



Episcopal Diocese of Georgia

Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse

Approved by Diocesan Council, March 2011

Episcopal Diocese of Georgia

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Obtaining Copies

The following policy statements are based on the Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, with some adaptations for the Diocese of Georgia. The Model Policies were developed by the Church Pension Group, in partnership with the Nathan Network. Copies of the Model Policies may be downloaded from the Church Pension Group website: www.cpg.org.

Copies of the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse may be downloaded at www.gaepiscopal.org.

Disclaimer

The diocesan policies are provided as a guide for Episcopal institutions in the Diocese of Georgia. Parishes and other institutions in the Diocese of Georgia may develop their own policies for the prevention of child sexual abuse in ministries and church activities for children and youth, using these as foundational guidelines. They do not cover every issue. They are intended to adhere to the laws of the State of Georgia; however, if there is any discrepancy between the policies and any state or federal law, the civil law will prevail. In addition, there may be certain instances, in particular with Episcopal schools, where the school's rules and regulations will take precedence.

In Appreciation

This document is not a wholly original work, but borrows freely from the Model Policies of the National Church and the Dioceses of Atlanta and Bethlehem. The final product, however, is tailored to the policies of this diocese. We are thankful to the dioceses whose work helped shape the document you hold.

Questions?

Questions or comments on the policies may be directed to Elizabeth Burns at eburns@gaepiscopal.org or by phone at 912.236.4279.

From your Bishop:



Children are precious in the sight of God and to the Diocese of Georgia. As your Bishop, I consider the safety of our children a top priority. The education of parents, clergy, and youth and children's ministers is crucially important to all of our ministries and to our life as a diocese.

Our diocese, our parishes and missions, our schools and related organizations, programs and activities, serve thousands of children and youth every year. We take the safety of children and youth seriously, especially keeping them safe from sexual abuse at church or when participating in church activities.

Our children are a great gift to us, and one of the many ways we love them is to provide a safe environment. This type of policy on the prevention, detection, and reporting of child sexual abuse helps us to provide that environment.

Thank you for all you do to keep our children safe.

The Rt. Rev. Scott A. Benhase
Bishop of Georgia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Code of Conduct	Page 5
General Definitions	Page 6
Safeguards for Children and Youth	
Screening and Selection	Page 8
Education and Training Requirements	Page 10
Monitoring and Supervision of Programs	Page 10
General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth	Page 11
Responding to Problems	Page 13
Appendices	
A. Guidelines for Appropriate Affection	Page 15
B. Confidential Notice of Concern	Page 17
C. Compliance Agreement Form	Page 18
D. Resources for State Criminal Records, Sex Offenders Registry, and State Child Abuse Reporting	Page 19

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships. Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur.

This Code of Conduct has been adopted by the Diocese of Georgia to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code and within the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church.

- Church Personnel agree to exercise care to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Church Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- All Church Personnel agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
- In the event that Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, church personnel agree to immediately report their observations.
- All Church Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.
- Church Personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

A. CHURCH PERSONNEL For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies. For example, directors of Christian Education, youth ministers, and parish administrators.
3. Those who contract their services to the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
4. Volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, vestries, Bishop's Committees, and boards of directors. For example, youth ministers, and Christian educators.

B. CHILDREN AND YOUTH A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years. A youth is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

C. CHURCH PERSONNEL WHO *REGULARLY* OR *OCCASIONALLY* WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH

For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition of CHURCH PERSONNEL WHO **REGULARLY** WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH:

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid or volunteer Church Personnel whose work regularly takes them throughout the facility or grounds or who has keys giving them access to the buildings on the grounds.
3. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth, other than church school teachers, in ministries, programs or activities more often than occasionally.
4. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle more often than occasionally.

5. Any paid personnel whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church, school or other related agency.
6. All vestry members or other members of similar decision-making groups who have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs or activities for children or youth.

Examples of Church Personnel who REGULARLY WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH: include, but are not limited to:

- Children's or youth choir directors
- Organists who work with children or youth
- Lay youth ministers
- Volunteer youth directors
- All Church Personnel who work or assist in the nursery more than four times a year
- All Church Personnel who work in the nursery if they are the only person over 21 present at any time
- All staff, whether volunteer or paid, at church camps
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth more than twice a year

For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel who **OCCASIONALLY WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH:**

1. Church school teachers.
2. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities infrequently, generally no more than three times a year or for one program or activity during a year that lasts less than a month (i.e. assisting with preparation for the Christmas pageant, or teaching one "unit" of Church School for a month).
3. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle infrequently, generally no more than three times a year.
4. All persons who work or assist in the nursery four or fewer times a year, whether on an emergency basis or otherwise.
5. Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth once or twice a year.

D. TYPES OF ABUSE

1. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
2. Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.
3. Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
4. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
5. Neglect is the failure to provide for a child or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
6. Economic exploitation is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money.

SAFEGUARDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

SCREENING AND SELECTION

1. Any and all Church Personnel who **REGULARLY WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH** shall be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
 - a. A **STANDARD APPLICATION** completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the Compliance Agreement Form (Appendix C).
 - b. **CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church (See Appendix D).
 - c. **SEXUAL OFFENDER REGISTRY CHECK** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years.
 - d. **INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW** with the applicant. e. **REFERENCE CHECKS** of persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children.

f. DRIVING OR MOTOR VEHICLE RECORDS CHECK if the person may be transporting children or youth.

2. Any and all Church Personnel who **OCCASIONALLY WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH** shall be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

a. A STANDARD APPLICATION completed by the applicant that includes an acknowledgment for the release of information to conduct background checks and the Compliance Agreement Form (Appendix C).

b. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW with the applicant.

c. AT LEAST ONE REFERENCE CHECK of a person or persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant interacts with children.

d. DRIVING OR MOTOR VEHICLE RECORDS CHECK if the person will be transporting children or youth.

3. All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not the person is appropriate to work with children or youth.

4. Church Personnel who work with or around children or youth must have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.

5. Criminal records checks and sexual offender registry checks will be conducted every five (5) years for Church Personnel who Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth.

6. To the extent possible, no person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with or around children or youth. For the purpose of this policy, immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar inlaw relationship, stepchild, stepparent, stepsibling, grandparent, or co-habitant.

7. Church Personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Georgia and apply for or are asked to or who do undertake a position working with or around children or youth are required to undergo the same screening and selection process in Section A above. This requirement may be met through a transfer of a copy of their personnel file to the new congregation, school, agency, or program together with completion of a new application, individual interview and reference checks with the congregations, schools, agencies or other programs for which the applicant has worked with or around children or youth since the screening was last done as shown in the applicant's personnel file.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Three hours of child abuse prevention education and training is required for all **CHURCH PERSONNEL WHO REGULARLY WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH** before they start their work with children or youth or, if that is not possible, one hour of child abuse awareness training before they start their work and the rest of the training within three months of starting.
2. One hour of child abuse awareness education and training is required for all **CHURCH PERSONNEL WHO OCCASIONALLY WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH** before they start their work with children or youth.
3. Church Personnel who are responsible for screening, selection and supervision of others in programs for children and youth are required to complete an additional three (3) hours of specialized education and training in screening, selection and monitoring every three years.

MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS

The monitoring and supervision of programs and activities involving children or youth is important for safeguarding children and youth and involves several aspects. One aspect involves having structural guidelines or standards for the programs and activities for children and youth. These include such things as who approves new programs, how many adults need to be present and the like.

In addition to setting structural guidelines and standards, church leaders must make sure the structural safeguards are followed. Programs and activities have to be monitored and supervised to do that.

The structural guidelines and standards are covered in both this **MONITORING AND SUPERVISION** section and in the following section, **GENERAL CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**.

The behaviors and interactions of persons with children and youth that need to be monitored and supervised are covered in the section on **GENERAL CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH** and in the **GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION**.

Structural Guidelines & Standards

1. Every program, e.g., youth group, nursery, lock-ins, for children and youth must have established ratios for adults and children. Compliance with the established ratio is required at all times, including activities that occur off church premises.
2. Church Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them, e.g., a closed room without a glass-paneled door.

3. Church Personnel over the age of 21 must directly supervise Church Personnel under the age of 18 and be physically present during all activities.
4. An up to date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth will be maintained in the church office or other place where church records are kept.
5. Church Personnel are not permitted to develop new activities for children and youth without approval from the rector or canonical equivalent. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing to the rector. The rector will consider whether the plan for a new activity includes adequate adult supervision.
6. Each program will develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths.
7. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, Church Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
8. It is encouraged that at least two unrelated Church Personnel supervise all activities. When the activity occurs away from the church or is an overnight, it is required that two unrelated adults be present and that male and female adults are present for mixed groups of male and female children or youth.

GENERAL CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The following guidelines are intended to assist Church Personnel in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children and youth to identify and stop those that may be inherently harmful to children or youth, that are the type used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or that may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily. These guidelines should also be used to make decisions about interactions with children and youth in church sponsored and affiliated programs. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families. When exceptions to these guidelines must be made, they should be reported to the supervisor of the Church Personnel making the exception as soon as possible.

1. All Church Personnel who work with children or youth must agree to comply with the _____ [Parish] Guidelines for Appropriate Affection (Appendix A) and have completed and signed the Compliance Agreement Form (Appendix C).
2. No person will be allowed to volunteer to **REGULARLY WORK WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH** until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months. The Rector has the right to refuse any person from working with children and youth.

3. Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
4. Church Personnel are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
5. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Church Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose on more than an occasional basis. Sample forms are available at youth.georgiaepiscopal.org.
6. Church Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic status. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity.
7. One-to-one counseling with children or youth will be done in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
8. Church Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
9. Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.
10. Church Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
11. Church Personnel are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.
12. Church Personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
13. Church Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the bed, sleeping bag, tent, hotel room or other room. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.
14. Church Personnel are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.

15. Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.

16. Church Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.

17. Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

18. By the end of the first quarter in each calendar year, the Rector and Senior Warden (or manager and supervisor - so there is one clergy and one lay person) of each Mission, Parish, or facility having contact with Youth and Children advise the Missioner for Youth (eburns@gaepiscopal.org) that they have reviewed all Church Personnel for whom they are responsible to assure that the training, security checks, and signed agreements have been completed.

RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS

REPORTING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS OR POLICY VIOLATIONS WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH

1. When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION, or which may violate any provision of these Policies for Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, they must immediately report their observations. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using staff or volunteers without the required screening.

2. Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:

- a. A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor of the person,
- b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the person is not the rector;
- c. A telephone call or meeting with a church warden if the person is the rector;
- d. A telephone call, meeting or fax to the bishop;
- e. Submit a NOTICE OF CONCERN (Appendix B), signed or unsigned, to the bishop.

3. All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF CHILDREN OR YOUTH

1. All Church Personnel are required by this policy to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities.
2. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
3. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, Church Personnel are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the rector of _____ Parish so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.
4. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve Church Personnel may be reported to the Diocese of Georgia in the following ways:
 - a. A telephone call, meeting or fax to the bishop;
 - b. A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the rector is not the person being complained about.
 - c. Submit a NOTICE OF CONCERN (Appendix B), signed or unsigned, to the bishop.
5. The Diocese of Georgia and _____ Parish will cooperate with any investigation by state authorities to the fullest extent appropriate and inform authorities that a concurrent internal investigation will be directed by the Diocese of Georgia.

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION

The Diocese of Georgia and _____ Parish are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Personnel from misunderstandings.

When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate, otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth.

These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth.

1. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some POSITIVE and APPROPRIATE forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate. (For example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities).

2. The following forms of affection are considered INAPPROPRIATE with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding children over three years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides given to children over the age of three.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

APPENDIX B

CONFIDENTIAL NOTICE OF CONCERN

Individual(s) of Concern:

Date of occurrence:

Time of occurrence:

Type of Concern:

Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth

Policy violation with a child or youth

Possible risk of abuse

Other concern:

What happened?

Where did it happen?

When did it happen?

Who was involved?

Who was present?

Who was notified?

If reported to the State, what was their recommendation about investigating? Attach additional sheets if needed.

Has this situation ever occurred previously? Attach additional sheets if needed.

What action was taken?

How was the situation handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were police called? Attach additional sheets if needed.

What is the follow-up plan?

Does anyone else need to be notified?

Will the situation need monitoring?

Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation? Attach additional sheets if needed.

Submitted by: (Please print)

Telephone number:

Location and address:

Signature:

Date:

Reviewed by:

Once completed, please fax to the confidential fax line 912.236.2007.

APPENDIX C

COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT FORM

(to be provided to every employee and every volunteer who works with children)

Name (print): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Compliance Statement

I hereby acknowledge and certify that:

- I have received and read the Diocese of Georgia's Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- I understand its contents.
- I will comply with its provisions of acceptable behavior and refrain from all prohibited and unacceptable behavior.
- I understand my responsibility to report any violations or potential violations of the conduct to church authorities.
- I consent to the initial and subsequent periodic background checks of criminal records, child abuse and neglect registry, and driving record.
- I recognize that any violation of the Code of Conduct may be grounds for dismissal from employment or may terminate my right to volunteer to work with children or youth.

Signature _____ Date _____

Parish and City: _____

APPENDIX D

RESOURCES FOR STATE CRIMINAL RECORDS, SEX OFFENDERS REGISTRY, AND CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

GEORGIA AGENCY

Georgia Bureau of Investigations 3121 Panthersville Road Decatur, GA 30034 (404)
244-2770 WEBSITE www.ganet.org/gbi

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

Criminal background records are obtained through either name and date of birth checks
or fingerprint checks.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

The online Sex Offender Registry is www.ganet.org/gbi.

STATE OF GEORGIA CHILD ABUSE REPORTING STATUTE WEBSITE

www.gahsc.org