

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN  
DIOCESE OF ALLEPPEY

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY  
2024

## FORWARD

We are deeply committed to the safety, well-being and holistic development of every child under our care. The sanctity of childhood is a divine gift and it is our sacred duty to protect it with unwavering dedication. Pope Francis through his Apostolic Letter “You are the Light of the World” (7 May 2019), has made his stand on the protection of minors very clear—that the Church will not tolerate any form of violation or abuse of them within its purview. He has clearly directed that explicit guidelines for their protection be formulated and followed everywhere in the church.

In an increasingly complex world, the vulnerability of our children has become a matter of grave concern. This Child Safeguarding Policy is a testament to our resolve to create a safe and nurturing environment for all children, ensuring that they can grow, learn, and thrive in a space free from harm and abuse. In accordance with the spirit and purpose of our Catholic mission, the Diocese of Alleppey expresses its firm commitment to the overall well-being of Minors, especially those who are defenseless and most in need.

The drafting and implementing of Child Safeguarding Policy for everyone of the Diocese of Alleppey is one of the important milestones in our Social commitment.

This policy outlines the standards, procedures, and guidelines that all members of our diocese—clergy, religious, and laity—must adhere to in order to safeguard the rights and dignity of every child. It is built on the principles of respect, responsibility and compassion, reflecting the teachings of Christ and the values we hold dear as a faith community.

Our commitment to child safeguarding extends beyond mere compliance with legal requirements; it is a reflection of our core mission to live out the Gospel in every aspect of our ministry. We equip ourselves to be vigilant, proactive, and united in our efforts to protect the innocent and to foster an environment of trust and safety.

With much pleasure we release this Child Safeguarding Policy that has been created to guide us in the various contexts of our ministry with children in the Diocese of Alleppey.

I urge each one of you to embrace this policy with the seriousness it demands. Let us work together, guided by the Holy Spirit, to ensure that our diocese remains a place where every child is cherished, protected, and given the opportunity to flourish in the love of Christ. I sincerely wish that this Policy will be followed in our Diocese for maintaining a safe and Child friendly environment for the minors.

May God bless our efforts and grant us the wisdom and strength to uphold this vital mission!

In Christ,

**Bishop James Raphael Anaparambil**

## MESSAGE

Whenever I think of our duty to protect the minors and the vulnerable adults, the very first image that comes to my mind is the marvellous structure and functioning of mother's womb. It is where God, the creator and protector, is amazingly at work. Every movement in the mother's womb is only to safeguard and keep the whole atmosphere within, most conducive to develop the foetus to be able to live enjoying the full dignity of a human person. How marvellously God who supplies oxygen, nourishment and love through the umbilical cord and the care of parents, ensures within the 9 months of its sojourn in its mother's womb, the various faculties to breathe, to eat and drink, to walk the earth and even beyond, to work creatively, to think/reason out, to imagine, to choose, to love, to pray, to be grateful, to be careful and to care for, to be compassionate and merciful, etc. etc. What's the purpose of such an amazing care? It is ever to ensure a dignified and well protected human growth towards perfection. So, the protection of a child is its very birth right and we arrive at this truth simply by a meditation on our very origins.

The culture of protecting a child until it is a major, therefore, is learnt from the school of 'mother's womb' and, obviously, it belongs to the school of the kingdom of God. The Word of God strongly admonishes us: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer 1,5); "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19,14); "...but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mt 18,6).

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter "*VOS ESTIS LUX MUNDI*" (*You are the Light of the World*), while presenting the various delicate processes through which every child is to be protected, conceives such a duty as part of our Christian existence/culture as he says, "All of us, in fact, are called to give concrete witness of faith in Christ in our lives and, in particular, in our relationship with others."

The very formation of the Commission for children under KRLCBC, even as the Commission for Catechetics is well functioning to take good care of children and their formation, manifests the great and extra concern the Catholic Church has in the grass roots to the protection of children.

Nelson Mandela, anti-apartheid revolutionary and political leader says, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." The publication of the *Child Safeguarding Policy* by the Commission for Children of the diocese of Alleppey, is simply the revelation of the soul of the diocese of Alleppey. Let the Spirit of the Lord set it ablaze ever!

May I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank from the core of my being, Mr Jose Antony Vattathil, the Director of the Commission for Children, and his collaborators for their commitment in bringing this document to light!

Alappuzha  
29-10-2024

**Fr Joy Puthenveettil**  
Vicar General

## **PREFACE**

It is with great pleasure and a sense of responsibility that we introduce the Child Safeguarding Policy of the Diocese of Alleppey. This document reflects our unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety, well-being and dignity of every child entrusted to our care within our diocese. We express sincere gratitude to our Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. James Raphael Anaparambil for his guidance in making this Policy.

This policy is not merely a set of rules and procedures; it is a solemn covenant that embodies our core values of compassion, justice and integrity.

Through the collaborative efforts of clergy, lay leaders, volunteers, Sisters and professionals, we have crafted this policy to establish clear guidelines for preventing, identifying and responding to any concern regarding child safety. It is our collective responsibility to uphold these standards diligently, ensuring that every child feels safe, respected, and valued in all aspects of its engagement with the Church.

By adhering to this policy, we pledge to hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of ethical conduct and to prioritize the protection of children above all else.

As we embark on this journey together, let us embrace this policy not only as a legal and moral imperative but also as a solemn promise to honor and protect the innocence and dignity of every child in our care.

With heartfelt gratitude for your suggestions, support and dedication to this vital mission,

**Jose Antony**  
Director, Commission For Children,

# **COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, DIOCESE OF ALLEPPEY**

## **POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

### **IN THE DIOCESE OF ALLEPPEY**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Diocese of Alleppey is devoted to the protection and well-being of all children within its community.”Unless you become like one of these little children you will not enter the Kingdom of God” (Mt.18,3). Lord Jesus has expressed immense love and concern for the children. He valued them and called them and exhorted “LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME” (Mt.19.14) . So every action against the children is against will of our Lord Jesus and in turn it will be an anti-social move. As per the directions given by the Vatican Curia and the guidelines issued by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) and Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference (KCBC) and complying with the norms of the Code of Canon Law and Civil Law I, Bishop James Raphael Anaparambil, the Bishop of the Diocese of Alleppey, by this Decree publish a Policy for the Protection of Children in the Diocese of Alleppey to prevent and manage Sexual or any other forms of harassment and for the protection of Children from Sexual and any other forms of offences committed by Church Personnel namely Clerics (Bishops, Priests and Deacons), lay workers and volunteers both paid and otherwise, religious both men and women and seminarians. This policy provides a comprehensive framework to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation, ensuring a safe environment for every child. We will follow the rules and regulations of the government and the guidelines of CBCI.

#### **2. Vision**

To create a safe and nurturing environment where every child is respected, valued, and protected from harm, reflecting the values of the Christian faith.

### ***3. Mission***

To implement effective safeguarding measures, provide education and training and foster a culture of vigilance and responsibility for the protection of children in all diocesan activities and settings.

### ***4. Motto***

"Protecting Every Child with Love, Care, Optimism and Vigilance."

### ***5. Application***

This Policy shall apply to all church personnel, parishes, organizations, institutions, lay employees, animators and volunteers here in the Diocese of Alleppey.

### **6. Objectives**

**The following are the objectives of the policy**

- a. To consider and protect our children from all kinds of exploitations and promote the social participation in this process.
- b. To take all possible steps to protect our children and helping them to reach their full abilities to attain the growth so that they may enjoy a contented life.
- c. To safeguard the children of various levels under the care of the Diocese of Alleppey, since it is not only a call to duty and responsibility but also the first priority to defend them from all possible physical, emotional psychological and other dangers.
- d. To associate with the laws practiced in the country for the protection and promotion of the rights of the children, hoping that it will be a valuable contribution from the part of the Diocese to the steps taken by the government and other bodies in connection with the care and protection of Children.
- e. To exercise the responsibility to protect and care the rights of the minors in the Diocese of Alleppey, especially their rights to health, education, development, protection and consideration.
- f. To be the voice of every child under the care of the Diocese of Alleppey by creating, awareness, promoting, education, recognition and ensuring prevention, strategic legal support and intervention.

- g. To ensure the execution of the policy through a proper system faithful follow up.

#### **4. Our Principles and Objectives**

Every member of the Diocese shall, following the call to love tenderly, act justly and walk humbly before the Lord, be bound by these guidelines and shall, in his/her life and ministry, witness to God's love for every human person:

- 4.1. By sensitivity, reverence and respect in his/her relationships treating all people with respect and courtesy and maintaining sexual and professional boundaries.
- 4.2. By exercising prudent judgment in initiating or responding to any physical contact, always keeping the well-being of the other person as the only goal.
- 4.3 By respecting the physical and emotional space of those who work with, socialize with or relate to in any way.
- 4.4 By exercising ministry only in places that offer sufficiently safe environment with openness and visibility.
- 4.5 By exercising prudent judgment in the expression of and response to affection and tenderness, avoiding all forms of over familiarity or inappropriate language.
- 4.6 By ensuring whenever reasonably possible, that another adult is present or close by, when ministering to a minor or a vulnerable person, always in a place visible to others, particularly when one is aware of one's weakness.
- 4.7 By becoming aware of the risks involved in entering into a personal relationship with those one ministers to, particularly a minor or a vulnerable person, as also in ministering to those who are already one's personal friends.
- 4.8. By regularly examining oneself regarding ones own ministry and relationships, both individually and with the help of a mentor, and by reviewing how effectively he/she maintains the boundaries between his/her ministry and personal relationships.
- 4.9. By establishing relationships that could be developed and matured within the context of the Gospel values and characterized by openness, honesty and integrity.

- 4.10. By giving oneself wholeheartedly to a vibrant prayer life, nourished by the Word of God and the Sacraments, regular spiritual direction, and Sacrament of reconciliation.
- 4.11. By seeking professional help when one observes with persistent and irresistible sexual attraction to or acting in a sexual manner with someone he/she mentors, teaches, directs, supervises works with or ministers to.
- 4.12. By avoiding any behaviour that could reasonably be interpreted as sexual misconduct, abuse, harassment or irresponsibility, even with the consent of the other person.
- 4.13. By shunning any and all sexual contact even with the consent of the other.
- 4.14. By not misusing power, authority and influence to establish a sexual relationship.

## ***5. Sources:***

This document is written in accordance with:-

1. POCSO 2012
2. J.J. (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015
3. The Code of Canon Law 1983
4. Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela 2001 (2010)
5. Vos Estis Lux Mundi 2019
6. Procedural norms for Dealing with cases involving sexual Abuse of Minors, CBCI 2015
7. Guidelines for Safe Environment Programme, KCBC, 2018
8. UNICEF's Child Protection Policy
9. Government of India's Child Protection Protocols
10. Mental Health Care Act 2017
11. Rights of Children of Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009
12. The Orphanages and Other Charitable Homes (Supervisions & Control) Act 1960
13. Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986
14. National Policy for children Act 2013
15. Domestic Violence Act 2005



16. VADEMECUM on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

## **6. Definitions:**

In these norms unless the context otherwise requires:

- 6.1. **Child** means a person who has not completed the age of 18 years.
- 6.2. **Church Personnel** means Clerics (Bishops, Priests and Deacons), lay employees and volunteers both paid and unpaid (Kaikkars, Sacristian, Chemmador, Catechism teachers, parish council members, Parish finance council members office bearers, animators and members of BCC, lay and pious associations, similar office bearers and those who are engaged in the activities of Parish, Diocesan level office barers etc.), men and women members of Religious Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, It is Secular Institutes and equivalent entities, and candidates to priesthood and religious life as well as other similar states of life.
- 6.3. **Ministry** means pastoral and spiritual counselling, spiritual direction, retreat apostolate, confessions, psychological counselling, social-developmental works, teaching and student mentoring or mentoring of all kinds.
- 6.4. **Sexual Harassment** means and includes any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal expression or physical conduct of a sexual nature which make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment includes any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behaviour, whether directly or by implication.
- a. Physical contact and advances;
  - b. Demand or request for sexual favours including travel occasions.
  - c. Making sexually coloured remarks or jokes or conversation;
  - d. Showing pornography;
  - e. Any other unwelcome physical conduct or verbal or non- verbal expressions of sexual nature;

- 6.5. Any act falling under the purview of the following cases will be considered as an incident of sexual harassment:
- a. When submission to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and verbal expression or physical conduct of a sexual nature are, implicitly or explicitly, made a term or condition for teaching/ guidance, employment, participation, or evaluation of a person's engagement in any activity.
  - b. When unwelcome sexual advances, and verbal or non- verbal expressions and/or physical conduct such as loaded comments, remarks or jokes, letters, phone calls or e-mails, message through any social media platform, gestures, exhibition of pornography, lurid stares, physical contact, stalking, sounds or display of a derogatory nature is verified.
  - c. When a person uses the body or any part of it or any object as an extension of the body with a sexual purpose in relation to another person with or without the latter's consent or against that person's will, such conduct will amount to sexual harassment.
  - d. When deprecatory comments, conduct or any such behaviour is based on the gender identity/sexual orientation of the person and/or when the premises or any public forum of the institute is used to denigrate/misconduct during the time of travel or study tours from institutions/ discriminate against person(s), or when a hostile environment is created on the basis of a person's gender identity/sexual orientation.
  - e. When a person shows any humiliating treatment to another person that is likely to affect his/her health and safety.
- 6.7. Teaching activities or explanation of various issues related to fertility, reproductive health and other research topics in a scientific manner as a part of training programme approved and endorsed by legitimate authorities which will not come under any of the offences of the law of the land, will not be considered as harassment.
- 6.8 **Other forms of harassment** means, a course of conduct which annoys, threatens, intimidates, alarms, or puts a person in fear of their safety.

- 6.9. **Committee for the protection of children means**, The committee constituted by the Bishop of Alleppey for the protection, safeguarding and monitoring desirable existence and growth of the Children of Alleppey Diocese.
- 6.10. **Complainant means**, a victim or if the victim is unable to make a complaint due to mental or physical incapacity or death, his/her guardian / parent /legal representative or such other person as may be prescribed by law.
- 6.11. **Respondent** means, the Church personnel against whom a complaint has been made.
- 6.12. Wherever '**she/he**' is used in these procedures to indicate a person or persons, it includes also the persons not belonging to either of these genders.
- 6.13. A **Parish** is a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor. (Can. 515 §1) Unless the law provides otherwise, a quasi- parish is equivalent to a parish. A quasi-parish is certain community of Christ's faithful within a particular Church, entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor, but because of special circumstances not yet established as a parish. (Can.516 §1); Where some communities cannot be established as parishes or quasi-parishes, the Diocesan Bishop is to provide for their spiritual care in some other way. (Can.516 §2)
- 6.14. **Institution** means, an organization or institute founded for a religious, educational, professional or social purpose managed by the Diocese of Alleppey.
- 6.15. **Service Provider** means, one who renders service either paid or unpaid in the churches, institutions or similar entities of the Diocese of Alleppey.
- 6.16. **Day** means a calendar day according to the Christian era.

## ***7. Jurisdiction***

This policy and its norms and procedures shall apply to:

1. Clerics (Bishops, Priests and Deacons) belonging to and residing in the territorial or pastoral limits of the Diocese of Alleppey.

2. Men and women members of Religious Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, Secular Institutes and equivalent entities, when they hold an office in the diocese and when they reside in the parishes or the church related institutions in the geographical boundary of the Diocese of Alleppey.
3. Candidates to priesthood and religious life as well as other similar entities.
4. Layemployees and volunteers, paid or unpaid, like trustees, Sacristians, chemmadors, catechism teachers, Parish council members Parish finance council members, animators, office bearers and members of BCC and Ministries of lay and pious associations and similar office bearers both in Parish Diocese levels and those who are engaged in the activities of church, whenever they act in the capacity of a church personnel.
5. Service providers and outsiders who may be within the jurisdictional area of the Diocese of Alleppey at the time of commission of the act coming under the purview of these norms.
6. The Committee for child protection has the duty to ensure that the internal complaint committee/redressal committee is formed and maintained in every catholic institution and parishes in the Diocese.
7. Staff members of the educational institutions of the Diocese
8. Staff members of the Catechism centers of the Diocese
9. Organisers of the camps and training programmes for the minors by any one of the Diocesan organizations.

## **CONSTITUTION AND FUNCTION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

### **1. Constitution of the Committee for the Protection of Children**

- 1.1. **The Committee** shall consist of minimum of 6 members, who shall be appointed by the Bishop of Alleppey. Of the 6 members, there shall be 3 women (at least one woman religious)
- 1.2. **The Director** may always be a well balanced person ( with adequate knowledge in Child protection rules of the government and its procedures, with good social image and sincerity), appointed by the Bishop for a period of 3 years. The Director can be reappointed any number of times. He is to lead, coordinate and administe the functions of the Commission as per the procedures and to report periodically about it to the Bishop.
- 1.3. **The office Secretary**, appointed by the Bishop, shall be a religious woman who shall supervise and administer the day to day affairs of the office including maintenance of office files, records, viz, attendance- register, case diary, case files, digital documents and proofs other document registers etc.

Among the other members, there may be:

- a. A counsellor/ a psychologist/ a social worker
- b. A person having previous experience in investigation
- c. A Person having previous experience in investigation and enquiry of cases, preferably a retired police officer of good reputation.
- d. A person having knowledge in medical field (preferably a medical doctor with adequate knowledge in medical science)
- e. A person having knowledge in canon law; preferably a priest. The Bishop may appoint him as coordinator in the committee. The duty of the coordinator is to function as a facilitator of the Commission especially in cases where clerics are involved.
- f. Depending on the necessity of each case, the Director may co-opt members and experts on an ad- hoc basis.
- g. The appointment of the members may be made for a period of 3 years which can be renewed any number of times by the Bishop.

## ***2. Disqualification of the Committee Members***

No person shall be appointed or continue to be a member of the Committee, if he/she is:

1. Declared insolvent by the competent Court;
2. Lunatic or a person of unsound mind;
3. Convicted for an offence involving moral turpitude;
4. Involved in a misconduct amounting to immoral trafficking;
5. Facing any inquiry relating to sexual harassment or found guilty of sexual harassment; punished for any misbehavior or misconduct;
6. Standing against the faith, morals and teaching authority of the Catholic Church or found a willful defaulter of the Church laws.
7. Those who are acting against this policy.

## ***Powers and Duties of the Committee***

The Committee for the protection of children will be the sole authority in the Diocese to deal with any sort of harassment cases, sexual abuse cases against children and the infringement of the policy for the protection of children promulgated by the diocese.

### ***The committee is vested with the following powers:***

- 3.1. Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person (complainant/ respondent/ witness) and examining him/ her on oath and recording the statements.
- 3.2. Requiring the discovery and production of valid Documents.
- 3.3. They can exercise powers, which are not against any provisions of the law.
- 3.4. Any other matter which may be prescribed.

### ***The committee is vested with the following duties:***

- 3.a. Ensure a safe and secure environment for children in the diocese.

The committee shall:

- 3.b. Provide periodical training to the church personnel and persons in the institutions in the diocese. Orientation seminars will be organized for the faithful to discuss the

nature and extent of the protection of children from sexual offences, exploitations, Juvenile Justice Act and all related ecclesiastical and civil laws.

- 3.c. Publish the policy in English and regional languages widely in any accepted mode;
- 3.d. Publish the names and phone numbers of Members of the Committee.
- 3.e. Issue certificates to the church personnel who participate in the periodical training programme and seminars and any other events organized by the committee at the discretion of the committee.
- 3.f. Help the victim with necessary aids to report the cases of sexual assault or harassment to the Committee as well as the civil authorities.
- 3.g. Address the spiritual, physical and emotional state of the victim, his/her family and the affected community.
- 3.h. Address the possibility of false accusations against clergy, employees and volunteers.
- 3.i. Provide a safe, accessible and sensitive mechanism for registering complaints.
- 3.j. Take action on complaints about sexual harassment and misconduct enquiries, provide assistance and redressal to the victims and recommend appropriate action against the respondent in accordance with the provisions of law.
- 3.k. After the inquiry, recommend disciplinary action to the concerned authorities.
- 3.l. Strict confidentiality shall be maintained at all times by all, who shall not divulge these details to anyone who has no right or need to know.
- 3.m. An accurate, detailed and comprehensive record of persons, places, dates, offences and other significant details shall be maintained in a confidential file in the Office.

### ***Meetings of the Committee***

The members of the Committee shall usually meet at least 6 times in a year. At the same time, whenever there is a real need or urgency special meeting may be convened by the Director.

1. The Director shall convene a meeting at the request of the majority of the total members of the Committee, on a date not later than 15 days from the receipt of such a request.
2. The quorum for the meeting of the Committee shall be 4 of its members, and if the quorum is not complete in the scheduled time, it shall be adjourned for half an hour
3. and the requirement of quorum ceases and thereafter, the meeting shall proceed with at least 3 of its members.
4. All decisions in the meeting will be taken through consensus of the members of the Committee present in the meeting. In case of any disagreement among the members regarding any decision, it will be decided by the majority of votes.
5. Agenda, discussions and the decisions shall be recorded and undersigned by all the members present in the meeting.

## **PROCEDURAL NORMS**

### **1. Procedure for Filing a Complaint**

Any person male or female (hereinafter mentioned as the 'Complainant') shall have the right to file a complaint concerning any harassment against Church personnel (hereinafter mentioned as the 'Respondent'). All complaints shall be addressed to the Director of the Committee.

1. The complaint should be filed within a period of 3 months from the date of incident. In case of a series of incidents, Complainant should file a case within a period of 3 months from the date of the last incident.
2. But if sufficient cause is given the delay can be condoned by the Committee and Committee can extend the time limit. (This will not prevent the victim from filing complaint which is in terms of limitation as prescribed in Criminal Procedure Code 1973 before the appropriate authorities.)
3. Where the aggrieved person is unable to file a complaint on account of his/her physical or mental incapacity or death or otherwise, his/her guardian or such other person (someone who has locus standi) as may be prescribed may make a complaint under this section. If the petition is signed by someone else besides the above, this party should obtain an authorization from the victim to make the complaint.



4. All complaints shall be in writing. The Complainant can avail the assistance of the Committee Director or any member to prepare the complaint in writing.
5. If the victim is not in a condition to write, oral statement can be recorded by the Director or any member of the Committee.
6. The complaint alleging a case of sexual abuse/ misconduct/ harassment should clearly state the name and address of the victim, together with the name and address of the alleged offender. It should be dated: state the date of the offence, whenever possible, and the age of the victim, (with, if possible his/her date of birth) at the time of the offence. It should carry a brief account of the offence, its frequency, and needs to be signed by the petitioner.
7. The complaint should be dated and signed in front of the Director by the Complainant. When the complaint is prepared with the assistance of the Committee, the complaint prepared shall be read out to the Complainant and will receive his/her signature.
8. The identity of the Complainant/Informant shall be kept confidential as much as the law demands.

## ***2. Preliminary Investigation***

Within a period of 7 working days from the date of reception of the complaint, the Director shall convene a meeting of the committee to deal with the complaint and make a preliminary inquiry/fact finding inquiry to verify the facts of the complaint.

1. If prima facie the case is established as sufficiently grave, then the accused Church personnel shall be relieved of all his / her duties or public ministerial functions and barred from all access to minors and such other persons with whom the similar misconduct is likely to occur.
2. He will be sent on administrative leave, to the place chosen by the bishop, with his entitlement to the congrua/maintenance allowance being intact provided that he fully abides by the directives of the bishop (In the case of Clerics).

## ***3. The Inquiry Process***

The inquiry process shall be proceeded and be concluded within a stipulated time of 90 working days, starting from the reception of such a request, if it is different from the reception of the complaint.

1. Within 7 days of the starting of the inquiry process, the Committee shall summon the Respondent and read out the content to him/her. The Respondent has no right to record or copy the complaint. But on written request the Committee may serve the copy of the complaint to the Respondent. The reply of the Respondent shall be recorded by the Committee and he/she shall be allowed 15 days for further defense or clarifications. In case the Complainant has any additions to make to the complaint filed earlier, he/she can submit a statement to that effect in 15 days. The replies may also include a list of questions that the party demands the Committee to ask the other party or its Witnesses.
2. Within 7 working days of the receipt of the replies and defense and the list of questions, the Committee shall start the process of an oral hearing.
3. In the course of the oral hearing, the Complainant, the Respondent, and their Witnesses will be heard individually and privately.
4. All parties can also submit any documentary evidence at the time of the oral hearing.
5. The Committee shall have the power to ask any questions that it deems fit to all parties during the oral hearing.
6. The Committee shall also ask questions which have been submitted by the Complainant and Respondent for the other parties. However, the Committee has the right to reject any questions that it has reasons to believe to be irrelevant, mischievous, or gender sensitive.
7. The Committee shall also call upon additional Witnesses and ask them any questions that it may deem fit.
8. The Committee shall request the concerned authorities for any documents pertaining to the complaint, if that is within the limits of law.
9. The Committee shall conduct the proceedings in a fair manner and may provide opportunity to the Complainant and the Respondent for presenting and defending his/her case.
10. The Committee shall consider as relevant any earlier complaints against the Respondent. However, at no time in the inquiry process shall the past sexual history of the Complainant be probed into, as such information shall be deemed irrelevant to a complaint of sexual harassment.

11. If the Respondent fails, without valid grounds, to appear for 3 consecutive hearings convened by the Committee, then Committee may proceed with the complaint based on available evidence.
12. If the Committee found that the Respondent is guilty of the acts alleged, then they shall record its findings in writing.

#### ***4. Complaint Withdrawal***

The Complainant shall withdraw his/her complaint in writing at any time during the inquiry process. However, the Committee must ascertain the reasons for the withdrawal of the complaint and record the same in writing and get it counter-signed by the Complainant. The inquiry procedure shall, on such withdrawals, be terminated. However, the Committee may proceed if the Committee is informed or has any reason to believe that such withdrawal is the consequence or effect of coercion or intimidation or influence by any other means exerted by the Respondent or any person on behalf of the Respondent.

#### ***5. Disciplinary Actions***

At the conclusion of the inquiry process, the Committee may recommend disciplinary action in its report to the Bishop. Recommendation of disciplinary action, by the Committee, could depend on factors such as the nature and extent of injury caused to the Complainant, the impact of the violation on the institution as a whole, (the position of the harasser in the hierarchy,) the repetition of offences and similar factors.

1. The Committee may recommend disciplinary action in the form of warning, written apology, bond of good behavior and other relevant mechanism as prescribed either in the Church laws or in the civil laws.
2. All cases of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment are not sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Only in the case of the sexual abuse of those below the age of 18 years, the Bishop will refer the matter to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome with all dossiers, for advice and follow the directives when received.
3. When permanent penalties have to be imposed on the offender, the decision has to be taken in consultation with the Holy See. The Norms for Procedure as given in the Code of Canon Law are to be observed.

4. Besides being a canonical delict, many such cases are also civil/criminal offences. Hence concerned authorities should never be hampered in their investigation of the case. The Committee/Bishop is obliged to give the police and other state bodies full cooperation. Confidentiality should never be invoked in these cases.

## **6. Redressal**

The Director shall submit a report along with recommended disciplinary actions to the Bishop within 7 working days from the date of definitive conclusion of the case and it shall be intimated to both the parties through a letter.

1. The Bishop upon receipt of the inquiry report may implement the disciplinary action on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee within 30 days.
2. The disciplinary action may be proportionate to the nature of the violation.
3. If the Bishop, after studying the results of the investigation by the Committee, concludes that the alleged offender is guilty and constitutes a risk for minors, vulnerable adults and the community, the offender is to be immediately relieved of all offices he has been holding.
4. In the case the accused is found guilty any damages assigned by a Court of law shall be the sole responsibility of the accused. The Diocese of Alleppey shall not have any liability on this, especially regarding financial or any other compensation.
5. In the case of Clerics, it should be examined whether he needs to be advised to request to be reduced to the lay state. He has the option of asking the Holy Father to dispense him from all obligations connected with the clerical state, including celibacy; else a procedure may be initiated for his dismissal from the clerical state. Penal remedies may also be imposed. It is to be kept in mind that the authorization of a penal process falls within the competence of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Reassignment to ministry or transfer to another diocese is excluded, if the cleric poses a risk to minors, to the community.
6. In the case of complaint against Religious man/woman, the concerned Superior should be informed by the Bishop.
7. In case the complaint is not proved, the Committee shall recommend that no action is required to be taken in the matter. Mere inability to substantiate a complaint or provide adequate proof need not attract action against the Complainant.

8. In cases where the Committee arrives at the conclusion that the allegation by the Complainant is malicious or false with the full knowledge of the Complainant or where the Complainant has produced any forged or misleading document, the Committee may recommend appropriate action against such Complainant.
9. If the Committee arrives at a conclusion that during the inquiry, any Witness has given false evidence or produced any forged or misleading document, it may recommend punitive action against the said Witness.
10. Non-adversarial modes of redressal and resolution could also be considered inappropriate cases. Examples of this may be verbal warning, verbal apology, promise of good behaviour and similar actions.
11. The Bishop shall immediately initiate actions to provide reasonable moral support to those who have been proved to be the victims of sexual misconduct, abuse and harassment by a Church person to deal with, get over, be healed of and to be freed from the trauma and, the scars inflicted by the offender, even by means of psychological and family counselling.

## **7. Amendments**

The norms and procedures of this Policy shall be suitably amended as per the modifications in the prevailing laws. The Bishop, upon the request or proposals of the Committee may amend these norms and procedures time to time after having heard the concerned persons and bodies of the Diocese.

## **8. Expected Outcomes of the Child Safeguarding Policy**

- a. A Safer environment for all children within the Diocese
- b. Increased awareness and vigilance in Child Protection.
- c. Enhanced trust and confidence in Diocesan safeguarding efforts of the Children
- d. A New culture of Child centered social growth will gradually develop in the families, schools and Church.
- e. A good understanding of the official governmental policies and rules among the Diocesan people.

## CONCLUSION

The Diocese of Alleppey is committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment for all children. This Child Protection Policy is a testament to our dedication to safeguarding every child in our Diocese and fostering a culture of respect, love and vigilance in our community. By the grace of God we will continue to work diligently to ensure the safety and well-being of all children under our care.

Given on the Diocesan day on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of October 2024.

Chancellor

✠ James Rapheal

Anaparambil Bishop of

Alleppey

Director

## **APPENDIX -1**

### **RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR ABUSE OR HARASSMENT**

1. All allegations sent to the Committee for the protection of children and vulnerable adults will be taken seriously. However before taking up any anonymous allegations the intention behind such anonymous letters will be first ascertained to the extent possible, lest they are attempts at blackmail or intended to deliberately bring disrepute to a Church personnel of the Diocese.
2. The requirements of civil and canonical laws shall be complied with.
3. The primary concern shall be for the alleged victim who shall be offered compassionate care even before the allegations are proved.
4. No financial compensation shall be offered to the alleged victim or the victim's family. Any damages assigned by a court of law would be the responsibility of the offender.
5. The alleged offender is to be presumed innocent until proved guilty, and shall not be bound to incriminate himself by admitting his guilt. But, if prima facie the allegations appear to carry some weight, then, during the pendency of investigations the alleged offender shall be temporarily removed from his current post and suspended from his current ministry and sent on administrative leave.
6. As far as possible, confidentiality and respect for the privacy of the alleged victim, the victim's family, the Complainant and the alleged offender shall be strictly maintained.
7. The seal of the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall in all circumstances remain absolutely inviolable.
8. Efforts shall be made to provide all necessary emotional, spiritual and moral assistance to the alleged victim, the alleged offender, and the accuser.
9. If the Bishop on his own or through someone else comes to know of sexual misconduct by any member Church personnel and finds information prima facie credible, he shall immediately get the matter investigated through the Committee and adopt appropriate remedial, preventive and disciplinary measures.

## **APPENDIX -2**

### **PREVENTIVE/PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES**

1. Every faithful is obliged to bring to the notice of the Committee for the protection of children, any instance of sexual misconduct, abuse or harassment on the part of any Church Personnel of the Diocese which has come to his/her knowledge, and nobody shall bring direct or indirect pressure on the Committee to ignore such allegations, be lenient or mitigate sanctions.
2. The Bishop shall take firm steps by the help of the Committee, at the very first instance of sexual misconduct, abuse or harassment coming to his notice, without any leniency or compromise.
3. Any touching of another should be appropriate, modest and devoid of any sexual overtone. This is to be particularly strict in the case of minors and vulnerable adults.
4. All sexually stimulating and erotically satisfying physical touch, gestures and words, jokes, songs and stories, even when they look innocent and socially acceptable, are inappropriate, particularly when minors and vulnerable adults are involved.
5. If one-to-one ministering to a minor should be necessary, meeting in isolated environments and closed rooms with scant visibility should be avoided.
6. All visitors are to be entertained in parlours and reception areas which are open, accessible and visible to all. The office, parlours and counselling rooms should be provided with doors and windows with transparent glasses.
7. No minor shall stay in the living quarters of Church personnel. No minor shall be taken to the living rooms of the Church personnel except close relatives (mother, father, and one's own siblings).
8. As a general rule all Church personnel must avoid being alone with minors/ vulnerable adults in secluded, isolated and closed places.
9. All trips, tours, picnics, parties, camps, vacations, overnight trips or camps and other such activities must have the prior written approval of parents or guardians or appropriate institutions and more than one adult/parent must accompany the participants in such activities. Whenever minor girls, women and minor boys are taken



on such tours, at least one lady staff must accompany the group (when there are girls). Separate dormitories and sanitary rooms should be provided to males and females during these trips. When such tours are a compulsory requirement of the curriculum organisation or institution, a separate written letter of consent shall be obtained from the parents or the guardians at the time of admissions, and these shall be carefully filed.

10. Excessive communication through e-mail, telephone, SMS, What's App and other means of social networks, which may lead to inordinate relationships are to be avoided.
11. No inordinate friendships are to be established, either with minor, vulnerable adults or with women.
12. Topics, vocabulary, recordings, messages, films, games, jokes, stories or the use of the computer software, internet websites or any other form of interaction or entertainment that would normally cause embarrassment on account of their sexual overtones, are not appropriate to be employed with minors, vulnerable adults and females. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.

**APPENDIX 3**  
**PLEDGE TO ABIDE BY THE CHILD**  
**SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

( To be signed by all persons associated with the concerned institutions or Organisations)

I declare that:

1. I have understood the Child Safeguarding Policy
2. I will abide by the codes of the conduct laid out in the Child Protection Policy.
3. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding abuse of children while serving in the organization, I will cooperate with the appropriate authorities during the investigation.
4. If I am proved guilty of child abuse, I am solely responsible for it and for its legal consequences.
5. I will not hire children for domestic or any other labour.
6. I will comply with all relevant Indian legislation regarding minors.
7. I will immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance with due procedures.

Name :

Designation & Organisation :

Signature :

Date :

## APPENDIX 4

### **STAFF AGREEMENT TO ABIDE BY THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

To be updated every year by the CSO/CSC and maintained along with the CSP as proof of agreement from the entire staff

- I have read and understood the Child Safeguarding Policy of this organisation.
- I will abide by the codes of conduct laid out in the child safeguarding policy.

| S.NO | NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS | M | F | OTHER | SIGN |
|------|-----------------------|---|---|-------|------|
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |
|      |                       |   |   |       |      |

Date

Child Safeguarding Officer's Signature:

## APPENDIX 5

### REPORTING FORM

(To be used by the CSO/ CSC in reporting an instance of child abuse)

---

NAME OF THE COMPLAINANT.....

AGE.....SEX.....NATIONALITY.....

ADDRESS/CONTACT DETAILS:.....

.....

.....

.....

TELEPHONE/MOBILE: .....

NAME OF THE CHILD (IF DIFFERENT FROM THE COMPLAINANT)

.....AGE.....

SEX. ....

HAS THE CHILD/GUARDIAN GIVEN CONSENT TO COMPLETION OF THIS FORM  
YES/NO

DATE OF INCIDENT: .....TIME:.....

PLACE: .....

PHYSICAL STATE OF CHILD :

EMOTIONAL STATE OF CHILD :

NAMES OF WITNESSES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

| S.NO | NAME | AGE | SEX | JOB TITLE | LOCATION<br>(ORGANISATION)<br>DETAILS) | PHONE<br>NUMBER |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----------|--|-----------------|
|      |      |     |     |           |  |                 |
|      |      |     |     |           |  |                 |

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT/S (ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NEEDED)

DETAILS OF PERSON ACCUSED

| S.NO | NAME | AGE | SEX | JOB TITLE | LOCATION<br>(ORGANISATION) DETAILS) | PHONE<br>NUMBER |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
|      |      |     |     |           |                                     |                 |
|      |      |     |     |           |                                     |                 |

Has the child/guardian contacted the police?

Yes/no If Yes, what happened:

Report submitted to.....On.....FIR#.....

If No, does the child/guardian want police support:

Has the child /guardian been informed of the following:

- The need to inform police. YES/NO
- The need for medical care? YES/NO
- The need for counselling? YES/NO
- ANY OTHER.....

NAME OF CHILD SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT FOR FOLLOW UP ACTION:

.....  
 ..... Has a referral been made? YES /NO (If yes, to whom) NAME.....ph#..... Has the Police been called? (If yes) NAME.....DESIGNATION..... FIR#.....Is this incident reported to Director.....Provincial.....

FOLLOW UP ACTION PLAN FOR ENSURING CHILD SAFETY.

NAME OF REPORTER :

DATE :

*(All information must be held securely and handled strictly in line with applicable reporting and investigation procedures laid out in this child protection policy)*

## APPENDIX 6

# REVIEW OF STANDARDS FOR CHILD PROTECTION

(Checklist to be maintained by the Child Safeguarding Committee about the institution)

### ORGANISATION:

|    | STANDARDS   | IN PLACE | PARTIALLY | NOT IN PLACE YET |
|----|---|----------|-----------|------------------|
| 1  | A written CSP about which all staff and children are knowledgeable                      |          |           |                  |
| 2  | An active, committed Child Safeguarding Committee and designated officers               |          |           |                  |
| 3  | Signatures of staff agreeing to comply with CSP   |          |           |                  |
| 4  | Assessment of child safety in the organisation using standard tools (NCSCR)             |          |           |                  |
| 5  | Compliance with behaviour protocols when working with children (staff, volunteers etc.) |          |           |                  |
| 6  | Publicising and implementation of equal rights of all children to protection            |          |           |                  |
| 7  | Enhancing child participation in child safety   |          |           |                  |
| 8  | Regular education and training in child safety  |          |           |                  |
| 9  | Access to advice and support in child-related issues                                    |          |           |                  |
| 10 | Increased partnerships for enhancing child protection                                   |          |           |                  |

Child Safeguarding Officer's sign:

DATE:

BRIEF REPORT:

## APPENDIX 7

### **CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION/IMAGES OF CHILDREN BENEFICIARIES (UNDER 18)**

I.....(parent or guardian name) parent  
or legal guardian of.....(child's name)  
Do hereby grant permission to.....(name of the  
institution) and its employees or representatives, to take and use: photographs, video and/or  
digital images of my child for use in promotional or educational materials pertinent to the  
... ..(name of the institution) program as follows:

- In printed publications or materials.
- In electronic publications or presentations.
- On the ..... (name of the institution) website  
..... (name of the website)
- On.....(name of the institution) related social media  
sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube).
- On the Don Bosco network websites

I agree that my child's identity (please select an option) ..... may be revealed  
.....may not be revealed  
in descriptive text or commentary in connection with the image(s).

I authorise the use of these images indefinitely without compensation to me. All negatives,  
positives, prints, digital reproductions and video shall be the property of.....  
.....(name of the of institution).

.....  
Name of parent/ legal guardian

.....  
Signature of parent/ legal guardian

Date :

Address :



## APPENDIX 8

### INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

A child who's being abused may feel guilty, ashamed or confused. He or she may be afraid to tell anyone about the abuse, especially if the abuser is a parent, other relative or family friend. That's why it's vital to watch for red flags, such as:

- Withdrawal from friends or usual activities.
- Changes in behaviour - such as aggression, anger, hostility or hyperactivity - or changes in school performance.
- Depression, anxiety or unusual fears, or a sudden loss of self-confidence.
- An apparent lack of supervision.
- Frequent absences from school.
- Reluctance to leave school activities, as if he or she doesn't want to go home.
- Attempts at running away.
- Rebellious or defiant behavior.
- Self-harm or attempts at suicide

Specific signs and symptoms depend on the type of abuse and can vary. Keep in mind that warning signs are just that - warning signs. The presence of warning signs doesn't necessarily mean that a child is being abused.

#### PHYSICAL ABUSE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, fractures or burns.
- Injuries that don't match the given explanation.

#### SEXUAL ABUSE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sexual behaviour or knowledge that's inappropriate for the child's age.
- Pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection.
- Blood in the child's underwear.
- Statements that he or she was sexually abused.
- Inappropriate sexual contact with other children

#### EMOTIONAL ABUSE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Delayed or inappropriate emotional development.
- Loss of self-confidence or self-esteem.
- Social withdrawal or a loss of interest or enthusiasm

- Depression
- Avoidance of certain situations, such as refusing to go to school or ride in the bus.
- Desperately seeks affection
- A decrease in school performance or loss of interest in school.
- Loss of previously acquired developmental skills

## **NEGLECT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

- Poor growth or weight gain or being overweight.
- Poor hygiene.
- Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
- Taking food or money without permission.
- Hiding food to eat later.
- Poor record of school attendance.
- Lack of appropriate attention for medical, dental or psychological problems or lack of necessary follow-up care

## **PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR**

Sometimes a parent's demeanour or behaviour sends red flags about child abuse. Warning signs include a parent who:

- Shows little concern for the child.
- Appears unable to recognise physical or emotional distress in the child.
- Blames the child for the problems.
- Consistently belittles or berates the child, and describes the child with negative terms, such as "worthless" or "evil".
- Expects the child to provide him or her with attention and care and seems jealous of other family members getting attention from the child.
- Uses harsh physical discipline.
- Demands an inappropriate level of physical or academic performance.
- Severely limits the child's contact with others.
- Offers conflicting or unconvincing explanations for a child's injuries or no explanation at all.

Child health experts condemn the use of violence in any form, but some people still use corporal punishment, such as spanking, as a way to discipline their children. Any corporal punishment may leave emotional scars. Parental behaviours that cause pain, physical injury or emotional trauma - even when done in the name of discipline could be child abuse.

## **RISK FACTORS**

Factors that may increase a person's risk of becoming abusive include:

- A history of being abused or neglected as a child.
- Physical or mental illness, such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Family crisis or stress, including domestic violence and other marital conflicts, or single parenting .
- A child in the family who is developmentally or physically disabled
- Financial stress, unemployment or poverty.
- Social or extended family isolation.

## GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

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During pre-COVID times, as part of our child safeguarding protocols, we were advised not to communicate with children and minors through social media. However, in the new circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, to overcome the challenges and limitations of physical distancing, it has become necessary to use online and social media communication with children and young people. Accordingly, the following guidelines for a child-safe virtual environment are to be observed in our institutions.

1. **Definition of virtual spaces:** Online environments where people interact. For example:

- a. Virtual/Online meetings: Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, FaceTime, GMeet etc.
- b. Messenger applications: iMessage, Google Voice, WhatsApp, Slack, etc.
- c. Telephone: cellular phone or landline

2. **Parental Permission:** Similar to a physical gathering, parental consent must be obtained and documented. The requested permission should specify the date and time of the virtual gathering, and the digital medium that will be used to conduct it.

3. **Contact Information:** In addition to parental consent, when communicating with children, parents must have the contact information of the person contacting: specifically the telephone number, email ID or account to be used. In the case of a virtual/online meeting, the parents should also receive the link.

4. **Messaging/Chats:** Avoid messaging a minor directly unless required for educational purposes as most messaging applications do not comply with Salesian Safe Environment protocols.

5. **Online gatherings:** Supervision by management of online live sessions is required and an additional adult presence during sessions is encouraged.

6. **Proper Setting:** Live online gatherings should be hosted from appropriate spaces (not places that look like bedrooms or bathrooms). Children and youngsters who participate should also be instructed to choose an appropriate space. Both the children and the person conducting the session should be properly dressed.

7. **Recording:** Meetings may be recorded only if appropriate and with prior notification to both parents and as well as participants.