

RESPECTFUL MINISTRY ENVIRONMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) honors the integrity of participants by respecting the purpose of their participation in ministry programs, their vulnerability, and their need for a place where they can be secure in their person. Abuse and/or harassment of minors and/or adult participants will not be tolerated. Members of each Beginning Experience® local board of directors and team must cooperate to comply with moral and legal imperatives to ensure that both minors and adults are protected.

Participants in *Beginning Experience* programs are grieving persons attempting to adjust to the loss of a relationship, and come to the ministry in an emotionally and psychologically vulnerable condition. *Beginning Experience* policy reflects the vulnerable state of participants, respecting the obligation to minister in an environment where they can feel safe.

POLICY

Any kind of abuse—physical, sexual or emotional—is unacceptable and not permitted within the *Beginning Experience* ministry. The safety and welfare of our children, youth and adult participants, as well as that of team members, are of foremost importance and will not be compromised.

Problems of abuse and related behaviors that come to the attention of the team or a team member must be reported to the appropriate authorities according to the dictates of local law and regulations regardless of the individuals involved in the abuse. It is the responsibility of the authority to assess the seriousness of the situation and determine any action to be taken.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies in its entirety to behavior of:

1. Members of each local board of directors, all team members, and other volunteers assisting on every *Beginning Experience* team
2. Members of each regional board of directors, employees and volunteers working on behalf of each *Beginning Experience* regional board
3. Members of the International Board of Directors, employees, and volunteers working on behalf of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT INCLUDES:

1. Any kind of sexual activity with a minor by any other person
2. Any conduct by *Beginning Experience* personnel which has as its intent unwarranted or inappropriate touching of a minor or non-consenting adult; such behavior shall be considered a breach of trust
3. Inappropriate behavior that could be construed as an indication of potential sexual misconduct as defined above



Because of the particular concern for minors, at a minimum *Beginning Experience* personnel should be aware of the appearance of inappropriate behavior.

Sexual harassment shall be considered sexual misconduct. This includes sexual advances, sexual innuendo, requests for sexual favors, or other conduct of a sexual nature directed to another person, whether participant, team member, or volunteer. **It is important to note that any conduct which might be construed to be offensive is prohibited.**

- All team members must comply with *Beginning Experience* policies on dating and relationships. These policies are designed to protect participants and ensure the peer nature of the ministry. See “Romantic Relationship Policies within the Ministry” in this section of this manual.
- All adults who propose to serve in *Beginning Experience* youth ministry in any capacity must comply with the requirements set forth in Section C ~ “Children and Youth Ministry” in this [Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams](#).

APPLICABLE LAW

This policy shall be implemented in accordance with all applicable national, state or provincial, and local laws and ordinances. All *Beginning Experience* personnel are legally responsible for complying with applicable laws regarding incidents of actual, alleged or suspected abusive or sexual misconduct, and with procedures outlined in this document. In addition, *Beginning Experience* personnel will adhere to all policies and procedures of the local Church.

INFORMATION AND TRAINING CONCERNING THIS POLICY

The Board of Directors of each *Beginning Experience* team shall be responsible for providing information to team members concerning this policy. All team members and volunteers shall complete any required diocesan training program concerning the maintenance of a respectful ministry environment.

REPORTING ALLEGED ABUSIVE CONDUCT

Any individual connected with *Beginning Experience* who has reasonable belief that sexual, physical or emotional abuse has occurred, is to report the situation to civil authorities. (This may include local law enforcement, adult protective services, child protective services, other social service agencies in the local area, and possibly the local diocese.)

The individual shall notify the local board or program coordinator of the situation. The local board president shall inform the executive director and, if applicable, the Asia Pacific Regional Board (APRB) or the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board (RBGBI). Each allegation of sexual misconduct has the potential of liability (the filing of a claim) against a team member, the local *Beginning Experience* team, a regional board, or Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.



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In the event of allegations of sexual misconduct **by a team member or other volunteer**, the local board of directors shall determine whether it would be in the interest of the ministry for the individual to be removed from the ministry. In making this determination, the board shall evaluate the facts using the guidelines set forth in the Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams, Section G, “Managing Team Conflict.”

In the event of allegations of a sexual nature or other misconduct **by a participant**, the local board of directors (or, during a program, the person in charge of the program with an additional team member) will address the issue with the participant, and may determine that it would be in the interest of the ministry and the other participants for this participant to leave the weekend. In making this determination, the local board or the person in charge of the program shall evaluate the facts using the guidelines set forth in the Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams, Section G, “Managing Team Conflict.”

In the event that a **participant discloses** a current situation involving abuse, intent to harm him or herself or a specific other person, some intervention may well be required. Confidentiality of individual sharing is an integral condition for participants and group success. Knowledge that their confidences will be respected allows the participants to share freely and honestly, and to confront the issues of their lives, their grief and their loss. However, it must be understood that participants have the choice of disclosing only what they wish to disclose.

Facilitators are bound by reasonable limits of confidentiality and facilitation process guidelines found in the Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Presenting Team. Caution should be exercised not to force anyone to disclose material that is unlawful and/or self-incriminating. If such information is disclosed, the procedures below are to be followed:

- The team member reports this information to the program coordinator.
- Together, the team member and program coordinator evaluate the substance of the situation, possibly in consultation with the team’s counselor-on-call.
- Together, the team member and program coordinator approach the participant and may suggest that he or she seek professional advice or counseling, which the team is not trained to provide.
- In addition, notifying state or local authorities may be required and/or taking other appropriate action.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors
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