



# **Alcohol & Drug Policy**

For the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware

*Prepared by the Recovery Committee of the Diocese*

*Adopted 2007*

# Alcohol and Drug Abuse Policy For the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware

Prepared by the Recovery Committee of the Diocese

*The foundation and framework of this policy is “An Episcopal National Policy on Alcohol and Drug Abuse” adopted by the 68<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1985.<sup>1</sup>*

## **Preamble**

We believe that God’s gifts are good and we know that humans struggle to use them in ways that are healthy, positive, joyful and in harmony with God’s purposes for creation. Moreover, we recognize the pain, confusion and “dis-ease” that arise when the gift of free-will is impaired by addiction to alcohol and other drugs. Because we are people of Easter faith, we do not lose hope nor do we despair in the face of addiction. God in the form of Jesus Christ offers new life and the Holy Spirit gives us power to transform our darkness into light. Therefore, we adopt and commend the following principles, guidelines and policies to aid our efforts to understand, respond to and recover from chemical addiction.

## **General Principles**

- The Diocese of Delaware acknowledges that alcohol and drug abuse is a major health concern in our society.
- We understand that such abuse impairs the body, mind and spirit of the abuser and has far-ranging effects as well on those around the abuser.
- We also agree with health authorities that alcohol and drug addiction are treatable human disorders and recognize that they can affect any individual, regardless of social, educational or financial status.
- We recognize that because addiction is a complex problem, no single model of treatment can be uniformly applied to all individuals.
- We especially acknowledge the need for guidance and for a healing ministry for those who abuse alcohol or other drugs and also for those who have close personal relationships with them.

---

<sup>1</sup> General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of ... The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 1985 (New York: General Convention, 1986), p. 135.

- Therefore, the diocese calls on all clergy and lay people to take to heart the seriousness of alcohol and drug abuse and its damage to the abusers and to their families, friends and associates.
- We encourage parishes to provide opportunities for education and conversation about the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs.
- We also encourage parishes and vestries to discuss and set guidelines detailing the appropriate use of alcohol during church sponsored activities.
- Furthermore, we urge all members of the Church to do everything in their power to offer forth the love of Christ in his healing ministry to those persons and families facing addiction.
- These policies and guidelines are not able to anticipate every situation that may arise when dealing with or treating addiction. Therefore, the diocese reserves discretion to apply them on a case by case basis.

### **Diocesan Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency**

The Episcopal Diocese of Delaware has established a Recovery Ministry Committee to address issues surrounding alcoholism and drug dependency. The committee's purposes are: 1) the development of an effective diocesan policy on substance abuse and addiction and 2) assisting the Bishop of Delaware in education of and interventions for diocesan clergy and employees who face alcoholism or other chemical addiction.

The committee commends and encourages the many programs offering treatment and support to persons suffering from the illnesses of alcoholism and drug addiction. Included among these programs are: Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, AlaTeen, Adult Children of Alcoholics, Narcotics Anonymous and various chemical dependency treatment programs and halfway houses. The Recovery Ministry Committee encourages parish and diocesan clergy, employees and leaders to become knowledgeable concerning local resources that offer education, intervention, treatment and continuing care for alcoholism and other chemical addictions.

## **The Need for a Policy in Every Parish**

The Diocesan Council requests every parish vestry in the Diocese of Delaware adopt a policy concerning the use of alcoholic beverages on church property. Some churches in the diocese have decided not to serve alcohol at church events or other social functions. For those vestries who have decided to permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored occasions or other events, the following is a sample policy.

### **Concerning Alcoholic Beverages in the Local Parish<sup>2</sup>**

The Episcopal Church has never endorsed prohibiting the use of beverages containing alcohol among adult members. Scripture offers Jesus' example of the use and serving of wine in his first miracle at Cana and in the institution of the Holy Eucharist. This Church also supports and has a responsibility to those people who abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages for whatever reason. Many churches do not serve alcoholic beverages at social functions, but for those which do, the following guidelines are suggested:

- All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
- Alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol does not need to be labeled if the alcohol is evaporated by the cooking process.
- Whenever alcohol is served, non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal attractiveness and accessibility.
- The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event.
- Food must be served when alcohol is present and the serving of alcoholic beverages should conclude well before guests are scheduled to leave.
- The group or organization sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the vestry. Such groups or organizations must also assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may be impaired.
- Recognizing the effect of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, it would be advisable to consider the nature of the function at which alcoholic beverages are proposed to be served.
- The use of other illegal mood altering substances is forbidden at any function.

---

<sup>2</sup> These policies are designed to be easily adapted and adopted by parish vestries and other church organizations.

### **Clergy and Diocesan Employees<sup>3</sup>**

The Diocese of Delaware believes it is important that any clergy person or diocesan lay employee having problems with the use of alcohol or drugs be treated with pastoral love and concern. When a clergy person or employee's alcohol or drug use interferes with the performance of his or her duties, the Diocese will require, as a condition of continued employment, said clergy person or employee to undergo a professional assessment and, if deemed clinically necessary, to participate in a treatment process. The Diocese, through the Bishop or the Bishop's designee, will assist in whatever way possible to coordinate treatment and continuing care for the individual and his/her family. The Diocese recognizes that recovery is an ongoing process and will seek to be supportive of the employee or clergy person's need for continued clinical and spiritual support.

That being said, the Diocese also recognizes that repeated attempts to address problems associated with use of alcohol or drugs can be painfully stressful and financially burdensome. As an employer we will not finance or support unlimited attempts at recovery. Tempered by a loving care for the individual, we implement what in effect is a "three strike" policy.

1. When treatment is deemed necessary the Diocese will do everything appropriate to the individual situation to support the employee or clergy person (and his/her family) both spiritually and financially. The Bishop or a designee will work with the person to find the best treatment program available and affordable. The Bishop's office will also provide pastoral care for the cleric's parish. Every effort will be made to offer job protection. Salaried sick leave may be offered for hospitalization or treatment in accordance with established diocesan policies for illness and disability. Persons refusing treatment or testing will not be offered job protection and such refusal may be grounds for termination.
2. In the event of a relapse following the initial round of treatment, the Diocese will not normally be expected to financially support a second treatment attempt. We will however, make every appropriate effort to continue to lovingly support the employee or the clergy person. Job protection may be offered. The length of time between an initial treatment and a relapse may prove to be an important factor in the response of the diocese.
3. In the event of a second relapse, the Diocese of Delaware will no longer hold itself responsible for support of treatment.

The President of the Standing Committee is to be contacted if there is reason to believe that the Bishop of the Diocese is in need of treatment. The President may consult with the Pastoral Office of the House of Bishops for guidance. In general, other provisions of this policy will apply.

---

<sup>3</sup> Lay employees of parishes are not covered by this policy but are covered by parish policies.



The Episcopal Church  
Diocese of Delaware