

Safe and Accessible Environments for Companioned Prayer™

Safe Environment requirements and guidelines are designed to prevent abuse, especially of children and vulnerable adults. They also protect everyone in the prayer group. Within the unique context of Companioned Prayer, the following guidelines are strongly recommended:

- Within each church or religious community, the Companioned Prayer ministry leaders and companions need to be aware of, and comply with, all of their organization's safe environment requirements and guidelines.
- All Companioned Prayer ministry leaders should be trained in ensuring a safe environment free from potential abuse, and should know the applicable reporting requirements including reporting as mandated by law.
- When breaking into small groups of two or three people for prayer, no small group should be physically isolated such that it cannot be seen by others. If possible, use a large open space such as a church nave where small groups can disperse. If smaller rooms are necessary, keep the doors open.
- Whenever a child, teen or vulnerable adult is being companioned, do so in a small group of three people instead of two whenever possible, with the participation of at least one experienced companion who has met the organization's requirements for safe environment training. This experienced companion should not separate themselves from their small group during the time of prayer.
- In the *AS WE ARE* part of the prayer, never ask about, or direct anyone to notice, those parts of the body associated with sexuality.
- Throughout the prayer, and afterwards during sharing time, do not put your hands or arms on or around another person.
- Confidentiality of any sharing must be maintained by those with which it was originally shared, unless the person who has shared indicates otherwise, or with respect to safe environment mandated reporting. See the separate handout on "Confidentiality and Sharing," and see *Sharing and Discussion* in chapter 5 of the book, *Companioned Prayer*, for more information. The requirement for confidentiality must be expressed in the introductory prayer sessions, and whenever anyone new joins an ongoing prayer group who has not been instructed in the necessity for confidentiality.
- Follow all public health and safety rules and recommendations, including those applicable to virulent diseases such as Covid-19, which may include requirements for masking, vaccinations, social distancing, etcetera.

- All venues (for outreach, introductory prayer sessions, follow-on prayer meetings, retreats, etcetera) should be ADA compliant so that no individual is denied access or egress. Special needs of participants for access, communication, seating, etcetera should be confidentially sought and reasonably accommodated. Costs for reasonable accommodation must not be borne by the person being accommodated.
- For people with sight impairments, a large print version of the standard Companioned Prayer form for use during Ordinary Time is available from the CPCF website at <https://www.companionedprayer.org/resources>.

For further recommendations, including safe environment training, procedures, standards, and reporting, contact your church or religious community's office associated with creating and maintaining a safe environment.