can only be disseminated as authorized by law and regulation. A central secondary dissemination log shall be used to record any dissemination of CORI outside this organization, including dissemination at the request of the subject.