

Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

St. John XXIII Parish policy

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Introduction

St. John XXIII Parish is committed to providing a safe and secure environment and to the safeguarding and protection of children within our parish. This safeguarding policy reflects our commitment to first prevent harm and abuse, and then report and respond whenever concerns arise. At the heart of our policy is the Charter against Sexual Abuse which was developed by the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg in 2019.

In accordance with Swiss Federal and Geneva Cantonal law, the parish complies with diocesan and cantonal agencies on all reporting requirements and the policy will be updated accordingly. All pastoral workers have the responsibility to support the safeguarding of children within the parish and are obliged to help prevent and to report any suspicion of abuse of a child. The same reporting obligation applies to any disclosure of abuse reported to a pastoral worker.

Education

The parish will ensure that pastoral workers who have contact with children and vulnerable adults receive training on how to recognise signs of abuse and to maintain a safe and secure environment for all. This training will also address the procedure for reporting any abuse or suspicion of abuse. This training will include:

- Presentation of the parish's safeguarding policy at the annual catechists' orientation meeting. All catechists will be required to indicate that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the policy through signing the Personal Declaration Form.
- Presentation and guidance information on working with children.
- A regular training workshop on the safeguarding of children, which will include information on prevention of abuse, signs of possible abuse and how to report abuse, suspicions of abuse and disclosures of abuse. Pastoral workers in contact with children in the parish should attend this workshop at least every five years.

Responsibilities

Pastoral workers: All pastoral workers should apply informed vigilance when in contact with children within the parish. They should understand that they are obliged by law to report any abuse, suspicion of abuse or disclosure of abuse to the Geneva Service de Protection des Mineurs and a member of the parish safeguarding response team or the appropriate contact person in the diocese as soon as possible. The parish safeguarding response team is available to advise and direct.

Safeguarding Coordinator: The parish priest and Parish Administrative Council (PAC) will nominate and approve a safeguarding coordinator. The safeguarding coordinator will advise the PAC and will take the lead in all matters relating to the safeguarding of children in our parish. They will be responsible for updating this safeguarding policy as needed.

Safeguarding Response Team: The PAC will appoint a safeguarding response team, who will respond to reported cases of abuse. The parish priest and safeguarding coordinator will be members of this team, with at least two other active members of the parish. Ideally the members of this team will have some expertise in child safeguarding. The PAC will appoint the members of the committee in consultation with the parish priest.

Director of Religious Education: The director of religious education is responsible for organising the Safeguarding workshops and keeping records to show that pastoral workers attend this training at least once every five years. They are also responsible for collecting the following documentation from catechists and other volunteers in the religious education programme:

- The signed Personal Declaration Form
- A criminal extract form.
- A special criminal extract form

Application

This policy applies to all pastoral workers and volunteers at St John XXIII Parish who have contact with children or vulnerable adults. It also applies when the pastoral workers and children are off-site, such as on retreat. While the focus is to educate, prevent, recognise and report abuse and potential abuse within parish activities, pastoral workers should be vigilant for signs of abuse that take place outside parish activities and must always report any suspicions or disclosures.

Publication

This policy is available on the parish website.

This policy has been informed by:

- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Swiss federal law
- Cantonal law for Geneva
- Charte contre les abus sexuels: Diocèse de Lausanne, Genève et Fribourg
- Safe and Secure: Church's Child Protection Advisory Service
- Save the Children: Safeguarding Children

Notes on terminology:

The term "Pastoral worker" is used to include priests, ministers, employees, volunteers, catechists and other parish personnel who may have contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

In accordance with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child, a child refers to a person below the age of eighteen years.

The principles of this policy also apply to situations involving vulnerable adults. Vulnerable adults are persons over the age of eighteen who, because of mental or physical impairments of their personal faculties affecting the ability to assess implications or make decisions, are unable to protect their interests.

Charter against sexual abuse

(translated and adapted from "Charte contre les abus sexuels" issued by the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva & Fribourg)*

Principles

1. ZERO tolerance

St John XXIII Parish and the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg (LGF) adopt a zero tolerance policy with regard to any act that violates sexual integrity committed between persons in its service (employees and volunteers) or by them towards third parties.

2. Prevention

St John XXIII Parish and the Diocese of LGF takes all possible measures to prevent and avoid such abuse.

3. Involvement of the justice system and assistance from outside the Church

The state justice system, as well as professionals and various associations, are called upon to deal with these matters. The state judicial authorities will automatically be involved. Resorting to bodies external to the Church is independent of proceedings by the Church's justice system (canon law).

4. Responsibility

Each pastoral worker has the duty to prohibit or reject any act of a sexual nature in connection with his or her canonical office. It is also the responsibility of each pastoral worker to inform the Geneva Service de Protection des Mineurs, and a member of the parish safeguarding team or the appropriate contact person in the diocese as soon as possible in case of abuse or suspicion of abuse.

Sexual abuse: definition

Sexual abuse is a sexual act, an act similar to a sexual act or any other act of a sexual nature imposed on a person who does not want it or does not consent to it, or who is under the age of 18. It is primarily an abuse of power. In addition to physical abuse (touching, sexual touching), sexual abuse can also be expressed in words, for example with repeated references to sexuality, allusions to sexuality, and an exaggerated interest in the intimate sphere of a person being addressed. Exposure to exhibitionist situations and pornographic acts is also considered abuse.

In the context of close relationships, spiritual guidance, teaching, youth work, the pastoral worker's status does not allow him/her to have a relationship with a sexual connotation: this is a serious violation of the relationship of trust, the law and professional conduct.

Other forms of abuse

- **Physical Abuse** includes action, such as hitting, shaking, choking, burning and poisoning. It also includes harm caused when the symptoms of an illness are deliberately induced in a child. All injuries need to be considered in the light of the age of the child, their stage of development, their social background, where injuries are on their body and any explanation given, as young children often sustain bumps and bruises in everyday play.
- **Emotional Abuse** or psychological abuse refers to persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, which is likely to adversely affect normal development. Examples of emotional abuse include, discrimination, bullying, making a child feel worthless, ridiculing and prevention of social interaction.
- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet the basic physical and/or emotional needs of a child. This could include failure to adequately feed, clothe or shelter a child; failing to provide suitable supervision; depriving a child of medical care; and not responding to basic emotional needs.

(Charter against sexual abuse con't)

The present charter is intended for all persons with a canonical mission in the parish or the diocese. The original and most up to date version is issued by the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg. It is inspired by the following documents: "Harcèlement sexuel et abus sexuels dans l'Eglise en tant que lieu de travail" (Sexual harassment and sexual abuse in the Church as a workplace), from the Reformed Church of Fribourg, "Que faire en cas d'abus sexuel?" by the Reformed Church of the Canton of Neuchâtel, "Prevention of sexual harassment, sexual abuse and psychological harassment in the Church" by the Reformed Church of the Canton of Neuchâtel, and the brochure "How to play your role without ambiguity" by the prevention service of the ESPAS association.*

1. ZERO tolerance

A position of trust

All persons with a canonical mission must be aware that they are in a position of trust with a person seeking help or advice and that they cannot take advantage of this situation. They must have acquired sufficient emotional and sexual maturity as well as self-control in order to quickly recognise impulses which are inappropriate with an ecclesiastical office, and not nourish or follow up on them so as to not risk acting on them. Such a relationship may also be solicited by the person seeking help. The pastoral worker must recognise this situation in time and clarify it with prudence and benevolence. It should be noted that people who are weakened by a particularly difficult life situation, or whose emotional maturity is still in the process of being developed, as well as people who have themselves been victims of abuse, may find it more difficult than others to set and respect limits.

When there is suspicion

Suspicion exists as long as the people in charge at the institution have not observed any concrete facts but feel that a situation is becoming delicate, and as long as no one has been directly accused by a child (or another adult).

Suspicions should always be taken seriously. However, it is important to remain calm and not to be hasty; in such situations, it is necessary to turn without delay to the Geneva Service de Protection des Mineurs, and a member of the parish safeguarding team or the appropriate contact person in the diocese. An investigation should never be carried out by the pastoral worker himself, but entrusted to professionals. It is important, however, to note the facts, times and places that gave rise to the suspicion.

In case of accusation or confidences

If someone confides in a pastoral worker, the latter must take the person who confides seriously and keep his or her trust (avoid making false promises in this case). It is also essential to clearly inform the person confiding of the steps taken or to be taken, including reporting the situation to the Geneva Service de Protection des Mineurs, and a member of the parish safeguarding team or the appropriate contact person in the diocese. As in the case of suspicion, the pastoral worker should not conduct an investigation.

Duty to Report

A pastoral worker has a duty to inform the Geneva Service de Protection des Mineurs, and a member of the parish safeguarding team or the appropriate contact person in the diocese of any knowledge or suspicion of abuse.

*More detailed information is available at www.diocese-lgf.ch/accueil/abus-sexuels.html

2. Prevention

Mandatory training

St. John XXIII Parish and the Diocese of LGF both provide prevention and awareness training on the topic of sexual abuse. These trainings are an integral part of ministry training, both clerical and lay.

All persons receiving an appointment from the parish or a canonical assignment from the bishop must commit to initial training in sexual abuse prevention.

Personal Adherence to this Charter

Each person wishing to serve St. John XXIII Parish or the Diocese of LGF shall first sign the Personal Declaration Form and present an extract from his/her criminal record (with the special extract).

Youth ministry and catechesis

The workers and leaders of youth groups (Mass servers, camps, retreats, vocation camps, pilgrimages, etc.) must also be careful when hiring outside assistance. They are required to ensure that any accompanying person has received adequate information on the prevention of sexual abuse and has signed the Personal Declaration Form. If necessary, they will establish a code of conduct specific to their field.

Personal warning signs for a pastoral worker

In the context of pastoral care, there are a number of signs that may alert the pastoral worker to a situation that may be beyond the scope of a professional relationship. Some examples of these warning signs are:

When the pastoral worker:

- Seeks admiration from the person in their care and encourages them to show it,
- has sexual fantasies about the person in their care,
- feels the need for closeness and physical contact
- provokes situations that will excite him/her sexually,
- seeks private contact with the person seeking help or advice.

Warning signs of pastoral worker behaviour

In the context of a supporting or counselling relationship, a person may be suspicious, especially when the pastoral worker :

- shows an exclusive interest in children and particular behaviour with them,
- shows an exaggerated interest in sexual relationships or repeatedly and spontaneously brings up the subject of sexuality
- makes sexual references,
- touches the person in his or her care in an unpleasant or inappropriate manner
- tries to meet with him/her outside of sessions,
- declares his or her love for the person in care in the context of professional assistance,
- disrespects or becomes angry when the person seeking help expresses discomfort.

(Charter against sexual abuse con't)

3. Resorting to state justice and to help outside the Church

State justice and ecclesiastical justice

Any abuse committed in the context of ecclesiastical activities leads to a canonical procedure (with immediate suspension of pastoral activity during the investigation). However, in order to avoid a collision of procedures, the Diocese of LGF does not intervene during the state procedure. During this process, the ecclesiastical authorities remain at the disposal of the state justice system, and out of respect for the latter, cannot communicate with the outside world, even if this may be misunderstood by the faithful and pastoral workers.

In the case of the absence of a state procedure

Even if the state does not initiate any proceedings (e.g. because of the statute of limitations), the facts are pursued by the ecclesiastical justice system. It should be noted here that in the Church, abuse of a minor concerns any victim under the age of 18 (the State considers sexual majority at 16). The statute of limitations can also be waived in church law.

Support for cases beyond the statute of limitations

Many victims have not dared to speak out about the abuse they have suffered in a church context; the statute of limitations has expired and these cases are not dealt with by the state justice system. In order to recognise and support these victims, the Diocese of LGF has created a commission for sexual abuse in the ecclesiastical context ([CASCE Commission](#)), which brings together a group of experts (psychologists, doctors, lawyers and theologians). It thus responds to the [Directives](#) of the Swiss Bishops' Conference and the Union of Major Religious Superiors of Switzerland "Sexual Abuse in the Ecclesiastical Context". Another commission, neutral and independent of the authorities of the Catholic Church, also responds to the same goals: the Commission for Listening, Conciliation, Arbitration and Reparation ([CECAR](#)). Both are places for "listening, exchanging and seeking conciliation with the abuser, or with his or her hierarchical superior, with a view, in particular, to financial reparation".

4. Responsibility

The Parish and the Diocese

St. John XXIII Parish and the Diocese of LGF support the denunciation of all cases to the state justice system, aware that not denouncing to the justice system only reinforces the perpetrator's beliefs and behaviour.

St. John XXIII Parish and the Diocese of LGF support victims who decide to report cases, knowing that these steps can be difficult and painful. The diocese directs victims to various forms of support, including those offered by the state (such as the [LAVI](#) counselling centres).

The clergy or lay pastoral worker

Whenever a pastoral worker feels that he or she is no longer able to respect the limits imposed by his or her position, whether based on his or her own behaviour or that of a person seeking support, he or she is responsible for reporting to his or her superior. Professional support is available to clarify the situation and, if necessary, to put an end to the problematic situation.

<https://diocese-lgf.ch/casce/>

<https://www.eveques.ch/groupe-dexperts/commission-dexperts-abus-sexuels-dans-le-contexte-ecclesial/sexuelle-uebergrippe-im-kirchlichen-umfeld/>

<https://cecar.ch>

<https://www.profa.ch/lavi/>

Translated and adapted version - the original online French version of this document is the most up to date. www.diocese-lgf.ch

Screening Practices and Procedure

St. John XXIII Parish applies the following set of screening practices as a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment to help keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe. The following practices apply to all pastoral workers who may come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults through classes or other parish activities.

Volunteer catechists and those serving in the confirmation programme and other parish volunteers must submit the following to the Director of Religious Education:

- A signed Personal Declaration Form
- In compliance with the 2019 “Charter against sexual abuse” issued by the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg, for all people who are serving the diocese to present a Swiss criminal record extract with special extract

St. John XXIII Parish has a responsibility to ensure all those who use their skills and talents to nurture and support the Catholic community are adequately trained in safeguarding matters.

All parish full-time, part-time and temporary staff should be invited to attend the awareness training workshop on Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults so they are aware of the existing policy and abide by it. The Director of Religious Education is responsible for keeping a record of attendance of the awareness training workshop on Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, at least once every five years.

Please note that all clerical appointments are screened by the Diocese.

Reporting & Response

According to Geneva cantonal law, pastoral workers have an obligation to alert child protection authorities if there are concrete signs that the physical, psychological or sexual integrity of a child is under threat. Pastoral workers are deemed to have satisfied their legal obligation if they forward their suspicions to the Service de Protection des Mineurs. The pastoral worker should also report their suspicions to a member of the parish safeguarding response team or to the appropriate contact person at the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg. Both of these parties are available to advise, support and assist the pastoral worker in reporting their suspicions.

If a child discloses abuse either within the parish or outside of parish activities, the pastoral worker should also report to the Service de Protection des Mineurs, following the procedure at the link below. Again the pastoral worker should also report their suspicions to a member of the parish safeguarding response team or to the appropriate contact person at the Diocese of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg.

Reporting will be handled in confidence.

Service de Protection des Mineurs
Boulevard de Saint- Georges 16-18
1205 Genève
Tel: +41 225461000

Heures d’ouverture des guichets: du lundi au vendredi de 8h00 à 12h30 et de 13h30 à 17h00
<https://www.hospicegeneral.ch/fr/service-de-protection-des-mineurs>

For the parish Safeguarding response team:
<https://johnxxiii.ch/catechism/safeguarding-policy/>

Further contact details

General emergency numbers

144 ambulance
117 police
147 free helpline for children

Police Services

Judicial Police: Brigade des mœurs
Boulevard Carl-Vogt 17-19, 1205 Genève
Mission: sexual assault and sexual offense
(if the perpetrator is an adult)

022 427 71 60
Judicial Police : Brigade des mineurs
Boulevard Carl-Vogt 17-19, 1205 Genève
Mission: sexual assault and sexual offense
(if the perpetrator is a child)
022 427 73 30

Hospital

Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève (HUG)
Pediatric emergency services
Avenue de la Roseraie 47, 1211 Genève 14
022 372 45 55
<https://www.hug.ch/en/pediatric-admissions-and-emergency>

Gynecological and maternity emergencies
30 Boulevard de la Cluse, 1211 Genève 14
022 382 68 16 /17
<https://www.hug.ch/gynecologie/urgences-gyneco-obstetricales>

Victim support services

LAVI (loi fédérale sur l'aide aux victimes
d'infractions)
Mission: Support (information, advice, financial assistance for
medical care and legal aid) for victims of physical and sexual
violence.
Centre LAVI Genève, 72 Boulevard Saint-Georges, 1205 Genève
Opening days : Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays
(only with appointment)
8h30-12h30, 13h30-17h00
Tuesday: 13h30-17h00
022 320 01 02
info@centrelavi-ge.ch
www.centrelavi-ge.ch

Psycho-social support

Centre de consultations pour victimes d'abus sexuels
durant l'enfance et l'adolescence (CTAS)
Mission: NGO which provides psycho-social support to child
victims of violence, families and professionals. Support services
are provided in French, English and Portuguese.
36, Boulevard St. George, 1205 Genève
022 800 08 50
www.ctas.ch

SOS Enfants
022 312 11 12
www.sos-enfants.ch