



**POLICY
FOR
INCLUSION OF REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS**

Approved by the Diocesan Board 6/2020

In the event anyone on any sex offender registry seeks to engage, to any degree, in the life of a parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York, the following protocols are to be followed

by the parish. Parish leaders also may apply the following protocols to anyone who has a criminal conviction history of victimizing others but is not on a sex offender registry.

While it is desired and expected that all registered sex offenders will self-disclose their status to the clergy or lay leadership, it is acknowledged that some registered sex offenders may attend our churches without our knowledge of their status. Should any of those persons seek to participate in ministries or leadership capacities, the requisite public record background checks should reveal their status on the registry and any other criminal convictions.

PROTOCOLS:

The following protocols apply whenever parish clergy, staff or lay leaders hear of a registered sex offender seeking to worship or otherwise participate in the life of the parish.

1. Interview the offender. The interview is to be conducted by at least two unrelated people: an ordained leader of the parish and a warden or vestry member. In the absence of an ordained leader, the two wardens or vestry members are to conduct the interview and will notify the district dean.

The following should be addressed in the interview:

(a) Discuss the offender's interests regarding participation in the parish.

(b) Review the behavioral boundaries and require the offender's cooperation as a means of making worship services available to the offender while maintaining a safe church environment.

(c) Advise the offender that any attendance at worship services or other events is conditioned upon obtaining information from the offender's parole or probation officer as well as consent from the parole or probation officer, confirmation from the parish's insurance carrier that insurance coverage will not be affected and the necessity of entering into a Covenant as set out below.

(d) Obtain the offender's residence address, telephone, and email information; name and contact information of the offender's parole or probation officer; name and contact information of the offender's therapist. Obtain permission to speak with the parole or probation officer and therapist, including any necessary HIPAA or other written authorizations.

2. Speak with the parole/probation officer to verify the terms of the parole/probation and criminal history. Obtain a copy of the probation or parole agreement and obtain consent from the parole/probation officer for the offender to attend worship services. If the terms of the

offender's parole or probation do not allow the offender to attend worship services, the offender shall not be allowed to attend worship services.

3. Identify appropriate monitors/chaperones and provide them with specific training and instructions. Such instructions include: having the offender in line of sight at all times, deflecting contact with children and vulnerable adults¹ and watching for any social invitation by unsuspecting parishioners. Friends and family members of the offender are not eligible to serve as monitors/chaperones with the exception of those who are vetted and approved to serve in this capacity by a probation officer. The probation officer's written verification of such approval must be attached to the Covenant. All monitors/chaperones shall sign and receive a copy of the Covenant.

4. Talk with the offender's therapist and find out if there are certain behavioral tools the therapist would want the monitors/chaperones or others to know about.

5. Contact the parish's insurance company and confirm that insurance will not be affected.

6. Create a Covenant with the offender using the template provided. The Covenant affirms the mutual desire to make it possible for the offender to attend worship services or other events within these protocols. Any violations of the Covenant will be grounds to deny the offender further access to the parish and/or its activities. The Covenant should be reviewed periodically and, at a minimum, every six months.

7. Inform parish clergy, staff, wardens, vestry and ministry leaders of the content of the Covenant. In small parishes it might be preferable to inform all members of the worshipping community.

8. Provide copies of the Covenant to the offender, wardens, clergy and all those who have consented to serve as monitors/chaperones. In addition, a copy of the Covenant shall be provided to the Bishop's Office.

9. Identify a means by which this information will be preserved and shared with all new clergy, staff, vestry members, and lay leaders as changes in personnel occur.

¹ Diocese of Central New York Policy: description of term Vulnerable Adult*

*Description of a **Vulnerable Adult**:

- a. Any adult who is infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness or disability
- b. Any adult who is ministered to in their home (by Eucharistic Visitors, Pastoral Care Visitors, Stephen Ministers, or others)
- c. Any adult who is wholly or partially dependent upon one or more other persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support; such dependency may be temporary as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child
- d. Any adult who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lacks agency in a pastoral relationship as in the wake of death of a family member or job loss

BEHAVIORAL COVENANT TEMPLATE

[PRINT ON PARISH LETTERHEAD]

BEHAVIORAL COVENANT

between

_____ (Covenantor)

and

_____ Episcopal Church,

_____ (Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or Wardens-in-Charge)

Purpose:

The purpose of this Behavioral Covenant is to promote reasonable safety of all persons in the parish, while maintaining a welcoming place of worship for _____.

This covenant is written in compliance with the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York's policy for

Parish Protocols for Inclusion of Registered Sex Offenders ("Policy"). The terms are as proscribed in the Policy.

Background:

_____ met with _____ and

_____ on _____, 20__.

At this meeting the policy was reviewed with _____ who acknowledges

awareness of the policy and understands its provisions.

_____ has clearly expressed their commitment to comply with the policy to help ensure that _____ [name of parish] is a safe place for all who attend.

_____ and _____ have clearly stated their commitment and intention that [name of parish] be a place of worship and continued healing for _____ and that _____ (Rector/Priest-in-Charge) can and will be _____'s pastor, subject to _____'s compliance with this covenant.

Information and Confidentiality:

_____ is aware that the parish is obligated to notify certain members of the parish of _____'s status as a Registered Sex Offender, per the Policy.

_____ is aware that confidentiality is not promised beyond the sacrament of confession.

Agreement and Covenant:

_____ agrees to the following:

1. _____ will only attend worship services and parish activities with _____ (Names of identified monitor(s)/chaperone(s) who will remain at _____ side at all times (outside of bathrooms).
2. _____ will attend worship services on only the following days and times. (Optional: These are services when children and youth are least likely to be present).

3. _____ will not initiate contact with anyone under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults and will actively avoid such contact, including moving to other parts of the building as necessary.

4. If anyone under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult initiates contact with _____, _____ shall excuse themselves and move away as quickly as possible.

5. _____ shall disclose to adult church members their status on the registry before meeting and/or visiting with adults in any setting if those adults have minors in their households or as frequent guests in their households.

6. _____ will not attend church related events outside where persons under 18 years of age are invited.

7. If _____ needs to use bathroom facilities at the church, _____ will request that a monitor/chaperone ensure no minors or vulnerable adults are in the bathroom with _____.

8. If _____ decides to attend a different church, _____ will notify the parish leadership.

Terms:

This covenant is in effect immediately upon signature. It will be reviewed every six months by parish leadership.

Violations of the Covenant:

By signing, _____ agrees, understand and accepts that violation of any of the provisions of this agreement may result in _____ being asked to leave _____ (name of parish).

Agreed to this ___ day of _____, 20__.

_____, Covenantor

Type name, physical address, telephone number, and email

Rector/Priest-in-Charge

Warden

Warden

Continued...

Monitors/Chaperones

1. _____

Type name, address, telephone number, and email

2. _____

Type name, address, telephone number, and email

3. _____

Type name, address, telephone number, and email