



STANDARDS OF MINISTERIAL BEHAVIOR IN DEALING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

General Guidelines

Children and young people deserve the Church's highest standard of care. As holders of positions of power, parish clergy, religious, seminarian, employee or contract staff, or volunteer adults will set appropriate boundaries to assure a safe place for children and young people in all Church ministries and programs.

Parish staff and volunteers will witness in all relationships with minors and others the chastity appropriate to each one's state in life, whether celibate, single or married.

Parish staff and volunteers will recognize that needs for affection and intimacy must be addressed outside their work with children and young people.

Recognizing that physical contact with a minor may on occasion be appropriate and in some instances unavoidable, it is acknowledged that it can also be misconstrued. It should occur in work with youth (a) only when completely non-sexual and (b) never in private. In addition, parish staff or volunteers will not engage in speech, gesture or other behavior, which may be construed, as seductive or sexually suggestive to a minor.

When working with youth, a team approach is best. All parish staff and volunteers will, to the extent possible, avoid being alone with a minor, including transportation.

Clergy, religious, seminarian, employee, staff and volunteer adults will be accountable to a spiritual director, superior, colleague, spouse or peer to ensure proper boundaries are maintained in relationships with young persons. Perceived or actual threats to those boundaries by any adults, a youth or others must be openly discussed.

All adults with regular contact with youth or children will seek education concerning the signs of abuse and neglect of minors and take appropriate and requisite action when such signs are recognized. All staff and volunteers are to acknowledge and accept the State of Michigan's *Child Protection Law* in that regard, as well as the Diocese's *Policy on the Sexual Abuse of Minors*, and pledge support of both.

Where other civil laws or codes of ethics govern particular aspects of relationships with minors, all staff and volunteers must agree to comply implicitly with them in all respects.

Particular Guidelines

Priests, unmarried deacons, religious and seminarians will not allow an unrelated minor to stay overnight in their private accommodations or residences unless a parent or guardian is present. Married deacons, staff and volunteers will not share overnight accommodations with an unrelated minor if no other adult is present.

Parish staff and volunteers will not meet with an unrelated minor in private absent exceptional circumstances. Adults will not meet with unrelated minors, if at all possible, without notifying a superior or colleague in advance. When such a meeting occurs without such notice, the subject adult will promptly notify a superior or colleague in writing of the event, the circumstances giving rise to it and what occurred.

When meeting with an unrelated minor in a public place, but alone with her or him, adults will take the steps necessary to see that the meeting is readily observable to others, both visually and audibly unless confidentiality of the oral communication is necessary in the interest of the minor, in which case additional precautions are to be taken to assure that the meeting will be within the sight of other adults.

If a minor is sexually suggestive in speech or behavior, the adults who witnessed the occurrence are to inform the minor that such conduct is unacceptable and, when appropriate, take other remedial action to prevent harm to the minor and scandal to others.

If a minor discloses information about a sexual issue or concern involving a parent, guardian or household member, the adult(s) receiving the disclosure must ascertain whether reporting is required (see above) or appropriate, putting the minor's health and safety first, and having due regard for a request for confidentiality and/or anonymity by the minor. The responsible adult(s) will consult with an appropriate professional to determine a proper response.

Apart from the limited circumstance referenced immediately above, all employees and volunteers are to encourage parents and guardians to inquire about their children's welfare and their relationships with parish adults. If any staff member or volunteer becomes aware of a danger to the health or safety of a young person, the staff member or volunteer will promptly advise the parent or guardian of the concern.

Parish staff and volunteers must never provide alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, pornography or other inappropriate material to a child or young person. Parish staff and volunteers must never use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while in ministry to minors.

Staff and volunteers must follow Diocesan policies for screening, supervising and evaluating persons who work with children and young people on a regular basis. (*See Policy 150.13, "The Protection of Children and Young People."*)

All clergy, religious, seminarians, employees, contract staff and volunteers must receive, read, understand and accept these Standards of Ministerial Behavior, and then sign a form to indicate support and endorsement of the Diocesan Pledge and Belief with respect to relationships with minors, as well as certification of receipt and approval of the Standards.

Clergy, religious, seminarians, employees, contract staff or volunteers may not provide pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, psychological or other mental health services to a minor or young person unless qualified to do so. Any adult providing such counseling will maintain a log showing the time and place of each session and include minimal information of the content. Such sessions are not to be audiotaped or videotaped. Information obtained from counseling sessions may be used only in educational, homiletic or other professional settings, and only after taking effective means to safeguard the minor's identity and confidential disclosures.

These guidelines, both general and particular, do not address or govern the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Under no circumstances shall there be disclosure, directly or indirectly, of information received in the confessional except as provided by Canon Law.



STANDARDS OF MINISTERIAL BEHAVIOR

Name _____

Organization _____ Pastor/Supervisor _____

OUR PLEDGE AND BELIEF

We the clergy, women and men religious, seminarians, employees, contract staff and volunteers of the Diocese of Grand Rapids who oversee, conduct or participate in programs or ministries involving contact with children and young people pledge that we will maintain an open and trustworthy relationship with them free of behavior which is sexual in nature.

We support implementing the guidelines defined in the Diocesan Personnel Policy "Standards of Ministerial Behavior." We are mindful these guidelines provide a basic structure which seeks to protect children and youth from neglect and sexual abuse, but that no framework can address all the situations which may arise in our work. We believe that human sexuality, our own as well as that of the young people we seek to serve, is a gift inherent in our creation in the image and likeness of our God. We pledge to honor both the spirit and the letter of these standards in light of this belief.

CERTIFICATION AND SIGNATURE

I the undersigned do certify I support and endorse the pledge and belief as stated above. By signing here, I also confirm and acknowledge that I have received, read, understood and agree to comply with the "Standards of Ministerial Behavior in Dealing with Children and Young People."

Signature **Date**
Clergy, Religious, Seminarian, Staff or Volunteer

Signature **Date**
Pastor or Supervisor

Provide a copy of this signed form to the signer. Return the original to the supervisor.