

**Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska  
1316 Peger Road  
Fairbanks, AK 99709**

**Bishop's Office**

Dear Diocesan and Parish Administrators:

Thank you for the assistance you have given to the implementation of *Faithful Healing: Preventing and Responding to Ministry Related Child Sexual Abuse*. I appreciate the efforts that have been done, particularly in the areas of the education of our young people and ensuring a safe environment for all.

Like the seamless garment image for the Church's respect of human life for all ages and circumstances, the protection of young people needs to reach out to people of all ages. Many adults, particularly those who are older with age-related disabilities can be in vulnerable situations for abuse by others. Therefore, with the assistance of our Diocesan Child Protection Review Committee, I present the *Diocese of Fairbanks Policy on Abuse of Vulnerable Adults*.

I ask that all parish and Catholic institution administrators and those who minister to older vulnerable adults study and implement this policy. Give particular attention to the Preamble of the policy. It explains the necessity of our Church working for a safe and holy environment for all members of our faith community regardless of age or circumstance. The requirements for diocesan and parish employees and those who serve older and vulnerable adults as volunteers must be observed. In many cases, these requirements have already been met through the *Faithful Healing* policy.

I am very grateful for the caring service you give to all of our people in the Diocese of Fairbanks. I believe that this policy will also assist us in carrying out our ministries.

Sincerely yours,



Bishop Donald Kettler

16 November 2005

Diocese of Fairbanks

Policy on Abuse of  
Vulnerable Adults

# **Policy on Abuse of Vulnerable Adults**

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## Preamble

Respect for all members of the Church community is very important to our Diocese. We undertake to ensure that our Church community is a safe and holy environment for all whom our ministry affects. Special care must be taken to safeguard those members of our faith community who, due to advanced age, or mental or physical disabilities, are more vulnerable than others. “Vulnerable adults” are not only those who are typically recognized as vulnerable by the state, “who, because of physical or mental impairment, [are] unable to meet [their] own needs or seek help without assistance.” *A.S.47.24.900(16)*. “Vulnerable adults” are also otherwise healthy adults who are vulnerable because of recent life experiences, for example: those in or recovering from abusive relationships, those grieving the death of a loved one, suffering job loss or career difficulties, experiencing separation, divorce, family or marital discord, financial difficulties, or facing sudden illness of those for whom they are responsible. Persons 60 years of age and older may be vulnerable simply due to the cumulative effects of age. It is important to recognize that all of us are vulnerable to varying degrees at different stages of our lives.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that: “We are a single flock under the care of a single shepherd. There can be no separate Church for persons with disabilities. Each person is created in God’s image, yet there are variations in individual abilities. Positive recognition of these differences discourages discrimination and enhances the unity of the Body of Christ. (*Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, UCCB June 3, 2003*). The Conference also cited the call of our Holy Father for actions which “ensure that the power of salvation may be shared by all” (John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, n. 16).

Abuse or exploitation of vulnerable adults can occur during ministry when persons in a position of trust or authority intentionally or unintentionally misuse their position to further their own desires, or fail to act in the best interests of the person to whom they are ministering. This abuse or exploitation can take many forms, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse and financial abuse. It is the policy of this Diocese that all who participate in ministry, whether by giving or receiving, shall be treated respectfully and honestly, and that safeguards shall be established to protect vulnerable adults during the period of their vulnerability.

Where one individual holds power over another due to position, age, size, gender or for any other reason, the potential for abuse exists. An imbalance of power may be real or merely perceived, but where it exists, the person in the position of relative power must be responsible for ensuring that abuse does not occur. We must recognize also that by agreeing to specific ministries, staff and volunteers may themselves become vulnerable to manipulation and abuse by others. As much as possible, people in positions of trust must take precautions to avoid compromising situations. By recognizing and avoiding these compromising situations, people in ministry can protect others from abuse, protect

themselves from abuse, and protect themselves from misunderstandings that may lead to allegations of abuse.

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 those to whom they minister. When these situations involve children or “vulnerable adults” as defined in state law, a person may be required by law to inform the local police, State Department of Administration, or State Department of Health and Social Services. (*See A.S.47.24.010 et. seq*). In cases of neglect or abuse involving adults, the ministering person should encourage the abused person to seek necessary help and support to stop the abuse, and should themselves secure such help for the abused person where possible.

## **Application**

This policy applies to all parishes, schools, institutions, programs and ministries operating under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Fairbanks.

## **Definitions**

The following definitions apply for purposes of this policy:

“Church personnel” includes bishops, priests and deacons with faculties to function in this Diocese, seminarians of the Diocese, those enrolled in the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program, men and women religious working in the Diocese, employees, and volunteers.

“Abuse of Vulnerable Adults” means unjust or improper use of a vulnerable adult, or that person’s resources, for one’s own profit or advantage. It includes causing physical or mental injury, and spiritual, sexual or financial abuse or exploitation.

“Financial Abuse or Exploitation” means the use of undue influence to solicit funds or property of value for personal gain or as contributions to any group or agency, including the Church.

“Mental injury” means fear or mental distress or causing a person to feel bad for their own thoughts or feelings.

“Older persons” are those 60 years of age and older.

“Physical injury” means a physical pain or an impairment of physical condition.

“Sexual abuse” means sexual contact, sexual exploitation or sexual penetration.

“Sexual contact” means knowingly touching, directly or through clothing, the victim’s genitals, anus or female breasts, or knowingly causing the victim to touch, directly or through clothing, the offender’s or victim’s genitals, anus or female breast. However, “sexual contact” does not include acts that may reasonably be construed to be normal caretaker responsibilities. Neither “sexual contact” nor “sexual penetration” includes acts for the purpose of administering a recognized and lawful form of treatment that is reasonably adapted to promoting the physical or mental health of the person being treated.

“Sexual exploitation” means allowing, permitting or encouraging a vulnerable adult to engage in sexual contact or sexual penetration with anyone, or allowing, permitting or encouraging a vulnerable adult to engage in lewd exhibition of the person’s genitals, anus or female breast.

“Sexual penetration” means genital intercourse, cunnilingus, fellatio, anal intercourse, or an intrusion, however slight, of an object or any part of a person’s body into the genital or anal opening of another person’s body.

“Spiritual Abuse” means imposing one’s own values or morals on another.

“Vulnerable adults” are persons 18 years of age or older who, because of physical, mental or emotional impairment, or the effects of recent life experiences are presently unable to exercise a normal adult’s degree of physical or emotional independence or mental insight and judgment.

## **Screening**

The Diocese of Fairbanks is committed to healthy ministry, and seeks to engage competent, qualified people. To protect vulnerable adults, Church personnel will be screened for their fitness to work with such persons.

All volunteers and employees in the Diocese shall complete an Application for Volunteers/Employees. The application shall ask specific questions about working with vulnerable adults.

Background checks, including a criminal history check, will be required for those employees and volunteers working with vulnerable adults, and for any other volunteer roles identified by the Bishop.

## **Reports of Abuse**

Abuse or neglect of vulnerable adults is usually a violation of state law. Some church personnel (e.g. clergy) are mandatory reporters under state law (Alaska Statute 47.24.010). All church personnel of the Diocese of Fairbanks who have reasonable cause

to suspect that a vulnerable adult has suffered harm as a result of abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any church personnel shall immediately report the harm to the Department of Administration or Department of Health and Social Services, State of Alaska. (See Appendix 1, Telephone Numbers for Reporting Abuse). Additionally, church personnel are encouraged to report neglect of persons 60 years and older who reside in long term care facilities or residences to the Long Term Care Ombudsman. (Alaska Statute 44.21.232). Those who report in good faith are shielded from civil and criminal liability for reporting. (Alaska Statute 44.21.236: 47.24.120).

If such a report is made, and the suspected abuser is one of the church personnel, a report must also be made immediately to the Bishop.

There is a special situation with the clergy-penitent privilege. A priest or deacon cannot be required to report information he acquired in a privileged conversation. A priest is absolutely prohibited from revealing, in words or in any manner for any reason, information acquired from a sacramental confession. This confidentiality is recognized under Alaska law. (See Alaska Rules of Evidence 506, Appendix II)

Nevertheless, clergy are encouraged to inform persons that they will not normally accept confidential communications concerning abuse of vulnerable adults outside of a sacramental confession.

Present abuse. Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that abuse of vulnerable adults involving Church personnel is a present or recent concern must report the suspected abuse directly to civil authorities and to the Bishop. Church personnel shall encourage such direct reporting.

Past abuse. The Diocese seeks to promote healing and reconciliation for those who have suffered abuse by Church personnel in the past. Such persons are encouraged to contact the Diocese's Assistance Coordinator. The Diocese will provide pastoral or other assistance when appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

## **Response to Abuse Report**

A sacred relationship exists between the Catholic Church and its members. Abuse of any kind and certainly abuse of vulnerable adults are matters of gravest concern. Knowledge of such abuse calls for a special response so that the safety of the vulnerable adult and the community is assured and healing can take place.

If the alleged violator is one of our church personnel, the first response must always be immediate and direct reporting to the proper civil authorities. A report must also be made to the Bishop. The next response should be assistance to bring healing and pastoral care wherever that is possible. With this in mind, the Diocese of Fairbanks has designated a special Assistance Coordinator to coordinate response in situations of reported abuse of vulnerable adults by church personnel.

When the Diocese is informed of allegations of abuse by any of its personnel, and after ensuring the allegations are reported to civil authorities, the Diocese must address the needs and rights of all involved – the person alleging abuse, the accused, and the parish/school community affected. The Assistance Coordinator will respond promptly to persons who contact the Diocese concerning abuse and will offer to meet with the caller. If the report concerns present abuse by any church personnel, the caller will be encouraged to report the suspected abuse directly to civil authorities. As appropriate, the Assistance Coordinator will offer whatever outreach programs or other assistance that will best promote the healing and reconciliation of the person reporting abuse. This outreach may include professional counseling, spiritual assistance or other services.

After this call/meeting, the Assistance Coordinator will contact designated Diocesan officials to review the information provided by the caller. If the allegation is subject to reporting under A.S. 47.24.010-.900, and the caller has not already done so, the Diocese will make a report to an appropriate authority under that statute. The Assistance Coordinator will inform the complainant that a report was made to civil authorities.

The Diocese will cooperate fully with civil authorities in their investigation of the charges. To ensure that there will be no interference or perceived interference in the investigation by civil authorities, any internal investigation by the Diocese will be coordinated with civil authorities while the civil or criminal investigation is pending.

## **Implementation and Duties**

To ensure the full implementation of this policy and to provide a vehicle for accountability, the following positions will be created and filled with qualified persons:

Assistance Coordinator. An Assistance Coordinator will be designated by the Bishop to receive and coordinate the response to allegations of abuse of vulnerable adults against church personnel.

Parish/School Coordinator. Each parish and school will designate one person to coordinate and ensure implementation of the policies and procedures required by this policy (e.g., background checks, training for personnel, etc.). The Pastor or Director of Schools, if not the designated person, is responsible for implementing abuse policies at the parish/school.

Review Board. The Bishop will establish a Review Board. The Review Board will assist the Bishop in assessing allegations and fitness for ministry, and will regularly review Diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with abuse of vulnerable adults. The Review Board may also advise the Bishop on other related matters, at his request.

The Review Board shall review reports of abuse of vulnerable adults involving church personnel and all actions taken by the Diocese to ensure the integrity of the

process for responding to reports of abuse. The Board shall offer advice regarding investigations and all other responses required for implementing this policy. The Board shall oversee the Diocese's handling of all such cases. In order to assist the Bishop in reducing and preventing incidents of abuse, the Review Board may examine policies and procedures and make recommendations for changes or the creation of new directives. The Review Board may act prospectively or retrospectively on these matters.

The Bishop shall appoint the members of the Review Board after consultation with appropriate Diocesan committees.

The Board shall be composed primarily of lay people who reflect the diversity of the Diocese, but a majority of whom are not in the employ of the Diocese. The members of the Review Board will be selected on the basis of their maturity, credibility, and ability to exercise independent judgment. At least one member shall be a priest, one member shall have particular expertise in the care and treatment of vulnerable adults, and the entire board will receive special training in order to provide appropriate advice.

The Review Board will review Diocesan policies on abuse of vulnerable adults at least every two years.

## **Procedure When Clergy Are Accused of Abuse**

When an accusation is made against a cleric, and after civil authorities have been notified, a preliminary investigation of the accusation will be made by an Investigator delegated by the Bishop. If it has not already occurred, and unless civil authorities request otherwise, the accused individual also will be informed of the allegation by the Bishop or his Investigator and will be given every opportunity to respond to the charges.

In the case of a cleric, member of a religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office, the Bishop will ordinarily suspend the accused from ministry and will encourage an outside professional assessment of the person accused. Should the accused be a cleric, canon law will be followed. Clerics and religious who are members of religious orders will be placed on leave from service in the Diocese and their religious superiors notified. (These three categories of persons are singled out because of their unique relationship to the Bishop or superior and because they are subject in a particular way to canon law. Decisions regarding such individuals will be guided by procedures of canon law.)

The Investigator shall obtain information about the accused person's file or background, make appropriate inquiries about the allegations, and make a report of all available information for presentation to the Bishop and the Review Board.

The Review Board shall evaluate allegations of abuse by priests or deacons in order to advise the Bishop on whether or not there is reasonable cause to suspect that the accused cleric engaged in such abuse. On the basis of that evaluation, the Board shall make recommendations to the Bishop about the following:

1. If the cleric has already been temporarily withdrawn from ministry pending inquiry, whether such withdrawal should continue; if the withdrawal should not continue, whether any restrictions should be imposed on the cleric returning to ministry;
2. If the cleric has not been temporarily withdrawn from ministry, whether he should be withdrawn, whether he should continue in his assignment and, if so, whether any restrictions should be imposed upon him;
3. Whether the preliminary actions taken by the Investigator were appropriate and whether further action by the investigator is required;
4. Whether the file may be closed at this stage of the proceedings or held open pending further action by civil authorities, further inquiry by the Investigator, or further action by the Board;
5. If the cleric's conduct does not constitute abuse, but is otherwise inappropriate, the Board may recommend further action to be taken by the Bishop.

Upon receiving and considering the recommendations of the Review Board, the Bishop is required by canon law to make an independent determination of whether it is probable that an accused cleric has committed abuse. This determination will include the protection of the rights of the accused and a decision on the action to be taken, including penalties, suspension or dismissal.

## **Procedure When Lay Employees or Volunteers Are Accused of Abuse**

An accused employee or volunteer who is not a cleric, member of a religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office may be placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the internal and/or civil investigation or may be terminated. Diocesan officials will coordinate with the accused individual's supervisor on this decision. The Investigator designated by the Bishop and the Review Committee will proceed as in the case of allegations against a cleric, except that the Bishop will make the final decision on whether or not the lay person accused has probably committed abuse of a vulnerable adult, and, if so, will terminate the person's employment or volunteer service.

## Outreach Offered in All Cases

When allegations of abuse have been made, and pending the results of the investigation into those allegations, the Diocese will reach out to persons affected. The Assistance Coordinator will keep in contact with the victim/accuser (or the caregiver or guardian of the vulnerable adult), and his or her family, if appropriate. Psychological counseling and/or pastoral care may be offered in the spirit of Christian justice and charity. When counseling is paid for by the Diocese, the therapist must be one authorized by the Diocese. Whenever possible, the therapist will be one who specializes in the treatment of vulnerable adults.

Within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputations of the individuals involved, the Diocese will deal as openly as possible with members of the community, providing assistance and support to communities directly affected by alleged ministerial abuse of vulnerable adults.

Since the need to protect persons who may be at risk and the safety of the community are always paramount, the Bishop, at his discretion and according to the norms of civil and canon law, may take further action to ensure that safety when there has been an allegation of abuse. The Bishop will also consider the rights and reputation of the person accused.

## Possible Outcomes of Abuse Report

There are three possible outcomes of the civil and/or internal investigation and assessment process:

- 1. The allegation may be substantiated or found credible, either through the admission or lack of denial of the perpetrator, through the investigation, or through the evaluation process.**

If an allegation of abuse of a vulnerable adult is substantiated or found credible, the person accused will have been reported to a governmental authority and will be subject to the sanctions of criminal and/or civil law. When any cleric, member of religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office is found guilty under secular law of abuse (or when it appears that an allegation of abuse against such a person is true), the Bishop shall proceed according to the norms of canon law.

When any employee or volunteer of the Diocese who is not a cleric, member of a religious institute or holder of ecclesiastical office is found guilty of abuse, or when it appears that an allegation of abuse against such a person is true, the individual may be terminated from employment, volunteer service, or any other position of responsibility within the Diocese, if termination has not earlier occurred.

Additionally, when an allegation of abuse of a vulnerable adult is substantiated or appears to be true, the Diocese may seek repayment from the offender for the cost of therapy provided to the victim, and for other costs related to the abuse.

The Assistance Coordinator will inform the parties regarding the outcome of the investigation. Arrangements for the ongoing psychological and pastoral care of the victim may be made.

**2. The allegation may be unsubstantiated, disproved or found not credible.**

If an allegation of abuse is unsubstantiated, disproved, or found not credible, the Assistance Coordinator will inform the parties of the outcome of the investigation. Continued efforts will be made to maintain the good name of the accused and provide for his or her well-being. The accused will be supported and assisted by the Diocese in efforts to restore his or her good name. If there are any steps that can be taken to assure a return to normal relationships in the parish, school, or entity involved, the Assistance Coordinator will consider these steps.

**3. The evidence supporting the allegation may be inconclusive to support a finding either way.**

If the evidence is inconclusive as to the validity of an allegation of abuse, or it is determined that the conduct complained of does not constitute abuse, two factors must be balanced. First, the safety and well being of the alleged victim and the community must be assured. Second, the rights of the accused must be considered.

Depending upon the charge and the nature of the evidence, lay employees or volunteers may be required to take corrective action or may be terminated according to the personnel policies of the Diocese in effect at the time. Clerics may be issued a warning as understood in canon law. It lies within the prudential judgment of the Bishop or his delegate to require psychological evaluation and treatment of the person accused.

The Assistance Coordinator will inform the parties involved of the outcome of the investigation and shall make efforts to minimize the impact on the alleged victim and the community. In these cases, the Assistance Coordinator may recommend that the alleged victim receive follow-up pastoral care or psychological counseling, as appropriate.

Whenever an investigation under civil or canon law raises questions of the continued fitness for ministry of a priest or deacon, the matter will be referred to the Review Board for further review and recommendation to the Bishop.

## Transfer of Clergy

No Diocesan priest or deacon who has committed an act of abuse of a vulnerable adult will be transferred by the Diocese for ministerial assignment or residence to another diocese/eparchy or religious province until the Bishop has forwarded, in a confidential manner, to the local Bishop/eparch and religious ordinary (if applicable) of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any act of abuse of a vulnerable adult by the priest or deacon, and all other information that tends to show he has been or may be a danger to vulnerable adults. If a priest or deacon who is a member of a religious order has committed an act of abuse of a vulnerable adult while in the Diocese, and is transferred by his religious superior, the Bishop shall forward to the superior, in a confidential manner, any information about the abuse.

## Prevention and Education

The Diocese is committed to preventing and fully addressing abuse of vulnerable adults by any Diocesan personnel, and to recognizing and responding to signs of such abuse against the people it serves. The following steps shall be taken:

Screening. Any cleric or religious applying for or proposed for assignment to ministerial services in a church, school or other entity operated by the Diocese must complete an application process which conforms with the guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for such clerics and religious. All Diocesan personnel as defined in this policy must complete the Diocesan *Background Check Request* and *Authorization* forms and undergo a criminal background check through the Diocese's Human Resources Office. Ordinarily, this screening will be initiated on or before the beginning date of conditional employment or volunteer service.

Education. All church personnel whose ministerial duties regularly involve vulnerable adults will be required to attend presentations or have other training dealing with the recognition of and reporting requirements for abuse or neglect of such persons

Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer. A Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer will be available to assist parishes and schools in implementing this policy.

Distribution of Policy Statement. This policy statement will be distributed to all Diocesan employees. It will also be available to all interested parties on the Diocesan website and from the Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer. Copies shall be available at all churches in the Diocese.

## Guidelines

Those who purposely abuse others usually seek out places where they can be alone with their victims. They encourage their victims to maintain 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. Consequently, as much as possible, ministry should be performed in public places, open to observations by others. Also, people should not minister in isolation. They should be supervised and supported in their ministry. When working in isolation, judgment can become skewed, boundaries may be crossed, and abuse may occur.

While the principles stated above and the guidelines below should be followed whenever possible, circumstances will arise in a church environment where these principles and guidelines cannot be applied. It is likely that there will be times when people will request private, confidential pastoral care in closed settings. There will also be times when individual home visits to vulnerable adults will be necessary. These types of ministry should continue and not be discouraged; however, the people involved should be aware of the inherent risks in these situations and should minimize the possibility of compromising situations.

### **General Guidelines:**

It is preferable to meet with a group rather than be alone with an individual.

It is preferable to have more than one adult present when working with vulnerable people. If another adult cannot be in the same room, it is desirable to have him or her in the same building.

It is preferable to meet in an open, public space rather than in a closed, private room. 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.

When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door; a door with a window is better than a solid door.

When involved in ministry, it is always wise to make others aware of your activities and your whereabouts.

It is best to schedule regular meetings with your pastor or supervisor to discuss the nature and progress of the ministry.

Elderly vulnerable adults often hold clergy and other church ministers in extremely high regard, particularly if they were taught at an early age not to question the Church. Extra caution must be taken to avoid unduly influencing such persons, especially in the area of financial giving.

It is Diocesan policy that all donors contemplating significant financial contributions should seek independent financial and legal counsel before doing so. People should also be encouraged to speak with family members before making any significant contributions. Except where the purpose of the visit is stewardship or planned giving, ministering persons should not accept gifts or donations from vulnerable adults. Encourage the person to make any donations directly to the church if they so desire. If the person insists on giving you something while you are there, provide a written receipt. Explain that the Diocese will issue an official receipt at the appropriate time.

**Guidelines for Home Ministry:**

Always arrange the visit in advance. Establish a starting time and approximate ending time, as well as a clear purpose for the visit, so the individual knows exactly what to expect.

Make another person (secretary, spouse, colleague) aware of where you are going and when you expect to return.

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 overtiring them.

Keep the ministerial 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. Never offer advice about medication or medical treatment, and avoid arguing with or agitating the person you are visiting.

Stay in the most public areas of the home – the living room, family room or kitchen. Avoid entering a person's bedroom unless absolutely necessary (as where the person is bedridden) and unless a third person is present in the home.

Choose a seat a comfortable distance from the person. Avoid sitting next to the person on a couch or sofa. Do not invite, initiate, or tolerate any inappropriate physical contact.

Ministering persons should never engage in any form of sexual impropriety with those whom they are visiting. Sexual impropriety includes all forms of suggestive or seductive speech, gestures, and behaviors, as well as sexual contact.

Do not agree to meet anyone in his or her home if you sense your personal safety might be compromised, or if you feel that a boundary of appropriate conduct may be crossed. If a person whom you do not know well asks for a meeting, arrange to meet with him or her at church offices, a coffee shop, or other public place.

When first arriving at a person's home, assess the situation for anything that may be out of the ordinary. Do not continue a visit if a person is inappropriately dressed, is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or if the person or an animal on the premises acts aggressively.

If a person acts strangely and says or does things that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, excuse yourself, document what happened and report the incident to your pastor or ministerial supervisor. Do not stay in a potentially dangerous or compromising situation.

If you become involved in a situation where a boundary of appropriate conduct is violated, or something occurs that is out of the ordinary or subject to misinterpretation, immediately report it to your pastor or ministerial supervisor.

Those engaged in Church ministry must treat all information and communications received from those ministered to as strictly confidential, and should not disclose such information except where required by law, where the communicating person has given written consent for disclosure, or the continued well-being of the person is in jeopardy.

Be aware of signs that vulnerable adults may not be caring for themselves as they should, and may require additional community resources to assist them. Signs of personal neglect include, but are not limited to, a decrease in personal hygiene, wearing stained or soiled clothing, periods of confusion, disorientation or loss of memory.

If you become concerned about the well being of a person whom you are visiting for any reason not requiring a report to civil or Church authorities, speak to your pastor or supervisor about initiating contact with a family member of the vulnerable adult in order to discuss the situation and decide appropriate action. Keep in mind that conversations of this nature, although necessary, may be perceived by the vulnerable adult at a betrayal of trust or a breach of confidentiality. Discretion is essential in these situations.

Persons who make in-home visits to the same person regularly should be aware of their own level of qualification and competence and should avoid offering advice in areas in which they are unqualified.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Telephone Numbers for Diocese of Fairbanks**

Bishop's Office	(907) 374- 9501
Diocese Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer	(907) 374-9500
<b>Emergency Reports</b>	<b>911</b>
Alaska State Troopers	(907) 451-5100
Fairbanks Police Department	(907) 459-6500
North Pole Police Department	(907) 488-6902
Adult Abuse Reporting/Adult Protective Services	1 (800) 478-9996
Long Term Care Ombudsman	1 (800) 730-6393

## Appendix II

### Rule 506. Communications to Clergymen.

- (a) **Definitions.** As used in this rule:
- (1) A member of the clergy is a minister, priest, rabbi, or other similar functionary of a religious organization, or an individual reasonably believed so to be by the person consulting the individual.
  - (2) A communication is confidential if made privately and not intended for further disclosure except to other persons present in furtherance of the purpose of the communication.
- (b) **General Rule of Privilege.** A person has a privilege to refuse to disclose and to prevent another from disclosing a confidential communication by the person to a member of the clergy in that individual's professional character as spiritual adviser.
- (c) **Who May Claim the Privilege.** The privilege may be claimed by the person, by the person's guardian or conservator, or by the person's personal representative if the person is deceased. The member of the clergy may claim the privilege on behalf of the person. The authority so to do is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

(Added by SCO 364 effective August 1, 1979; amended by SCO 1153 effective July 15, 1994)

## **Diocese of Fairbanks**

### **Statement of Receipt and Agreement**

By signing this statement, I acknowledge that I have received the Policy Booklet: “Diocese of Fairbanks Policy on Abuse to Vulnerable Adults”.

Further, by signing this agreement, I agree to abide by all the provisions contained in the booklet. I understand that this agreement is required for me to serve in any capacity of ministering to or volunteering to work with vulnerable adults.

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Date

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Applicant’s signature