

Prevention of sexual abuse



Sound boundaries for
work in the Church

«Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.»

Matthew 25:40

«The crimes of sexual abuse offend Our Lord, cause physical, psychological and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the faithful. In order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church's mission. »

(Vos estis lux mundi, motu proprio, pope Francis 2019)

Prevention of abuse of minors and vulnerable adults in the Catholic Church in Norway

We have safeguarding standards in all our parishes in the three dioceses/administrations.

Our Church must be a safe place for all of us. We are working to prevent abuse and to create a culture which makes it easy and safe to express concerns related to abuse. Those concerns will be taken seriously. It is important to be aware that abuse may occur.

To trust the Church means that one can depend on the clergy, employees, and volunteers, who have responsibility for minors and vulnerable adults, respecting these standards in their service and behaviour. It is important to understand that the same standards apply both in the physical and virtual settings, given contemporary technological developments.

We prevent abuse by creating positive attitudes through the application of specific measures which are part of parish routines. Parish priests and parish councils are responsible for insuring that these measures are included in parish routines.

Monasteries and convents, St. Eystein's Seminary, Catholic schools, Catholic Youth Union (NUK) and other Catholic organisations must acknowledge these safeguarding standards.

The ethical standards given below aim to cover more than abuse committed by church employees and volunteers. The norms of Christian marriage and family ethics have been under pressure for many years. Without this secure foundation, the connection between family and reproduction has been eroded, leaving many of the people we encounter insecure.

Invasive sexualization is present in modern communication channels; pornography is easily available to even quite young children. This impacts our society and our mutual relations. Hence those working within the Church have to face issues which until now have been mostly unknown. For this reason, implementation of our ethical standards will also protect our priests, employees and volunteers.

The following standards apply to our three dioceses:

A. Standards for recruiting and vetting

When recruiting volunteers, the parish priest and parish council must:

- nominate annually the person responsible for training and follow-up of the volunteers
- carry out onboarding including introducing volunteers to the Ethical standards
- ask the volunteer to sign a declaration acknowledging the ethical standards.
- collect mandatory vetting document issued by the police for all working with minors.

B. Ethical guidelines concerning working with minors and vulnerable adults.

- Treat all people with respect
Remember that words and actions might be misinterpreted/misunderstood.
- Respect others' physical and emotional boundaries.
- Be aware of possible consequences of touching.
- Keep a clear boundary between your private life and your role in the parish.
- Be aware of the power that your role and position give you.
- Meet with a minor in an open and observable environment, not alone (see below for exceptions)
- Apply the principle of «at least three persons present» – one child two adults, one adult two children.
- The «at least three principle» applies also to virtual reality.
- If the door must in exceptional circumstances be closed, another adult or parent should be informed in advance.
- Avoid contact with minors on social media.
- Telephone contacts with minors should be noted.
- Do not share pictures or videos containing inappropriate content.
Observe night curfew during camps. Do not talk to minors after 11 pm
- Do not use alcohol or tobacco when minors are present.
NB! An adult under the influence of alcohol or an illegal substance is to be considered *vulnerable*.
- Respect rules of privacy as stated in Norwegian law (e.g. sharing information, photographs and use of social media)
- Be confident in challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviour.
- Be aware that the abuser does not have to be an adult.
- Make sure that minors and vulnerable adults feel safe to share their concerns.
- Share concern about possible abuse with your superior without delay.

For priests:

- Confession should be heard in the confessional, or in exceptional circumstances, in an observable area.
- Private conversation one to one should be held in an observable area, for example with a glass door, or in the open air.

C. Safeguarding standards for creating safe environments

Parish premises must be safe irrespective of who is organising activities. Hence the following precautions must be taken:

- Each parish must have its own safeguarding check list
- Each parish must appoint a person responsible for allocating premises in the parish to users.
- A contract for the use of parish premises must be signed by the person responsible for the use of the premises
 - This applies to both parish-based groups and external users
 - Person responsible for allocating the premises must make sure that the user is acquainted with safeguarding and ethical standards.
- Each parish must provide appropriate premises for private conversations (one to one), e.g. with a glass door/window.
- Visiting clergy and other guests must be made acquainted with these safeguarding standards.

D. Training and follow-up

Safeguarding measures also include sharing knowledge and good practice which foster the development of skills:

- Each diocese/administration appoints a safeguarding coordinator who is to support parishes in organising safeguarding courses and reporting annually to the bishop.
- We offer safeguarding courses to key persons in each parish – training of trainers.
- Course material is available on katolsk.no
- Implementation of these standards will be checked during the bishop's visitation of the parish.



Oslo katolske bispedømme
Akersveien 5
0177 Oslo
Tlf.: 23 21 95 00
okb@katolsk.no



Trondheim stift
Sverresgate 1
7012 Trondheim
Tlf.: 73 52 77 05
mn@katolsk.no



Tromsø stift
Storgata 94, postboks 132
9252 Tromsø
Tlf.: 77 68 56 04
nn@katolsk.no