



## ***Anawim Community***

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### **Policy Statement on Providing a Safe Environment for Minors and Vulnerable Persons**

1. We, the officers and members of the Anawim Community, together with the whole Church, firmly believe that the protection of minors and vulnerable persons is an integral part of living and proclaiming the Gospel. We affirm that Christ himself has entrusted us with the care and protection of the weakest and defenseless, who are among his precious little ones, his *anawim*: “*whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me*” (Mt 18:5). We believe that every child is a gift from God and deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.
2. Therefore, we are committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children, young people, and vulnerable persons who visit our Community or who participate in our programs and activities.
3. We affirm and uphold the policies and guidelines of the Catholic Church regarding our duty to prevent and respond to any form of abuse or misconduct involving minors. These policies are found in the Apostolic Letter, *On the Protection of Minors and Other Vulnerable Persons*, issued by Pope Francis in 2019, and in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2002 and revised in 2018. We also commit ourselves to full compliance with the policies of the Dioceses where the Anawim Community is present.
4. All our members are urged to be vigilant in preventing any form of physical or psychological violence or abuse, neglect, ill-treatment, or exploitation of minors. We require all clergy, staff, members, and volunteers who work with minors in our Community to undergo the background checks required by the local Diocese, and to complete the safe environment training specifically provided by the Diocese for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons.
5. Any cleric coming from another Diocese to the Anawim Community for an event, such as a day of recollection, spiritual retreat, or other spiritual exercise, must submit to the local Diocese a Letter of Suitability, testifying that the cleric is in good standing with his proper Diocese or religious community, society, or congregation, and there is nothing to prevent his ministry, especially any ministry with children, young adults, or vulnerable persons. The Letter of Suitability is issued by the cleric’s proper diocesan bishop or proper religious superior. This Letter of Suitability must be submitted well in advance of the event so that any concerns that arise might be addressed.

6. We believe that abuse victims must be treated with compassion and respect; they must be listened to and cared for. Whenever possible and appropriate, we will refer alleged victims and their families to those in the Diocese who are authorized to provide pastoral care, as well as spiritual, psychological, and legal support.

7. Any accusation against Anawim members or volunteers must be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency and to the safe environment office of the Diocese. We cooperate with civil authorities in investigating and prosecuting any allegations of abuse or misconduct.

8. In each of our Regions, the Regional Co-Director must appoint, with the approval of the Board, a representative of the Anawim Community as the Region's Safe Environment Coordinator. These Coordinators are responsible for promoting the protection of minors and vulnerable persons at all Anawim activities in their Region and for assuring that everyone is in full compliance with these safe environment policies. In any matters involving reports or allegations of abuse or misconduct involving minors or vulnerable persons, the Safe Environment Coordinator is responsible for facilitating the Community's response in coordination with the Diocese, as well as with external agencies, such as law enforcement, social services, and child protection, when necessary.

9. We pray that the Holy Spirit will guide and bless our efforts to provide a safe and healthy environment for minors and vulnerable persons in our Community, and that He will heal and protect all those who have been harmed in any way by abuse or misconduct. We ask for the intercession of Our Lady of the Liturgical Life and St. Joseph, Protector of the Anawim, in the fulfillment of our mission as a Community in the Church.

*Approved by the Director and the Board of the Anawim Community*

*February 22, 2024*

*Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle*

*Revised with Board approval, June 17, 2024*