

CHURCH SAFETY TEAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CHURCH SAFETY TEAM

Each Church should establish a Church Safety Team comprised of member volunteers who regularly attend services and events. The responsibility of the Church Safety Team is to enhance, but not guarantee, the physical safety of those attending service and events. The scope of the Team does not include safety associated with sexual misconduct, abuse or other similar issues. The Church Safety Team members should be communicated to the Diocese on an annual basis; each January or whenever there are changes in the composition of the team.

CONCEALED FIREARM AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

At no time is any person other than an active duty, uniformed law enforcement officer allowed to openly carry a firearm on church premises. General members of the congregation and visitors are not granted permission to carry a shotgun or an assault rifle on church premises at any time.

No weapon allowed or no open carry notice shall be posted conspicuously at the entrance of the building.

While the best practice recommendation for all congregations is to provide safety through paid law enforcement, the Diocese recognizes that this is not always affordable for every congregation. If Church safety team members who also have a valid state issued permit license to carry (LTC) choose to carry on Church premises, they must adhere to the state law regarding firearms in the general public and have individual liability insurance. All Church Safety Team members must also attend annual safety and firearms training as a team.

All training attendees and topics covered should be documented and filed with the Safety Committee Chair, Church Office and Diocesan Risk Management Team. Training should include, but is not limited to, these areas:

- Firearms Safety Rules
- Weapons handling in and around crowds
- Situational Awareness
- Medical Emergencies
- Fire Emergencies
- Recognizing suspicious behavior
- Movement, platform, and weapons handling principles
- Evacuation planning and procedures
- Active Shooter Situations
- Scenario-based Exercises

The most cost-effective training may be rendered by local Police Departments. The Diocese encourages Parishes to foster partnerships with their Police Departments. The Diocese has also recognized three Church Training Companies to be used as their official training companies. They are:

- Defensive Solutions of Texas (the premier)

www.dst1911.com

- Sheepdog Church Security
www.sheepdogchurchsecurity.net/contact-us
- ALICE
www.alicetraining.com

Parishes may seek approval from The Risk Management Committee for the use of other companies.

SAFETY ASSESSMENTS

The Church Safety Team should conduct a Campus Wide Safety Assessment (CWSA) of the church and grounds at least once a year. The CWSA should include:

Review of building for safety:

- Physical Hazard
- Access/Egress Points
- Emergency Exits
- Fire Extinguishers
- Medical Trauma Kits
- AED Devices

Review of grounds for safety risks:

- Parking
- Grounds
- Playgrounds
- HVAC Equipment
- Fencing

The result of the annual CWSA should include:

- Creation/Update of Safety Map(s) that includes all buildings and exterior features including the location of all exterior doors and windows that can be accessed from the outside. The map(s) should also include location of safety features including evacuation routes, rendezvous points, fire extinguishers, medical kits, and AED devices.
- Prominent display of Safety Map(s) in every room.
- Designated location(s) for assigned Church Safety Members during services and other events.
- Identification of event types where Church Safety Members should be assigned and procedures for assignment.
- Active Shooter Action Plan, (see Active Shooter Guidelines below to assist)

- Developing/Updating a “Welcome Policy” for the Safety Team Members, training them to greet visitors with a handshake, but also using that opportunity to pay attention to small details such as nervousness, irrational behavior and unusual clothing or bags that could conceal weapons.
- Training of clergy, church staff, lay ministers, ushers and volunteers on safety procedures, evacuation and intruders.
- Creation and delivery of training for Church Safety Team and other members as needed.
- Creation of Safety Plan Document that will be available to Church Members.

CHURCH SAFETY TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

SAFETY LEADER RESPONSIBILITY

Before an Emergency: PREVENTION

The Safety Team Leader should never be assigned one area of responsibility during a service or event, which will allow them to freely monitor all areas of the church campus as needed. Prior to each service or event, the Safety Leader will assign a team member to each area of responsibility as designated in the CWSA. The Safety Leader should monitor all communications among the members and respond to any issues that arise. The Safety Leader should also be responsible for communicating with the Pastoral Staff.

During an Emergency: RESPONSE

In the event of an emergency, any member of the Safety Team can call 911 and give the details on the type of emergency to the 911 operator. Once 911 is contacted the Safety Leader should be alerted to the situation. After the initial 911 contact the Safety Leader (or their designee) should be the primary point of contact for First Responders including any necessary follow-ups with 911 operator and guiding the First Responders to the location of the emergency.

In the event of an Active Shooter emergency, the Safety Leader or assigned Safety Team Member should, depending on the location of the intruder, initiate an immediate evacuation of the congregation per the Evacuation Procedures or initiate a lockdown/shelter in place response. The guiding principle should be: Is it more dangerous out there? Shelter in place. Is it more dangerous in here? Evacuate.

After an Emergency: RECOVERY

After a threat has been neutralized, the Safety Leader should continue to assist and direct First Responders as they assess the situation. In addition, the Safety Leader should convene members of the Safety Team and others present as necessary to debrief on the situation. This debrief should include observation, actions taken and outcomes. Relevant data from the debrief should be communicated to First Responders.

SAFETY MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES:

Before an Emergency: PREVENTION

All members of the Safety team should be properly trained in recognizing suspicious behavior, communicating with problematic individuals, and reporting to First Responders. The goal is to prepare

the members to see behaviors that indicate malintent and to anticipate potential problems before they occur. This can be accomplished by developing a “Welcome Policy” for the Safety Team Members, training them to greet visitors with a handshake, but also using that opportunity to pay attention to small details such as nervousness, irrational behavior, and unusual clothing or bags that could conceal weapons.

Prior to each service or event, one member will be designated as the Leader for that service or event, unless the Safety Leader decides to serve in the role. The Safety Leader will then assign each working member to their designated area of responsibility. The safety member should use their training to scan the area for potential problems, as well as for medical issues that could arise. In the event of an emergency, the team member should communicate the nature of the emergency to the Safety Leader.

During an Emergency: RESPONSE

In the event of an Active Shooter Emergency, each safety member on duty should immediately use their training to neutralize the threat if possible or begin the process of evacuating the congregation per the evacuation guidelines. In the event of a Medical Emergency, the members should first report the emergency to the Security Leader, then respond to the level of their training.

After an Emergency: RECOVERY

After a threat has been neutralized, each safety member should be prepared to assist First Responders as they arrive, as well as to deploy Trauma Kits to any severely injured persons prior to the arrival of First Responders.