

f. The ability of the cleric to provide effective ministry in light of the circumstances.

g. The best interests of the Eparchy and all its people.

8.2 The Bishop will serve as a link between a falsely accused priest or deacon returning to ministry and the Eparchy. The Bishop shall provide pastoral support for the priest or deacon to ensure that the accused's ability to minister effectively in the wake of false accusations is fully restored.

8.3 The pastor or ministry supervisor responsible for staff or volunteers who are falsely accused of child sexual abuse shall provide continuing moral support to the individuals as they return to work or volunteer services. The Eparchy will provide necessary counseling services to assist falsely accused individuals to overcome the consequences of the accusations and to become restored to power and effectiveness in their job duties and volunteer services.

### **Section 9:**

#### **Screening and Selection — Clergy, Staff and Volunteers**

9.1 All applicants to the priesthood and/or diaconate are required to participate in psychological screening and background checks to assess their fitness to the ministry and their fitness to work with minors.

9.2 All priests and deacons seeking incardination, priests or religious seeking ministry or residency in the Eparchy must demonstrate their fitness to work with minors.

a. Superiors of religious congregations proposing names of individuals for ministry or residency in a Church institution are required to state in writing that there is nothing in the person's history or behavior that would make him or her unsuitable to work with minors.

b. Pastors, associate pastors, administrators, or directors of Church institutions may not grant permission for full-time, part-time, or regular weekend ministry to an extern priest or deacon without prior written approval of the bishop or his designee.

9.3 All staff and all volunteers who work with or have regular contact with children shall be screened for their fitness to work with minors. The Eparchy shall screen potential staff and shall conduct background checks of potential staff prior to extending an offer of employment. Applicants who refuse to grant permission for the background checks and other screening will not be considered for any staff position in the Eparchy.

9.4 The basic screening program for all staff and volunteers shall include:

- a. A completed employment/volunteer questionnaire.
- b. A completed background check.
- c. A personal interview with the applicant.
- d. A signed Code of Conduct agreement.

9.5 No individual who has sexually abused a minor will be employed or engaged as a volunteer for the Eparchy. The Eparchy will immediately terminate any staff member or volunteer if it discovers evidence of previous child sexual abuse by the person.

9.6 The Eparchy will adopt a code of conduct for clergy, staff, and volunteers. The Code of Conduct will establish guidelines for appropriate interactions between Church personnel and those that they serve and will establish disciplinary consequences for violations of the Code of Conduct.

### **Section 10:**

#### **Media**

10.1 There shall be a designated spokesperson for the Eparchy. The spokesperson shall be responsible for responding to all inquiries and news conferences regarding allegations of sexual abuse.

10.2 The spokesperson shall be informed immediately upon the receipt of any allegations.

10.3 All complaints to the Eparchy are treated as confidential until such time as the allegation becomes public record as a result of charges being filed or the matter is general public knowledge.

10.4 Within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved, the Eparchy will deal as openly as possible with members of the community (cf. Article 7 of "Charter"). The Eparchial communications policy will be a commitment to transparency and openness.

### **Section 11:**

#### **Insurance**

11.1 Diocesan insurance covers individuals acting within the scope of their ministry or employment within the Church.

11.2 Diocesan insurers shall be notified of incidents, concerns, or allegations in accordance with the terms of applicable insurance contracts.

11.3 The Bishop or his designee shall notify the Eparchial attorney and insurance carrier.

### **Section 12:**

#### **Conclusion**

12.1 These policies will be reviewed every two (2) years by the Eparchial Review Board, along with representatives designated by the Bishop.

12.2 Recommendations for revisions shall be presented to the Bishop.

## **Procedures for Filing a Complaint of Sexual Abuse**

1. All clergy, staff, and volunteers, must report knowledge or belief that a child is the victim of sexual abuse. (See Eparchial Sexual Abuse Policy Section 2.)

2. All complaints or knowledge of abuse should first be brought to the attention of the pastor of the parish, the principal of the school, the head of a religious community, or the supervisor of the particular ministry or organization.

3. If a victim or a victim's family is making a direct complaint on their own they will meet with the pastor of the parish, the principal of the school, the superior of the religious community, or the supervisor in charge of the activity. At all times, a victim or complainant, may report directly to the Bishop, to the local civil authorities, or to a child abuse reporting agency.

4. The person hearing the complaint will take note of the victim's name and address, the person they are accusing, the place where the incident occurred, the time that the incident took place, and a general description of the nature of the offense.

5. Upon receiving the preliminary information noted above, it is mandated that the pastor, principal, religious superior, or ministry supervisor forward the report of abuse to:

- a) the Bishop & Chancellor of the Eparchy;
- b) the local police department for your town (911); and
- c) the Child Protection Agency or Hot Line for your area that is listed on the Eparchy website or parish bulletin board.

6. The Bishop and Chancellor, upon receipt of a complaint, will contact the Victim's Assistance Coordinator, the Eparchial Review Board, the local protopresbyter, the Eparchial attorney, and the Eparchial insurance company. They will also verify that the report has been filed with the local police and the appropriate Child Protection Agency and State Department for Children

They will also verify that the report has been filed with the local police and the appropriate Child Protection Agency.

7. The Bishop will personally meet with all victims and their families.

8. The Bishop will begin a preliminary internal investigation of the incident in accordance with canons 1468-1470 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

If there is credible evidence that sexual abuse has occurred, appropriate measures will be taken to remove the offender from ministry and place him on administrative leave in accordance with the provisions of canon 1473 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.