

# Safeguarding children and young people<sup>1</sup>

## A St John XXIII Parish Policy

This review: June 2020  
In accordance with Parish Statutes  
To be kept under periodic review

### 1) Introduction

The care of God's children, young and old, is at the forefront of the teachings of Christ.

- a) The care of God's children is one of the primary responsibilities of all members of the Church. With the Church's message and the position it holds, it is important that it be a shining example that others can look to and want to follow. Thus, everything possible must be done to ensure that children and young people are always in a safe, secure and happy environment. Anyone placed in a position of trust within the Church, whether paid or unpaid, who has direct access to children and young people must be selected with utmost care.
- b) Abuse and neglect of children and young people have damaged the lives of millions worldwide. Abuse and/or neglect can have devastating physical and psychological effects on anyone, some of them being irreparable and taking time to overcome. Children and young people must be protected and kept away from all forms of neglect, physical or mental violence, coercion, maltreatment, injury or abuse, including sexual abuse.
- c) This policy addresses, in particular, abuse that may occur in relation to the conduct of the parish's employees, volunteers, ministers and pastors. Anyone involved in parish activities is obliged to help prevent, detect and report any case of suspected abuse of a child, a young person or a vulnerable adult. At the same time, the rights of an alleged perpetrator of abuse must be respected.
- d) The priority, therefore, is to have preventative policies and practices operating effectively in the Parish that apply to all those who have direct involvement with children or young people. This document covers employees, volunteers, ministers and pastors.

### 2) Safeguarding

Safeguarding<sup>2</sup> is a term which is broader than 'child protection' and relates to the action the parish takes to promote the welfare of children and young people and protect them from harm within the church community. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. **Within the purview of the parish**, safeguarding is defined as:

- a) protecting children and young people from being abused;
- b) preventing accidents from happening that can impact on children's and young people's health and development;

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<sup>1</sup> The principles of this Safeguarding policy also apply in situations affecting vulnerable adults.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Safeguarding children and young people, UK Charity Commission, 14 July 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people/safeguarding-children-and-young-people>

- c) ensuring that children and young people grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- d) taking action to enable the best outcomes for children and young people.

### **3) Objectives of the Policy**

- a) to provide a safe and secure parish environment for all;
- b) to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse;
- c) to coordinate with diocesan and civil agencies that are concerned with the abuse of children and young people on policy and reporting requirements<sup>3</sup>;
- d) to screen parish appointments to ensure that they comply with all relevant local diocesan and civil/legal requirements;
- e) to educate those who have contact with children and young people in the parish about the issues of abuse and their duty to maintain a safe and secure environment;
- f) to provide awareness training in the prevention, detection and report of abuse that concerns children and young people at any level in the parish;
- g) to inform parents, care givers, children and young people of the channels of communication that are available to them in the parish;
- h) to ensure that suspected cases of abuse of children and young people<sup>4</sup> are reported immediately through the appropriate channels as indicated in Section 9 of this policy; and
- i) to review this policy on a biennial basis.

### **4) Exclusion of this Policy**

This policy does not cover any form of abuse that may occur outside of Parish organized activities/programmes. However, there is a recognition that abuses in this situation is a possibility and it must be noted that such alleged cases of abuse must be brought to the attention of civil authorities.

### **5) Screening of prospective Parish appointments/employees**

All prospective parish employees, such as priests and office employees will be screened for any history of abuse.

#### **I. Screening of Priests**

- a) The screening of priests being considered for a Parish appointment ("priest candidates") is the responsibility of the Search Committee, in association with local and diocesan authorities.
- b) Priest candidates will be required to provide the following information in writing:

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 6

<sup>4</sup> The community is aware that there is always a possibility of abuse outside of the parish premises

- a list of all appointments since ordination;
  - a declaration as to whether concerns have been expressed, or complaints made, at any time in the past regarding the priest candidate's direct or indirect involvement in any form of abuse of children and young people. Full details of any such concerns or complaints must be provided;
  - a declaration as to whether the priest candidate has been sanctioned at any time for behaviour or conduct directly or indirectly involving the abuse of children and young people. (A sanction could involve an oral or written warning, caution or reprimand; a reassignment or diminution of duties; or dismissal). Full details of any such sanction must be provided;
  - a declaration as to whether the priest candidate has been charged with and/or convicted of a criminal offence, at any time, including a criminal offence directly or indirectly involving the abuse of a child, a young person or a vulnerable adult. Full details of any such criminal charge/conviction must be provided; and
  - other information that may be requested by the Search Committee.
- c) Priest candidates will be informed in writing that the members of the Search Committee and relevant local and diocesan authorities will review the information provided by them as described in paragraph I (b), above. The accuracy and completeness of such information will be verified using all means considered appropriate by the Search Committee and/or local and diocesan authorities. While this process of verification will be conducted with due discretion, the confidentiality of information provided by priest candidates cannot be guaranteed. Priest candidates should be made aware of the possibility of a breach of confidentiality, when necessary, in the verification process.
- d) A priest candidate who is appointed to a position in the Parish will be provided with a copy of this policy, including the appendices, and will be required to sign a statement stating that he has read and understood them and that he agrees to abide by the policy.

## II. Screening of prospective Parish employees

- a) A Parish employee is a person who provides a paid or remunerated service to the Parish.
- b) The screening of prospective Parish employees is the responsibility of the clergy and Parish Administrative Council (PAC), usually through the PAC member responsible for human resources.
- c) All prospective Parish employees will be required to provide the information listed in paragraph I (b) above (adjusted as necessary). Paragraph I (c), above, concerning the verification and confidentiality of information, also applies.
- d) Persons referred to under paragraph II (c), above will be provided with a copy of this policy and will be required to sign a statement stating that they have read and understood them and that they agree to abide by the policy.

## 6) Catechists, ministers, confirmation and other volunteers<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> see also, item (9) Educational and training aspects of this policy.

Volunteer catechists and those serving in the confirmation programme and other parish volunteers (who are in contact with children and young people through classes and parish activities) must submit the following to the *Director of Religious Education*, as applicable:

- a) a signed Declaration of Acceptance of the Safeguarding Policy;
- b) a signed Disclosure form;
- c) attendance to the awareness training workshop on Safeguarding children and young people, at least once every three years; and
- d) in compliance with the [2019 Charter against sexual abuse \(French\)](#) issued by the [Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg](#), for all people who are serving the diocese to present a [criminal record extract](#) and a [special extract](#).

All ministers in the parish should be invited to attend the awareness training workshop on Safeguarding children and young people so they are aware of the existing policy and abide by it.

## **7) Occasional Helpers**

A practical approach using good judgment is adopted in relation to adults, including parents, who either attend or provide occasional assistance to volunteer catechists, e.g., in the conduct of classes or activity practice. Provided the person in charge does not ask or allow that person to assume responsibilities beyond what is appropriate, i.e., by leaving them unsupervised with children or young people, their presence is acceptable. Once a person is providing assistance on a regular basis, and in circumstances not controlled by the approved helpers, then their continued presence should be subject to the screening process used for volunteers.

## **8) Other screening tools**

The screening of Priest candidates and prospective employees is not limited to the process described above. In addition, depending on the position to be filled, the proper recruitment and selection practice may include the need for:

- a) completion of an application form;
- b) provision of references and their verification;
- c) conduct of a personal interview of short-listed applicants;
- d) information about any period in a job history that is not accounted for, in particular for prospective employees; and
- e) where relevant, original certificates as proof of qualifications.

## **9) Educational and Training Aspects**

- a) The Nomination Committee (Pastor, representatives from the Parish Pastoral Council [PPC] and the PAC) will nominate a *safeguarding coordinator* who will advise the priests and parish leaders on all matters related to the safeguarding of children and young people and provide/recommend regular awareness training.
- b) The *director of religious education* will ensure that all volunteers involved in the catechism and confirmation programmes are aware of matters related to the

prevention, detection and reporting of suspected cases of abuse. This will be achieved by:

- presentation of the Safeguarding Policy at the annual Catechists' Orientation Evening;
  - provision of information from the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Services (CCPAS);
  - conduct of an annual awareness training workshop on Safeguarding children and young people to ensure that there is awareness in our parish community; and
  - submission, by all catechism and confirmation programme volunteers, of a signed Declaration of Acceptance of the Safeguarding Policy
  - submission, by all catechism and confirmation programme volunteers, of a signed Disclosure form.
  - presentation of the code of conduct and guidance on working with children and young people (appendix 3 and 4 respectively) for their reference and guidance.
- c) The *safeguarding coordinator, director of religious education* and coordinator for the altar servers will make all efforts to ensure that the parish environment, or an environment external to the parish, is safe and secure and minimises the risk of abuse for all children and young people involved.

## 10) Response Team

A *response team* will be established in the parish. The parish-at-large will be periodically reminded of the existence of this team and its functions.

Function: The *response team* will respond to all reported cases of abuse. Their functions are explained in greater detail under paragraph 11, below.

Membership: The *response team* will consist of at least three active members of the parish, ideally with training and expertise in dealing with reported/suspected cases of child abuse. In addition, the pastor and the *safeguarding coordinator* will be members of the *response team*.

Coordinator: The *response team* will be chaired by the *safeguarding coordinator*.

Appointment: Members will be appointed by the PAC in consultation with the parish priest.

Term of office: Members, other than the pastor and *safeguarding coordinator*, will be appointed for two years and may be renewed for one additional two-year term.

## 11) What to do when the abuse or neglect of a child or young person is suspected or reported<sup>6</sup>:

- a) In the case of **unreported suspected abuse**, and when the child or young person does not appear to be in danger, or you are not sure whether child abuse is involved, discuss your concerns with a member of the response team, and together decide whether to take further action.
- b) When **an incident of suspected abuse is reported** it is brought to the attention of a member of the response team. In consultation with the *safeguarding coordinator*, that member will gather all relevant information required to complete a reporting disclosure form (Appendix 2).

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 6 for Reporting Flow

- c) The reporting disclosure form is a clear and concise record of reported facts. It excludes all extraneous information or suppositions, nor conclusions as to the veracity of a claim of a suspected abuse.
- d) The *safeguarding coordinator*, in consultation with the member who completed the reporting disclosure form and, as appropriate, with the pastor, will decide on the appropriate next steps. When it is considered advisable or necessary, such next steps will include liaising with, or reporting the alleged incident to, civil authorities.
- e) In all cases, support must be provided to the child, young person or vulnerable adult. The person who first consulted with the response team may also need to discuss support for him/herself with the *safeguarding coordinator*.
- f) Reporting disclosure forms will be handled in confidence and will be retained by the parish in a secure location. No such forms may be destroyed without the PAC deciding, on the recommendation of the response team, on a legally sound retention and destruction schedule. Pending such a decision, original forms will be retained by the parish for an indefinite period of time.
- g) In the case of a reported alleged case of abuse that is from outside the parish, see Appendix 6.

## 12) Where to report in Geneva

The *safeguarding coordinator*, when deemed necessary will liaise with the Service De Protection Des Mineurs which contacts follow:

Service De Protection Des Mineurs  
Boulevard de Saint-Georges 16-18  
1205 Genève

### Adresse postale

Case postale 75  
1211 Genève 8

Tél: [+41 22 5461000](tel:+41225461000)

### Heures d'ouverture des guichets

Permanence téléphonique +41 22 546 10 00  
Du lundi au vendredi de 8h00 à 12h30 et de 13h30 à 17h00

Fax : +41 22 546 10 09

Website: <https://www.ge.ch/organisation/pole-protection-enfance-jeunesse>

## 13) The Response Team

Gian-Luca Burci

Celeste Sandoval (*safeguarding coordinator*)

## 14) Policy Review due date: June 2022

## 15) Other useful resources

- Thirtyone:eight resources <https://thirtyoneeight.org/news-and-events/publications/>
- 10 safeguarding standards: A framework for creating safer places  
<https://thirtyoneeight.org/media/2496/10-safeguarding-standards.pdf>
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, UK  
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/coronavirus>

## Appendix 1

### Confidential Declaration for Volunteers and Paid Positions

1. Have you ever been convicted for any criminal offence?

Yes  No

If yes, please state the nature and date (s) of the offence (s) continuing on a separate sheet if necessary.

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2. Have you ever been cautioned by the police or bound over to keep the peace?

Yes  No

If yes, please give full details continuing on a separate sheet if necessary.

3. Have you ever been found by a court to have caused significant harm to a child or young person under the age of 18 years, or has any such court made any order against you on the basis of any finding or allegation that any child or young person was at risk of significant harm from you?

Yes  No

If yes, please give full details continuing on a separate sheet if necessary.

4. Has your conduct ever caused or been likely to cause harm to a child or young person under the age of eighteen, or put a child or young person at risk of harm, or to your knowledge has it ever been alleged that your conduct has resulted in any of those things?

Yes  No

If yes, please give full details, state the nature and date(s) of the alleged offence(s) and whether you were dismissed, disciplined, moved to other work or resigned from any paid or voluntary work as a result. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

I declare that the above information (and on the attached sheets) is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have read the Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines of St John XXIII Parish, Geneva; I understand them and will adhere to them.

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality(ies): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth dd/mm/yy: \_\_\_\_\_

Civil Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please supply us with the name and address of a referee\* to whom we may approach for a personal reference. (If you have any difficulties with this request, kindly contact Celeste Sandoval at 078 636 4641 or email [childprotection@johnxxiii.ch](mailto:childprotection@johnxxiii.ch))

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\*This must be a person who has known you for at least 5 years, is not a relative and is a person of standing in the community (such as a doctor, a teacher, etc.)

Details are Valid for:

Details are Valid for:

Details are Valid for:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Attended Child Protection  
Seminar on: \_\_\_\_\_

Attended Child Protection  
Seminar on: \_\_\_\_\_

Attended Child Protection  
Seminar on: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 2**

**REPORTING DISCLOSURE FORM**

Date of report

\_\_\_\_\_ Y/M/D

Child's full name

Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_ Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Given Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Y/M/D

Address

Telephone no.

No./Apt. & Street

City Postal Code

Mother's Full Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Given Name

Father's Full Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Given Name

Medical concern, if any

Details of Alleged Abuse\*:

- what the child/young person said, to whom and when,
- when and where the incident(s) allegedly occurred,
- brief description of any easily visible marks or injuries,
- the name of the alleged offender(s) and relationship to the child, and
- names of any other children who might have relevant information.

**Please limit this report to the factual essentials of the points listed above and any directly related reported facts. In the event of legal proceedings, this report form and any other form of written records may be subpoenaed, or subject to similar legal process.**

\* including neglect (use back of the form if writing space is needed)

Person Making Report:

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_ Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Given Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Position

\_\_\_\_\_ Y/M/D

## Appendix 3

### Definition of terms<sup>7</sup> and related resources

- a) *Physical abuse* is any intentional act of causing injury or trauma, which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm, upon another person through bodily contact. Children, young people and adults can suffer from physical abuse. Alternative terms include physical assault or physical violence. Behavioral and physical signs may offer clues that a person may have been abused.
- b) *Sexual abuse* involves forcing or enticing a person (who could be a child, a young person or a vulnerable adult) to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not he or she is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- c) *Emotional abuse* is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- d) *Neglect* is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
  - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
  - ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);

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<sup>7</sup> Texts adapted from - [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419595/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf)

or

- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Who are considered *children and young people*?

In line with the United Nations definition of a child<sup>8</sup> and as expressed in this document, children and young people refer to people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday.

What is a *vulnerable adult*<sup>9</sup>?

A vulnerable adult is someone who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC\\_PRESS200910web.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Texts adapted from Staying Safe and Secure. CCPAS. A summary of the ten 'Safe and Secure' safeguarding standards for churches, other places of worship and faith-based organisations.  
<http://files.ccpas.co.uk/documents/StayingSafeAndSecure.pdf>

## Appendix 4

### Example of a code of conduct

#### **You must:**

- treat all children and young people with respect
- provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow
- ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others
- respect a child or young person's right to personal privacy
- encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behavior they do not like
- remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned
- be aware that any physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- recognise that special caution is required in moments when discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- operate within the Church's principles and guidance and any particular procedures of the diocese, Parish, order or club
- challenge unacceptable behavior and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse
- provide access for children or young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have
- give guidance and support to inexperienced helpers

#### **Do not:**

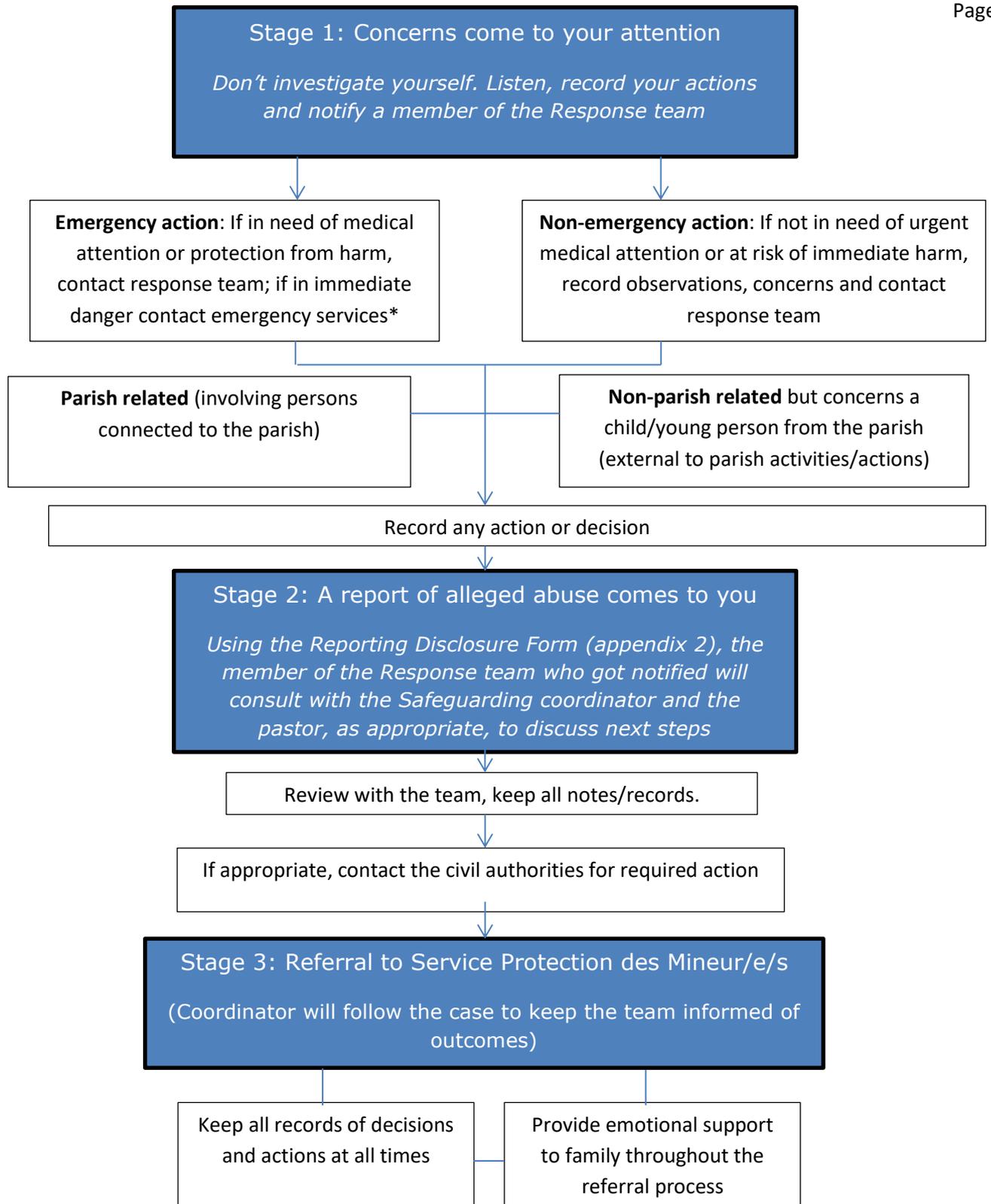
- have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or young people
- be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behavior
- make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- either exaggerate or trivialise child or young person abuse issues
- rely on your good name or that of the Church to protect you
- believe 'it could never happen to me'
- take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach

## Appendix 5

### Example of guidance on working with children and young people

- Any physical contact should be appropriate and only take place in public, or when at least one other adult is present.
- Physical contact should reflect the child or young person's needs, not the adult's.
- Physical contact should be age appropriate.
- Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be perceived to be, sexually stimulating to the adult, or the child or young person.
- Children and young people have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others (except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention).
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should feel able to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misunderstood.
- If an adult persists in inappropriate touch with a child or young person this must be challenged.
- If there are concerns about an adult's contact with a child or young person, advice must be sought.

Steps in reporting an alleged abuse



\*police or medical/hospital services