



THE DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND

## **SAFE CHURCH TRAINING**

THROUGH

THE GEORGE MERCER JR.  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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## **SAFE CHURCH POLICIES**

The Diocese of Long Island intends that every parish congregation and every ministry be always places of community, learning, grace, insight, and caring. This begins by assuring that they are safe places. By that we mean places where the vulnerable are protected from harm and where all live and work with respect for one another. This beginning point aims toward an end point at which our gathering places for worship, community, and service are experienced as anticipations of the Kingdom of God.

The Diocese has adopted the following policies consistent with those goals:

- Policy prohibiting Sexual Harassment
- Policy prohibiting Sexual Exploitation
- Policy for the protection of Children and Youth
- Policy for the protection of Vulnerable Adults

Mercer School of Theology is deputized by the Bishop with providing training in the service of these goals. We call this “Safe Church Training.”

## **WHAT DOES SAFE CHURCH TRAINING INCLUDE?**

Safe Church training is divided into two sections and is commonly referred to as SHE-CAP training.

SHE refers to training in recognizing and reporting sexual harassment and exploitation.

Harassment refers to the definitions in law of what constitutes unwelcome sexual advances and requests for sexual favors, whether verbal or visual/non-verbal; whether physical or otherwise. Sexual exploitation refers to a variety of behaviors related to the demand of sexual favors with the threat of denying assistance, withholding work support, or any other negative repercussions in the work-place or community. The Diocese of Long Island’s “Policy on Sexual Harassment,” and “Policy on Sexual Exploitation” provide further elucidation of what is intended by the terms ‘harassment’ and ‘exploitation.’

CAP refers to training for the prevention, the recognition where present, and the reporting of instances of abuse of children and vulnerable adults. The Diocese of Long Island’s “Policies for

the Protection of Children and Youth” and “Policies for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults” provide explanation of prohibited behaviors, reporting suspected abuse, background screening for hiring by parishes or other ministries, as well as monitoring and supervision of activities in parishes involving children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Safe Church training in the Diocese of Long Island includes interactive Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Child and Youth Abuse Prevention instruction.

## **WHO PARTICIPATES IN SAFE CHURCH TRAINING?**

### **All Church Personnel are required to participate in Safe Church Training**

Church Personnel includes **all** persons who have pastoral relationships, including members of the clergy, and all seminarians, postulants, candidates for holy orders; all paid personnel, whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies; those who contract their services to the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies; volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so, and volunteers licensed under **Diocese** Canon III.4 (such as Lay Eucharistic Visitors). Volunteers include members of advisory boards, vestries, Bishop’s Committees, and boards of directors.

Examples of Church Personnel include:

- Church School Teachers
- Children’s or youth choir directors
- Organists who work with children or youth
- Lay youth ministers
- Volunteer youth directors
- All Church Personnel who regularly work in the nursery
- All Church Personnel who work in the nursery if they are the only person over 21 present at any time
- All staff, whether volunteer or paid, at church camps
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth more than twice a year
- Lay Eucharistic Visitors and other volunteers as in Canon III.4).

As is evident, the intent of the policy and definition is to encourage and mandate the Safe Church Training of all Church Personnel. If there is doubt as to whether a particular individual or class of persons should participate in Safe Church Training, the bias should be toward requiring training.

## **WHERE DOES SAFE CHURCH TRAINING TAKE PLACE?**

Most Church Personnel may participate in Safe Church Training through on-line modules offered by the Episcopal Church through the Mercer School. The program platform is **PraesidiumAcademy.com**.

However, all persons who have pastoral relationships, including members of the clergy, and all seminarians, postulants, and candidates for holy orders must engage in **in-person training**, provided by the Mercer School, for their first, initial, training. Other Church Personnel may choose to participate in in-person training but are not required to do so.

Praesidium Academy provides training in short, focused courses that can normally be completed in 30 minutes and may be taken from any location where a high-speed Internet connection is available. Several of the modules are available in Spanish and French languages.

Each parish congregation, school, or other ministry must have a designated Safe Church Administrator. The local administrator will assist members of the congregation or ministry who are renewing their training after a 3-year period to sign-in and access Praesidium Academy training. (The process of establishing a parish/ministry Safe Church Online Administrator is described in below).

## **RENEWAL OF TRAINING**

Church Personnel are required to renew their training for most aspects of Safe Church every three (3) years.

**However, New York State law mandates that employees of organizations and companies complete one component of such training, sexual harassment training, every year.**

Safe Church Training (including sexual harassment training) renewal is accomplished by participation in the Safe Church online training. The required modules appear in the Mercer website in the chart “Who Takes What” as ANTI-HARASSMENT.

## **ONLINE SAFE CHURCH MODULES**

The chart posted on the Mercer website as “Who Takes What” lists the training modules from **PraesidiumAcademy.com** which are required for various Church Personnel. Except where otherwise indicated, renewal training must take place every three (3) years. In cases of overlap, the recommended approach is to take all the possibly applicable modules which pertain to a particular ministry. There are five modules, labeled UNIVERSAL TRAINING which are required for almost everyone. Besides these, there are many other modules in the program, which are applicable to specific ministries and should be taken as required by diocesan policy.

Modules do not need to be taken all in one sitting. The system keeps a database and issues certificates of completion which should be kept by the user and by the parish office. Monitoring of workers' and volunteers' completion of the program is the responsibility of the parish.

## **ESTABLISHING A LOCAL SAFE CHURCH ONLINE ADMINISTRATOR**

All parishes in the diocese are eligible to participate in the Praesidium Academy program. Participation in the online program will become necessary everywhere as parish members reach the 3-year anniversary of their first Safe Church Training and require renewal online at continuing 3-year intervals.

First, a local Online Administrator must be appointed who will access the system and maintain the records at the parish or school level. This Administrator will be the primary point-of-contact for employees and volunteers. The Administrator must have experience using a computer, Microsoft Office, and the Internet. Often the Administrator is the Sunday School Superintendent or a Vestry member, a deacon, or even the Rector or Priest in Charge. The Parish Safe Church Administrator contacts the Diocesan Safe Church Coordinator at the Mercer School @ahillebrand@dioceseli.org to be assigned a personal username and password so that the system can be activated for the parish. A name and password are specific for each user.

The system can generate reports and email communications to users and administrators. The parish is required to keep records of compliance which are requested to be shown during the Bishop's visits to the parish. It is advisable to produce regular communications in the parish to remind members to participate. An Online How-To Guide for the Administrator is available through the program.

Instructions for the parish Online Administrator for Praesidium Academy will be provided on the George Mercer Jr. School of Theology website and are available by contacting the Mercer School office.

## **ARRANGING IN-PERSON SAFE CHURCH TRAINING AT YOUR PARISH**

If necessary, a parish can request in-person Safe Church Training at their church location. Clergy or administrators should phone the Mercer School Safe Church Coordinator (516.248.4800, ext. 150) to request a local training. A qualified trainer will be put in touch with parish leaders to arrange a date, time, and location. Only trainers qualified and recommended from Mercer School should provide sessions in the Diocese of Long Island.

Registration of persons for the training session takes place in the parish. The date and location of the training are to be communicated back to the Mercer Office. The names of all those who participated in the training are also communicated to the Mercer Office in a timely manner following the training session, in order that a certificate of training may be created and returned to the parish.

Parishes doing local Safe Church Training sessions are requested to inform parishes in the local area if there will be space in the session allowing for the participation of persons from surrounding parishes. The names and parish names of such persons are to be communicated to Mercer School after the training session.

When local Safe Church Training sessions are arranged, the local parish or sponsoring group of parishes are responsible to provide the trainer's stipend.

## **INFORMATION ON UPCOMING IN-PERSON SAFE CHURCH TRAINING**

Session dates and locations will be noted on the Mercer website tab entitled "Safe Church" and in the events calendar on the Mercer homepage at [www.mercerschool.org](http://www.mercerschool.org).

Persons are always welcome to phone the Mercer Office with questions relating to Safe Church training in the Diocese of Long Island at 516.248.4800, extension 150.

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