

**ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NIAGARA**  
**GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND OTHER**  
**VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

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**1.1 The Need for Guidelines**

The Diocese of Niagara has adopted a “Policy With Regards to Screening and Management of Staff and Volunteers”, which undertakes to ensure that our Church be a safe and holy place for all whom our ministry affects. The policy states that all staff and volunteers, lay and ordained, who come into contact with children, youth and vulnerable people be screened in a manner appropriate to the ministry or job being undertaken.

Although proper screening is necessary to help ensure that people are only assigned to positions that are appropriate for them, and in line with their ministerial gifts, it is the purpose of these guidelines to address and define appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

**1.2 Limitations of Guidelines**

While these guidelines need to be read and understood by all who minister to vulnerable groups within our Church, it is recognized that it is impossible to make recommendations for all possible situations and circumstances. Cultural differences, as well as differences in local custom and resources, exist throughout our Diocese. Therefore, we primarily rely on the discretion and good judgement of our clergy and volunteer lay ministers to avoid compromising situations.

Additionally, it is recognized that The Church is an ever-evolving, dynamic organization, whose culture is in a constant state of change. Guidelines that may have appeared appropriate in the past could potentially be seen as outdated or out of touch with current realities. Likewise, these guidelines may cease to be completely appropriate at a future date. It is recognized, therefore, that these guidelines will need to be reviewed and updated on a periodic basis in order that they reflect the up to date standards that The Church wishes to uphold.

### **1.3 Definition of Vulnerable People**

The term “vulnerable people” refers not only to people who are typically recognized as vulnerable, such as children, youth, some of the elderly, those coming from an abusive relationship, hospital patients, and the mentally and physically disabled, but also to those otherwise healthy adults who are vulnerable because of recent life experiences. These circumstances include: but are not limited to, those who are grieving because of the death of a loved one, those experiencing job loss, or career difficulties, those living with separation, divorce, or marital discord, those living through financial difficulties, those facing illness in themselves or others, and those facing other uncertainties. It is important to recognize that all of us are vulnerable to varying degrees at different stages of our lives.

### **1.4 Theological Foundation**

The aforementioned Screening and Management Policy and these Guidelines arise from a desire to follow the teachings of Christ as outlined in scripture. When questioned by a Pharisee about which commandment in the law is the greatest, Jesus answered:

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22: 37–40)

In following these commandments, each of us is called to serve God and to minister to others in life-giving ways. While it is important to respect the dignity of all whom we come into contact with, we acknowledge that there are those among us who, through no fault of their own, are particularly vulnerable to harm and abuse. As ministers of God and followers of Christ, it is our duty and responsibility to recognize these people and do all that we can to protect them from coming to any harm through the ministries of The Church.

Further, as baptized Christians, each of us has entered a covenant relationship with God. The words of The Baptismal Covenant reflect the basis of this relationship, which is renewed by the church community each time a baptism is performed. Each vow contained within The Baptismal Covenant demands something from us and directly affects the ways that our communities are shaped, as outlined below:

**Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?**

In order to keep this vow, it is essential to acknowledge the God-given value of every person, and to refuse to tolerate any vexatious or exploitative conduct or comment that might prevent a person from fully, safely, freely and joyfully participating in the regular learning, fellowship, worship, and prayer of the church. Our call is to draw people to Christ; to become a part of the Christian story and people.

**Will you persevere in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?**

The misuse and abuse of power has the enormous potential to alienate people from God, one another, and even themselves. In other words, the abuse of power can be the cause of sin in human life and relationships. Therefore, The Church has a special responsibility to persevere in resisting any teaching or conduct that would abuse the sacred nature of the community relationships we are called to build. In fact, The Church has a responsibility to call people away from such conduct or teaching, and back to the teachings of Christ and a New Way of Life.

**Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?**

Taking a more positive approach, The Church has a responsibility to teach a life-giving theology as part of the Good News of the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus Christ. We aim for our church communities to be places of trust, inclusivity, love, and safety. In this context, our communities should reflect, most beautifully, the depth of love possible in relationship with God.

## **Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?**

To exploit another person violates both our relationship with that person, and our relationship with God. If we fail to prevent such exploitation, when methods of doing so are at our disposal, we fall short of this vow, particularly when the exploited person is vulnerable and cannot prevent the exploitation by him or herself.

## **Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?**

To ensure justice and peace, we must protect those who are vulnerable, especially where there is an imbalance of power in a relationship. Because The Church strives to be a community that embodies reconciliation and healing, it is incumbent upon all Christians to take the ways in which our communities live out this aspect of the baptismal vows very seriously. An essential part of this vow is doing all that we can to mitigate the risk of potential indiscretion or abuse.

### **1.5 The Need for Clear Job Descriptions**

The current policy requires that all positions within a parish, staff and volunteer, lay and ordained, must have a corresponding job description. Providing job descriptions shows respect for people in ministry and demonstrates that they are valued, that their contributions will be taken seriously, and that they will be supported in their tasks.

Among other things, the job description should include: the time frame associated with the position (renewable if appropriate), an outline of duties and responsibilities for the position, a statement of necessary boundaries and limitations associated with the position, and a statement of the type and frequency of support and supervision that an individual in the position will receive. As such, a proper job description can provide the basis for discussion around appropriate and inappropriate activities, at the start, during, and at the end of a particular ministry.

## **1.6 The Need for Supervision**

Ideally, anyone ministering to vulnerable people should have regularly scheduled meetings with a supervisor in order to discuss the ongoing ministry, ensure that his or her actions remain appropriate, and ensure that participants are benefiting from the ministry. When an individual is in doubt about appropriate or inappropriate courses of action, or is in doubt about the vulnerability of a particular group or individual, or when he or she feels that a boundary may have been crossed in the course of ministry, he or she needs to report the situation to the supervisor and seek advice on how best to proceed. If the supervisory person is unable, unwilling, or unavailable to assist the ministry person, he or she should seek advice from another qualified individual. It is important that the supervisory or advisory person be identified in advance so that there is no question of whom to contact should it become necessary.

## **1.7 Additional Information and Resources**

For information and resources on Job Descriptions, Risk Assessments, and Screening Procedures, see The Anglican Diocese of Niagara's "Policy With Regards to Screening and Management of Staff and Volunteers", Volunteer Canada's Publication, "Screening in Faith", visit their website at [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca), or call the Ontario Screening Initiative Call Centre at 888-642-6930.

For more information on the Diocese of Niagara's response to sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and professional misconduct see, "Sexual Misconduct Policy: Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Assault" (October 2000).

## **2.1 Imbalance of Power and the Potential for Abuse**

Abuse can occur when a person in a position of trust or authority intentionally or unintentionally misuses their position to further their own desires or fails to act in the best interest of the person to whom he or she is ministering. This abuse can take the form of physical abuse (causing bodily harm), emotional abuse (causing a person to feel badly for their own thoughts or feelings), sexual abuse and harassment (through inappropriate speech, gestures, innuendo, touch, or explicit sexual contact), spiritual abuse (unduly imposing one's own values or morals on another), and financial abuse (the use of undue influence or coercion to solicit funds for personal gain or as contributions to The Church).

Where one individual holds power over another, due to position, age, size, gender or other reason, the potential for abuse is greater. An imbalance of power may be real or perceived, but where such an imbalance exists, the person in the position of power must be responsible for ensuring that abuse does not occur. It is therefore necessary for all people within the church to be familiar with actions that constitute abuse and avoid both behaviour and situations where abuse or the appearance of abuse has the potential to occur.

Further, it needs to be recognized that by agreeing to specific ministries, staff and volunteers themselves become vulnerable to manipulation and abuse by others. As much as possible, people in positions of trust must take necessary precautions to avoid compromising situations and must take steps to reduce the risk associated with such situations. By recognizing and avoiding compromising situations, people who supply ministry protect others from abuse, they protect themselves from abuse, and they protect themselves from misunderstandings that may lead to allegations of abuse.

Also, because of the intimate nature of ministry, people in positions of trust may suspect or become aware of situations of abuse or neglect by third parties against people to whom they minister. Where these situations involve children, a person is required, by law, to inform the local Children's Aid Society. In cases of neglect or abuse involving adults, the ministry person should encourage the abused person to seek the necessary support and help to stop the abuse and should endeavor to secure such help for the individual where appropriate and feasible.

## **2.2 General Guidelines for Avoiding Compromising Situations and Reducing Risk**

Those who purposely abuse others seek out private places where they can be alone with their victim. They want their actions to remain secret and do not discuss them with others. They encourage their victims to maintain a veil of secrecy and may attempt to limit their contact with others. Keeping this in mind, it is important to avoid situations involving extreme privacy and/or secrecy, wherever possible. The following two principles are fundamental when ministering to vulnerable groups:

1. As much as possible, ministry should be performed in public places, open to inspection from others.
2. People should not minister in isolation. They should be supervised and supported in their ministry. When working in isolation, judgement can become skewed, boundaries may be crossed, and abuse may occur.

While the principles noted above and the general guidelines noted below should be followed whenever possible, circumstances will arise in a church environment where these principles and guidelines cannot be met. It is likely that there will be times when people will request private, confidential pastoral care in closed settings, and that there will be times where individual in-home visits are necessary. These types of ministry should continue and not be discouraged, however, the people involved need to be aware of the inherent risks in these situations and minimize the chance of ending up in a compromising situation.

General Guidelines:

1. It is preferable to meet with a group rather than be alone with an individual.
2. It is preferable to have more than one adult present when working with vulnerable people (if the other adult cannot be in the same room, it is best to have them close by in the same building).
3. It is preferable to meet in an open, public space rather than a closed, private space. A church hall is better than a secluded room, a church office is better than a person's home, a living room is better than a bedroom
4. When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door; a door with a window is better than a solid door.

5. It is always wise to make others aware of your activities and your whereabouts.
6. It is best to schedule regular meetings with a supervisor to discuss the ongoing nature and actions of the ministry.
7. If a person is involved in a situation where a boundary is violated, or something occurs that is out of the ordinary or could be misinterpreted, he or she should immediately report it and discuss it with a supervisor. If the supervisor is unwilling, unable, or unavailable for discussion, he or she should seek out another qualified person or colleague with whom to discuss the issue.

## **2.3 Recognizing Your Own Level of Competence and Providing a Referral When Needed**

There are likely to be times in the course of a ministry when a clergy or layperson is not able to help the person to whom he or she is ministering as much as the person wants or needs. These situations are most likely to occur in one on one ministries of visiting, pastoral care, or counselling, and may result from a lack of time available, from a lack of skills or expertise, or from a lack of resources. In all of these cases, the responsibility lies with the ministering individual to recognize that the person requires a higher level or different type of care than he or she is able to provide. It is also the responsibility of the ministering individual to suggest an appropriate alternate source of care and to assist the person in contacting that source of care if necessary.

Would the person be better served through a government agency, a support group, a professional counselor or a therapist? If the answer to this question is yes, it is incumbent on the ministering individual to seek out an appropriate person or agency that is in a better position to help, and make this choice available to the person receiving care.

### **When to Provide a Referral or Seek Additional Help:**

1. Always provide the person with a referral if the person asks to see someone else, or if he or she expresses a desire for additional help that you are unable to provide.
2. Always provide the person with a referral when a person shows signs of mental illness, psychosis, incoherence, severe depression, violent behaviour, alcohol or drug addiction, when a person makes suicidal or homicidal threats, or when a person shows suicidal tendencies.
3. Always provide the person with a referral in situations involving physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.
4. Provide the person with a referral if you are unable to devote the necessary time required to help the person, if you feel out of your depth in terms of experience or expertise, if you feel you don't properly understand the situation or the issues involved, or if you feel overwhelmed by the situation and unable to cope.
5. Provide the person with a referral if you are uncomfortable with the nature of the relationship, if you feel the person has become overly dependent on you, or if you have become emotionally involved in the situation to the point that you have lost your objectivity.

6. Provide the person with a referral if you feel the person or situation is not progressing, if you feel that the person is “stuck” in an unproductive pattern, or if you intuitively feel that the person could be better helped in another way.
7. Provide the person with a referral if the behaviour of the person, or the nature of your relationship with the person undergoes a drastic change. For example, if someone whom you’ve been visiting regularly suddenly doesn’t want to see you, or if you notice that they are not properly caring for themselves anymore.

### **Potential Places to Refer a Person:**

1. The variety of community, government, and private resources available to help people in times of need is almost endless. Except in cases of emergency, you may wish to check with your supervisor or rector before providing a person with a referral. They should be able to assist you in determining a proper course of action. Personal identities of people receiving care should be kept confidential.
2. Caregivers should make a person aware that he or she can expect to pay a fee when working with a professional counselor. These fees vary amongst individual counselors, but subsidies may be available.
3. The following represents a partial list of possible places to refer:
  - ♦ Police (In cases of immediate emergency or danger)
  - ♦ Supervisor or Rector
  - ♦ Children’s Aid Society (In cases of known, suspected, or potential abuse or neglect)
  - ♦ Bereavement Council
  - ♦ Family Doctor
  - ♦ A Family Member
  - ♦ Alcohol, Drug, and Gambling Services
  - ♦ A Counselling Agency or Professional Therapist (These include child counselors, family counselors, marriage counselors, women’s counselors, etc. Look under Marriage in the Yellow Pages)

### **3.1 Specific Guidelines for Nursery Care Givers, Church School Teachers, and Youth Workers**

Because children are naturally trusting and readily place their faith in those adults who care for them, and because they often do not necessarily have the skills, knowledge, or experience to distinguish between appropriate behaviour and inappropriate behaviour in the adults who care for them, they are particularly vulnerable to abuse. The following guidelines address some of the special considerations that need to be undertaken when working with children and youth.

1. Children should be supervised at all times. When Church School is over, children should be escorted to meet their parents or remain under supervision in the classroom until they are picked up. Parishes with large numbers of children in the Nursery or Church School should consider a more formalized sign in and out procedure, particularly where visitors or infrequent attendees may not be known to the staff.
2. Children should be supervised by adults or responsible teenagers. While all Church School teachers need a supervisor to whom they can regularly report, teens should have the opportunity to check-in with a responsible adult before or after each lesson. While it is not necessary that an adult be present in every classroom, at least one clearly identified adult should be readily available each Sunday to handle any emergencies or extraordinary situations that may arise.
3. Whenever possible, it is best to have at least two leaders supervising a group of children. Unfortunately in many parishes, recruiting Church School Teachers is difficult. In order that a single teacher not be alone with a group of children, it may be possible to set up a schedule whereby parents take turns assisting the teacher each week. Another possibility is to designate one person to roam among all the classrooms each week, checking on each class, and supplying assistance when and where necessary.
4. Ontario Daycare Guidelines suggest a leader to child ratio of 1:5 for infants and toddlers (under 2 and a half years old), 1:8 for older preschool children (2 and a half to 6 years old), and 1:10 for school age children (over 6 years old). Churches are not bound by these ratios, however, where leader to child ratios consistently exceed the suggested numbers, an individual parish should attempt to recruit more Church School Teachers. The strategies mentioned above, in point 3, may prove useful when recruiting additional help.

5. It is best that Church School Classes and Youth Group Meetings take place in public spaces. The church is better than a private home; a church hall is better than a secluded room. An open door is better than a closed door; a door with a window is better than a solid door.
6. Special events or field trips off church premises should be pre-approved by church leadership. Parents should be notified well in advance of the outing and written parental approval should be obtained. At least two adults should be available to supervise the event and leaders of both genders should be available if working with a co-ed group.
7. If an event requires that a leader drive children or youth, the leader must hold a valid driver's license and insurance. Seat belts must be available for all passengers. When driving young children, approved child restraints or car seats must be available as required by law. Leaders must not have any alcohol or drugs in their system when driving. Leaders should avoid being alone with a single child in the car unless under extreme circumstances, such as driving a child home in an emergency.
8. Church School Teachers and Youth Workers should avoid one on one interaction with children and youth. If a child or adolescent requests to speak privately with an adult, it should be done out of earshot but within view of another adult. It is inappropriate for a Church School Teacher or Youth Worker to suggest a meeting with an individual child outside of regular group activities.
9. Encourage parents of young children to take them to the washroom before Church School. If a child needs to use the washroom during Church School, he or she should be escorted by an adult. It is best if the adult remain outside the washroom with the door open. An adult should not enter a cubicle with a child and close the door.

10. In general, physical contact should occur only at the child's initiation or with the child's permission. Any physical contact with children or youth must be of a non-sexual nature and appropriate to the situation.

Appropriate contact includes:

- ♦ Bending down to the child's eye level, speaking kindly, and listening attentively
- ♦ Gaining permission before hugging a child and respecting his or her right to refuse a hug
- ♦ Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity
- ♦ Comforting a child by placing an arm around his or her shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side
- ♦ Praising or welcoming a child by holding the child's two hands in yours
- ♦ Patting the child on the head, hand, back, or shoulder in affirmation
- ♦ Holding a preschool child who is crying, provided that he or she wants to be held

Inappropriate contact includes:

- ♦ Kissing, or coaxing a child to kiss you
- ♦ Extended hugging or tickling
- ♦ Touching any area of the body normally covered by a bathing suit, specifically the buttocks, thighs, breasts or groin areas
- ♦ Carrying older children, having them sit on your lap, or having them rub up next to you

11. Physical or verbal attacks should not be used to discipline children. Gentle physical restraint is appropriate only if a child is in danger of causing damage or injuring himself, herself, or others.
12. **Sexual contact of any type with a child or youth is always inappropriate regardless of who initiates it.** If a youth initiates inappropriate physical or sexual contact with a leader, it is the responsibility of the leader to stop such physical contact, explain the necessary boundaries to the youth, then reestablish and maintain the appropriate boundaries. Any interaction in which a boundary may have been crossed should be documented and reported to a supervisor. Note that it is far less likely that inappropriate physical or sexual contact will occur when others are present. To avoid any inappropriate contact, or allegations of inappropriate contact, leaders must try to avoid being alone with a child or youth at all times.
13. Jokes, innuendoes, or compliments of a sexual nature are inappropriate and should be avoided. Be cautious when children or youth are asking questions or seeking advice around topics of a sexual nature. In general, don't say or do anything you wouldn't want to see reported in the newspaper or on TV. Don't say or do anything that you wouldn't want your family to find out about, and don't say or do anything that you wouldn't want the participant's family to find out about.
14. In overnight situations, no adult/leader should sleep in the same space as a participant. Sleeping and changing areas should be segregated by gender. Leaders and participants should change in separate areas so that one is never naked in the presence of the other.
15. There may be times when a Church School or Youth Group Leader suspects that a child has been a victim of parental abuse or neglect, or is at risk of being subject to abuse or neglect, or where a child or youth discloses such abuse to the leader. **In these situations, the leader is required by law to report the case to the Children's Aid Society (CAS). This requirement cannot be delegated to anyone else, the person who becomes aware of abuse or neglect, or who suspects that the risk for abuse or neglect is present must call the CAS.**

16. If a child discloses neglect or abuse the following steps should be followed:

1. Believe in the child and take his or her disclosure seriously.
2. Listen openly and calmly to the child, but do not ask leading questions.
3. Reassure the child that you will do your best to get the right kind of help.
4. Record the facts. Write down the child's name, address, telephone number, the time and place of the conversation, and what the child told you in his or her own words.
5. Report the disclosure to the Children's Aid Society.
6. Tell your supervisor and rector that you have made such a report to the CAS. This helps them to prepare for potential repercussions from the report.

### **3.2 Specific Guidelines When Conducting Pastoral Care or Individual Counselling**

In times of crisis or uncertainty, people will often turn to The Church for support and understanding. Pastoral Care represents an important and rewarding ministry for those involved. However, it is important to recognize that in times of crisis, people become more vulnerable than they would otherwise be and that a caregiver may potentially have a great deal of influence over an individual's attitude and behaviour. Caregivers in these circumstances must be particularly aware of their own biases and, regardless of their intentions, must do their best not to unduly influence the person seeking care.

When a caregiver meets repeatedly and regularly with an individual to help address difficulties or uncertainties in his or her life, the relationship might be more accurately defined as a counselling relationship. Because the degree of influence is likely to be even greater in counselling situations, the caregiver needs to be particularly aware of the potential power imbalance in the relationship and be extra vigilant in maintaining appropriate boundaries. The guidelines shown below should be followed when conducting pastoral care or individual counselling:

1. Caregivers should be aware of the nature of dual relationships and avoid counselling people to whom they are personally close or with whom they have a working relationship.
2. Caregivers should be aware of their own level of competence and avoid working in areas for which they are unqualified. See Section 2.3 of this document, "Recognizing Your Own Level of Competence and Providing a Referral When Needed", for more information along these lines.
3. Caregivers should meet with a supervisor on a regular basis to discuss their work, since isolation can lead to a loss of perspective and good judgement.
4. Caregivers should never engage in any form of sexual impropriety with those whom they counsel regardless of invitation or consent. Sexual impropriety includes, but is not limited to, all forms of overt or covert seductive speech, gestures and behaviours as well as explicitly sexual contact.
5. Pastoral care and counselling relationships are for the benefit of the person being cared for. They should be entered into only with agreement from the person seeking care, and should be continued only as long as it is reasonably clear that the person is gaining some benefit from the relationship.

6. If the caregiver becomes unable or unwilling to continue the relationship, he or she should endeavor to arrange for the person to see another caregiver.
7. Caregivers must treat all information and communications obtained in meetings as strictly confidential and should not disclose them to anyone except where required by law or where given written consent by the individual(s) involved. When discussing the details of a particular situation with a supervisor, the identity of the people involved must be protected.
8. Caregivers should not agree to ongoing counselling of a person under the age of 18 without the knowledge and written consent of the youth's parent or guardian. In those situations where a minor has specifically requested counselling without his or her parents' knowledge, the caregiver should seek approval from his or her supervisor before beginning counselling. The supervisor should speak with the youth directly before granting approval.
9. When possible and where confidentiality permits, counselling should take place in a church office with a window in the door. It is best to have another adult close by while counselling takes place.
10. Counselling relationships should involve some form of record keeping. At a minimum, the caregiver should record: the date, the number of the session, who was present, and the session focus. This helps the caregiver to maintain objectivity, judge an individual's progress over time, and, in the case of litigation, recall accurately what occurred during the sessions.

### **3.3 Specific Guidelines When Conducting In-Home Visits**

There are a wide variety of reasons and circumstances that make meeting people in their own homes a necessary part of The Church's ministry. When visiting shut-ins, preparing people for baptism, welcoming newcomers, conducting stewardship or planned giving campaigns, or responding to pastoral crises, it is often necessary and desirable to go to someone's home.

However, visiting people in their own homes presents it's own set of challenges. Homes, by their nature, are private environments. Because a person tends to be more comfortable and relaxed in his or her own environment, this increased degree of relaxation may, in fact, make him or her more vulnerable. Also, because the person being visited is better able to control the situation in his or her own environment, he or she may hold a higher degree of power than the visitor. Visitors should be aware that they are potential victims of abuse when visiting someone's home and should take the necessary steps to protect themselves.

The following guidelines are meant to protect both parties in these situations – the visitor and the visited.

1. Always arrange the visit in advance. Establish a starting time and approximate ending time, as well as a clear purpose for the visit so that the individual knows exactly what to expect.
2. Make another person (secretary, spouse, colleague) aware of where you are going and when you can be expected to return.
3. Be respectful of people's time and do not overstay your welcome. When visiting a shut-in or someone who is ill, be particularly conscious of how they are feeling and avoid over-tiring them.
4. Keep the pastoral purpose of your visit in mind at all times. Do not attempt to unduly persuade or influence the person, particularly if he or she seems confused. Avoid offering advice about medication or medical treatment, and avoid arguing with, or agitating the person you are visiting.
5. Stay in the most public areas of the home – the living room, family room, or kitchen. Avoid entering a person's bedroom unless a 3<sup>rd</sup> party is present in the home.

6. Choose a seat at a comfortable distance from the person you're talking to, avoid sitting next to them on a couch or sofa. Do not invite or initiate any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact.
7. Visitors should never engage in any form of sexual impropriety with those whom they are visiting. Sexual impropriety includes, but is not limited to, all forms of overt or covert seductive speech, gestures and behaviours as well as explicitly sexual contact.
8. Do not agree to meet anyone in his or her own home if you sense your own personal safety may be compromised, or if you feel that there is the potential that a boundary may be crossed. If a person whom you don't know well asks for a meeting and you are at all suspicious, arrange to meet him or her at church offices, a coffee shop, or a local restaurant until you know him or her better.
9. When first arriving at a person's home, assess the situation for anything that may be out of the ordinary. Do not continue if the person is inappropriately dressed, under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or if a person or animal acts in a threatening or aggressive manner and is not properly restrained.
10. If the person acts strangely, says or does things that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or initiates inappropriate physical contact, tell them to stop, then, reestablish and maintain appropriate boundaries. If the behaviour continues, excuse yourself, document what happened, and report it to your supervisor. **Do not stay in a potentially dangerous or compromising situation!**
11. Do not take the person away from the home for a walk or in your car unless specifically arranged in advance as part of the visit and approved, in advance, by your supervisor. If driving a person to appointments or errands is part of the stated ministry, drivers must hold a valid driver's license and insurance. Seat belts must be available for all passengers. Drivers must not have any alcohol or drugs in their system when driving. If possible, driving ministries should be team ministries to avoid being alone in a car with a vulnerable person.

12. Visitors must treat all information and communications obtained while visiting as strictly confidential and should not disclose them to anyone except where required by law or where given written consent by the individual(s) involved. When discussing the details of a particular situation with a supervisor, the identity of the people involved must be protected.
13. Except where the stated purpose of the visit is stewardship or planned giving, it is best not to accept gifts or donations when making in-home visits. Encourage the person to make his or her donation using the offering plate or by mailing it directly to the church. If the person insists on giving you something while you are there, provide a written receipt. Explain that the church will issue an official receipt at the appropriate time.
14. It is Diocesan policy that all donors should seek independent financial and legal counsel before making any significant contributions to The Church. People should also be encouraged to speak with their family before making significant contributions in order to avoid allegations of undue influence or abuse of trust.
15. Be aware of signs that a person may not be caring for him or herself as he or she should, and may require additional community resources to assist him or her. Signs of personal neglect include, but are not limited to: a decrease in personal hygiene, wearing the same clothes all the time, particularly if they are stained or soiled, and periods of confusion, disorientation, or loss of memory.
16. If you become concerned about the well being of a person whom you are visiting, speak to your supervisor about trying to initiate contact with a family member in order to discuss the situation and recommend possible courses of action.
17. If a person makes in-home visits to the same person on a regular basis, they should be familiar with the guidelines contained in this document under Section 3.2, “Specific Guidelines When Conducting Pastoral Care or Individual Counselling”, and Section 2.3, “Recognizing Your Own Level of Competence and Providing a Referral When Needed”.

### **3.4 Specific Guidelines When Conducting Hospital or Nursing Home Visits**

People in a hospital or nursing home may be in unfamiliar surroundings. They may be experiencing considerable pain, uncertainty, or fear over their condition. They may be under the affect of anesthesia or other medication. As such, people in these situations become more vulnerable because they may not be completely themselves. Additional care must be taken when ministering to them, as outlined below:

1. Upon arrival at the hospital or nursing home, check with a nurse or attendant to determine if the person is able to receive visitors and to make them aware of your presence.
2. Make yourself aware of institutional rules and procedures and follow them closely. For example, some hospitals may require the use of security badges for regular visitors. Some areas of the hospital may have strict hand washing or other policies in place.
3. If you are a regular hospital visitor and your hospital has an on-site chaplain, make yourself known to this person. Use this person as a resource when appropriate. The hospital chaplain will be aware of any procedures or issues specific to his or her hospital.
4. Be prepared to listen to the situation or diagnosis with the individual you are visiting, but refrain from giving opinions or advice.
5. Be prepared to meet with friends or family members who may be visiting at the same time as you are. Keep in mind that these people may or may not hold the same religious beliefs as the person you are visiting.
6. Discussions with a patient, their family, or friends should be held in strict confidence. Visitors must treat all information and communications obtained while visiting as strictly confidential and should not disclose them to anyone except where required by law or where given written consent by the individual(s) involved. When discussing the details of a particular situation with a supervisor, the identity of the people involved must be protected.
7. If a nurse or doctor comes to engage the patient in discussion or treatment, excuse yourself to a waiting area until the conversation is finished, unless specifically requested to remain by the patient or the health care professional.

8. If a patient requires assistance to use the washroom, or to get out of bed, seek the help of a nurse or orderly, do not attempt to help the person on your own.
9. Do not take the person away from the hospital or nursing home for a walk or in your car unless specifically arranged in advance as part of the visit and approved, in advance, both by your supervisor and the appropriate authorities at the hospital or nursing home. If driving a person to appointments or errands is part of the stated ministry, drivers must hold a valid driver's license and insurance. Seat belts must be available for all passengers. Drivers must not have any alcohol or drugs in their system when driving. If possible, driving ministries should be team ministries to avoid being alone in a car with a vulnerable person.
10. People making hospital or nursing home visits should be familiar with the guidelines in Section 2.3 of this document, "Recognizing Your Own Level of Competence and Providing a Referral When Needed", and Section 3.2, "Specific Guidelines When Conducting Pastoral Care or Individual Counselling".

### 3.5 Specific Guidelines When Ministering to the Elderly

Most of us are familiar with the physiological changes that accompany aging. Pain and stiffness in joints can result in loss of manual dexterity and decreased mobility. Hearing often deteriorates, making communication more difficult. In later stages of life, cognitive ability may decrease, resulting in difficulties with memory or periods of confusion and disorientation. In addition, significant emotional changes are likely to occur as people begin to face end of life issues including: the inability to perform tasks that they once did, loss of significant life-long friends or companions, possible regrets over mistakes made or opportunities missed, and the inevitable facing of one's own mortality.

All this being said, we need to remember that many people remain active and contributing members of their community well into their eighties and nineties. Often, these people possess life experiences, gifts, and wisdom that make them a joy to minister to, as well as significant resources for ministering to others. The following should be kept in mind while working with the elderly:

1. Approach each individual with dignity and respect. Do not prejudge an elderly person's interests or abilities. Physical difficulties may not be indicative of interest or mental acuteness.
2. Elderly people often hold clergy and other church personnel in extremely high regard, particularly if they were taught at an early age not to question The Church. Extra caution must be used not to exert undue influence in these situations, particularly in the area of financial giving.
3. It is Diocesan policy that all donors should seek independent financial and legal counsel before making any significant contributions to The Church. Elderly people should also be encouraged to speak with their family before making significant contributions in order to avoid allegations of undue influence or abuse of trust.
4. Be aware of signs that an elderly person may not be caring for him or herself as he or she should, and may require additional community resources to assist him or her. Signs of personal neglect include, but are not limited to: a decrease in personal hygiene, wearing the same clothes all the time, particularly if they are stained or soiled, and periods of confusion, disorientation, or loss of memory.

5. If you become concerned about the well being of an elderly person, speak to your supervisor about trying to initiate contact with a family member in order to discuss the situation and recommend possible courses of action.
6. When meeting elderly people in their homes, follow the guidelines in Section 3.3 of this document, “Specific Guidelines When Conducting In-Home Visits. Be sure to arrange the visit in advance and do not overstay your welcome.
7. People visiting elderly people should also be familiar with the guidelines in Section 2.3 of this document, “Recognizing Your Own Level of Competence and Providing a Referral When Needed”, and Section 3.2, “Specific Guidelines When Conducting Pastoral Care or Individual Counselling”.