



**For Clergy, Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers  
within Dioceses, Parishes, Organizations & Agencies**

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# MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

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### Preface

National Catholic Services (National Catholic) developed this *Model Code of Conduct for Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Employees, and Volunteers (Code of Conduct)* for use as a model risk management tool by bishops, pastors, superiors of religious communities/institutes, and administrators. Created to help dioceses, parishes, and agencies develop and implement uniform guidelines for appropriate behavior in situations of pastoral counseling, spiritual direction and other ministry and educational settings, this document is not intended to address all situations that may arise. Rather, it is intended to create a structure for a variety of circumstances that, if not appropriately addressed, could create a risk of incidents, allegations, claims, and/or lawsuits. The primary objective is to ensure the safety of youth and vulnerable adults involved in interactions and ministry with clergy, staff, and volunteers.

The Church must be exemplary. Clergy, staff and volunteers should and will be held accountable for inappropriate behavior. In order to maintain the highest level of accountability, there must be a clear and unambiguous blueprint of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. For those with no intention to do harm, the *Code of Conduct* provides a basic structure for identifying limits they might not see or recognize, and helps people with good intentions perform appropriate behavior. Identifying these limits and boundaries is essential to creating and maintaining an environment that promotes excellence in service and exceptional safety standards. The *Code of Conduct* may also be used as an objective tool when needing to communicate concerns about another's behavior.

For those seeking to use their position to groom or otherwise harm young people and vulnerable adults, the *Code of Conduct*, along with a commitment to honor the code, will highlight the Church's commitment to the safety of young people. The *Code of Conduct* is intended as a "continuous improvement document," and suggestions and recommendations for additions and revisions are encouraged as are questions and concerns.

For those who have no code of conduct currently in place for clergy, staff and volunteers, this model *Code of Conduct* is available for implementation in its entirety. Those who already have a standard of proper behavior may find the *Code of Conduct* addresses areas for review, expansion or revision. Additionally, the needs of your individualized Code of Conduct will be determined by your entity's ministries and activities. For example, some programs and services have group activities, whereas others are limited to one-on-one interactions requiring different guidelines. Furthermore, in many dioceses, cultural considerations will need to be part of the process. Whatever your organization's needs, the *Code of Conduct* is intended to provide a foundation for implementing effective and enforceable standards of conduct for all persons affiliated with, or representing the Church.

**National Catholic grants permission for reproduction and/or adaptation of the *Code of Conduct* to meet the needs of your diocese, parish, school, organization, community/institute or agency.** You are invited to personalize the materials by inserting the name of your diocese, parish, religious community/institute or agency, and/or the responsible employee or office as noted within the document.

National Catholic recommends that your customized *Code of Conduct* be developed and implemented in adherence to, and in strict compliance with, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Revised Edition*<sup>1</sup> (*Charter*) and *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons, or other Church Personnel*<sup>2</sup> (*Norms*).

If you have any questions about the *Code of Conduct* or its provisions, please contact National Catholic.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Revised Edition*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C., Rev. Ed. 2011. Available online at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> The *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Congregation for Bishops, Washington, D.C., December 8, 2002. Note: The *Norms* were officially promulgated as particular law of the United States on December 12, 2002.

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### I. Preamble

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, and volunteers in our parishes, religious communities/institutes, schools, agencies, and youth serving agencies must exemplify Christian values and appropriate conduct. The *Model Code of Conduct for Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers (Code of Conduct)* provides a set of standards for conduct in certain situations. Within the pretense or context of a ministry relationship, certain behaviors and situations are unacceptable. To ensure the proper monitoring of activities, especially those pertaining to youth and vulnerable adults, this *Code of Conduct* intends to establish a balance between encouraging positive and appropriate interactions and hindering inappropriate and/or potentially harmful or unsafe interactions. Establishing standards of conduct with this balance in mind assists in creating and maintaining environments where there is no opportunity for sexual misconduct or other harmful acts.

### II. Responsibility

The public and private conduct of clergy, staff, and volunteers, can inspire and motivate, but when the actions are inappropriate it can also scandalize and undermine the people's faith. Clergy, staff, and volunteers must know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry and they must also be aware of the responsibilities that come with the trust offered by those seeking services.

Responsibility for adherence to the *Code of Conduct* is not optional and rests with the individual. All adults performing work, ministry, or volunteer service within this organization are expected to follow these guidelines. Clergy, staff, and volunteers who disregard this *Code of Conduct* or fail to act consistently with the *Code of Conduct* will be subject to remedial action by [the parish, the religious community/institute, the school, the bishop, etc.]. Violations of these guidelines are a serious matter and will be investigated and resolved in accordance with the organization's policy. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry based on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm or potential harm.

### III. Definitions

#### 1. Counselors/Spiritual Directors

- 1.1 There are some persons within the organization who have a role of being a counselor or a spiritual director as part of a ministerial relationship to a "client" or another member affiliated with [agency or organization]. These include Pastors, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors: Clergy, staff, and volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups.
- 1.2 Clergy may also have a role as a counselor or spiritual director.
- 1.3 Appropriate pastoral conduct is expected on behalf of all Clergy, Counselors and Spiritual Directors. [See Section IV]

#### 2. Client

- 2.1 For the purposes of this Code, the terminology of "client" refers to the person receiving the service provided within the ministerial relationship.

#### 3. Adult volunteer

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- 3.1 Adult volunteers are defined as those 18 or older.
- 3.2 Adult volunteers are not counselors. Their response to situations and conversations by minors may have potential legal implications and they should, therefore, know their boundaries. The role of an adult volunteer is limited to compassionate listening, along with communicating concerns to the appropriate party per the policy and *Code of Conduct*.

### 4. Child

- 4.1 For the purposes of this Code, “children,” “child,” “minor,” “youth,” or “young person” is defined to mean any person fewer than 18 years of age.
- 4.2 Under no circumstances may a child be placed in a supervisory role over other children. It is the responsibility of adults to properly supervise the children in their care.

### 5. Vulnerable adult

- 5.1 While each of us can be vulnerable in any given set of circumstances, the phrase “vulnerable adults” has a wide and varied definition. In [agency or organization, the parish, the religious community/institute, the school, etc.] the terminology can apply, but is not limited to:
  - 5.1.1 Persons 18 years of age and older, with physical, mental, emotional or behavioral conditions;
  - 5.1.2 Adults with an illness, or situation that renders an inability to defend, protect or get help when injured or abused;
  - 5.1.3 Individuals whose condition or disability impairs their ability to provide adequately for their own care, including adults who habitually lack the use of reason, along with individuals who have a court-appointed guardian.
  - 5.1.4 The elderly, whose various circumstances might make them susceptible to persons or situations that cause them harm, or individuals who are residents or patients within hospitals, group homes, nursing homes, day service facilities, day activity centers, adult foster-care homes or an adult who receives care services from a licensed home care or personal care service within their own homes.

### 6. Social Media

- 6.1 Social Media is defined as any form of electronic communication through which a user creates, utilizes, accesses, retrieves, and/or visits online communities or systems to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.
- 6.2 For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, Social Media is to encompass, but is not limited to, all of the following: email, texting, chat rooms, instant messaging, social networks, video messaging, on-line message boards, gaming systems, landline and mobile telephones, on-line voice communications, etc.

## IV. Pastoral Standards

### 1. Conduct for Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors

- 1.1 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.

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- 1.2 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.
- 1.3 Providing counseling services to someone with whom the Clergy, Counselor, or Spiritual Director has an existing relationship is not recommended. This does not preclude ministers providing services to members of their congregations or institutions. However, the nature of the relationship must be given careful consideration before entering into a counseling relationship particularly given the disparity of power that occurs in ministerial relationships. Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should avoid counseling relationships with people whom they have a close or professional relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague). They should also decline to provide counselling services to family members, friends, and other close personal relationships. *[See Section 7.2.2]*
- 1.4 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should not record audio or video of the sessions. In the case that professional observation of the counselor is required, the client must be notified, and, if at all possible, the conversation should be conducted in an environment that allows for anonymous observation (i.e. within an office that includes an observation window or video conferencing capability).
- 1.5 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. “Sexual intimacy” means physical sexual contact as well as inappropriate conversation, communication or body language of a sexual or perceived sexual nature. This guideline applies to both nonconsensual sexual intimacies and what might be considered consensual sexual contact.
  - 1.5.1 If, at any time, a client indicates an interest is establishing or pursuing an intimate relationship, or any relationship outside the counseling sessions with his or her counselor, the supervisor must be immediately notified, with the end goal of working together to decide an appropriate course of action to interrupt this thinking.
  - 1.5.2 Staff and volunteers should also avoid the appearance of inappropriate contact via behavior, conversation, other forms of communication, travel, etc.
- 1.6 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors shall not engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are close to the client—such as relatives or friends of the client. Such relationships can pose a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client and should be avoided. The leader must presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships and refer the client to another trusted professional.
- 1.7 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors are fully and completely responsible for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling, counseling-related, and ministerial relationships. The responsibility for upholding proper boundaries must always reside on behalf of the person providing the counsel. Attempts by the client to initiate an inappropriate relationship with the counselor will not mitigate this responsibility for maintain an appropriate, professional relationship.
- 1.8 Physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding) between Clergy, Counselors, and/or Spiritual Directors and the persons whom they provide ministry or counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided. Always adhere to the principle of maintaining transparency in all interactions. Be sure that any contact is public, appropriate, and non-sexual (PAN). Behavior conducted via electronic methods of

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communication must also be proper and transparent. *[See Section V.4]*

- 1.9 Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times.
  - 1.9.1 No sessions may be conducted in private living quarters.
  - 1.9.2 Sessions should not be held at places or times (outside of acceptable ministry practices) that could cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled or for others in the environment.
  - 1.9.3 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should never meet alone with a client or recipient of ministerial service in a location or at a time when no one else is in the facility to observe interactions. Always promote an atmosphere and attitude of openness and transparency when meeting with clients.
    - i. If a client comes for an unscheduled appointment or arrives at a time when there are no other adults in the facility, the ministerial leader should either reschedule the appointment or require another adult to stay in the facility during the appointment.
- 1.10 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors shall maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.
- 1.11 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should inform caregivers and young people of the policies and procedures around working with children and request acknowledgement of their receipt and understanding of the information in writing. Caregivers must know what practices are in place to ensure safe environments and be aware of proper behavior while planning activities for youth.
- 1.12 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should inform supervisors and/or other staff on the premises of one-on-one meetings with youth, and invite random visual observation or status checks—even if the meeting is not on the organization's property. For example, being able to visually observe the Clergy, Counselor, or Spiritual Director at all times from outside the room provides assurance that the interactions are appropriate to the relationship without compromising the privacy of the session. *[For guidelines to address professional observation of a session see Section III. 1.3.]*
- 1.13 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should establish a type of emergency response system with colleagues and/or other staff to properly respond to emergencies or unforeseen situations that could create a risky or unsafe environment.
- 1.14 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should limit interactions between youth they are serving and other adults affiliated with the programs or agency while the young person is receiving services. Ensure that any contact with affiliated adults is also public, appropriate, and non-sexual (PAN).

## 2. Confidentiality

*Information disclosed to Clergy, Counselors, or Spiritual Directors during the course of any session shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. **NOTE:** The following guidelines and obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances can there be any disclosure—even indirect disclosure—by priests of information received through the Sacrament of Reconciliation or any communication protected under Internal Forum.*

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- 2.1 Information obtained in the course of professional counselling sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
  - 2.1.1 If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the Clergy, Counselor, or Spiritual Director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
  - 2.1.2 Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Clergy, Counselor, or Spiritual Director should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
- 2.2 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling. This includes telling the client from the beginning the circumstances under which confidentiality is considered “waived” (i.e., risk of imminent danger to the client or others, reporting abuse as mandated by law, etc.).
- 2.3 Clergy, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should keep minimal records of the content of sessions.
- 2.4 Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies, or other public presentations **only** when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual’s identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.
- 2.5 DUTY TO WARN: If a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director discovers that there is a) a serious threat of imminent harm to a specific person or b) a serious threat to the welfare of a minor client and that communication of confidential information to a parent, legal guardian, person at risk, or law enforcement is essential to the health and well-being of all parties, the Counselor or Spiritual Director shall:
  - 2.5.1 Attempt to secure written consent from the client for the specific disclosure.
  - 2.5.2 If consent is not given, disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the client and any other person at risk of harm.

Consultation with the appropriate supervisory personnel is required before disclosure.

## V. Standards of Appropriate Behavior

### 1. Conduct With Youth

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers interacting with youth shall maintain an open, transparent and trustworthy relationship between youth and adult supervisors.*

- 1.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers must be aware of their own and others’ vulnerability when working alone with youth, and should use a team approach to manage youth activities.
  - 1.1.1 Establish appropriate ratios of adults to youth in all programs and activities.



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- 1.1.2 Ratios should be determined separately for each activity based on: a) age and development of the youth involved, b) the level of risk of isolation in the activity, and c) location of the activity and ability for others to casually observe the youth and adult(s) involved.
- 1.2 Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur in public, and be appropriate and completely nonsexual (PAN). Physical contact should never occur in private. *[For information on contact via electronic communication, See Section V.4]*
  - 1.2.1 Except in emergencies, physical contact between adults and minors in professional relationships should be initiated by the minor. Adults should not generally initiate physical contact other than an occasional congratulatory pat on the upper back, hand shake, “high five”, etc.
- 1.3 Clergy, staff, and volunteers shall not possess or use illegal drugs at any time and shall not use alcohol when working with youth. **[Agency or organization]** has a “No Tolerance” policy regarding the use or possession of illegal drugs and the use of alcohol when working with youth. Anyone found to be using, or in possession of illegal substances, will be terminated. Anyone using alcohol when working with youth will be subject to disciplinary action including possible termination.
- 1.4 Pastors, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors should not allow individual young people to visit or stay overnight in the professional’s private accommodations or residence.
- 1.5 Staff and volunteers should not provide shared, private, overnight accommodation for individual young people including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place when no other adult is present.
  - 1.5.1 In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, the clergy, staff, or volunteer should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm. This includes assuring that more than one adult is present. In the rare case that no other adult is available, it is the responsibility of the clergy, staff and/or volunteers to be in communication with a supervisor or colleague to create a plan to provide for the needs of the youth and, at the same time, maintain safety.
  - 1.5.2 Use a buddy system or team approach to managing emergency situations. Provide the plan to all staff and responsible adults in writing and review it together periodically.

## 2. Sexual Conduct

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers must not exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community for any purpose, and particularly not for sexual gain or intimacy.*

- 2.1 Clergy, religious, staff, and volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
- 2.2 Staff and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction must never develop intimate relationships with minors, including online relationships, and should avoid developing inappropriately intimate relationships with other staff, or parishioners. Staff and volunteers must act in a professional manner and be an example of Christian chastity at all times.

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- 2.3 No clergy, staff, or volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 2.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to civil authorities when the situation involves a minor and to [appropriate person in the parish, community/institute, diocese, or agency] in all circumstances. [Agency or organization] procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.
- 2.5 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the state of [state name] and should follow those mandates.

### 3. Harassment

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers must not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by other Church staff or volunteers.*

- 3.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- 3.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following:
  - 3.2.1 Physical or mental abuse.
  - 3.2.2 Racial insults or discriminatory practices.
  - 3.2.3 Derogatory ethnic slurs.
  - 3.2.4 Persecution based on religious beliefs or practices.
  - 3.2.5 Disparaging remarks and treatment because of disability
  - 3.2.6 Provoking bullying and ridicule as a result of illegal disclosure of medical information.
  - 3.2.7 Unwelcome sexual advances or touching.
  - 3.2.8 Sexual comments or sexual jokes.
  - 3.2.9 Requests for sexual favors used as:
    - i. A condition of employment, or
    - ii. A condition for favorable personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation, or
    - iii. An agreement to provide or continue professional counseling or pastoral services.
  - 3.2.10 Display of offensive materials.
- 3.3 Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work or professional environment.

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- 3.4 Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the [appropriate person in the parish, community/institute, diocese, or agency]. [Name of agency or organization] procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

### 4. Electronic Communication

- 4.1 All information and messages that are created, sent, received or stored using [agency or organization] communication assets are the sole property of the [agency or organization], and no user has any ownership interest or expectation of privacy in such communications. The [agency or organization] retains the right, in its sole discretion, to review all information or communications sent, received, stored, or posted using [agency or organization] communication assets. The [agency or organization] also retains the right to track Internet site, chat room and newsgroup visits, as well as file downloads, for compliance with [agency or organization] policies and for other business reasons. The [agency or organization] has the right to conduct such review without prior notice to the employee. The user consents to allow Information Technology and [agency or organization] access to, and review of, all materials created, stored, sent or received, by the user through any [agency or organization] network or Internet connection. Employees may not intercept or disclose, or assist in intercepting or disclosing, electronic communications.
- 4.2 Any content posted or communicated online by staff or volunteers must reflect Catholic teachings and values.
- 4.3 Further advancements in technology may require periodic updates and addendums to this section of the Code of Conduct. The universal principles provided for are to be applied prudently and judiciously in the event an update has not occurred.

### 5. Electronic Communication with Minors

*All decisions related to electronic communication with minors must be made by a pastor, principal, or administrator. No individual employee or volunteer may use electronic communication with minors who participate in any of this organization's activities without written permission from both the organization's leadership and the minor's parent or other responsible party. "Electronic communication" includes all aspects of social media as defined in the "Definitions" portion of this document.*

- 5.1 No clergy, staff or volunteer shall collect email addresses, phone numbers or any other medium of communication from minors without written permission from parents or guardians.
- 5.1.1 Parents or guardians must designate, in writing, which form(s) of communication with children may be used and must provide the contact information.
- 5.1.2 In the case of elementary or middle school age children, parents should always be contacted directly.

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- 5.1.3 In the event of any direct communication between professionals, staff, or volunteers and minors, parents and/or guardians must be copied on the content of the communication.
- 5.2 Electronic communication should be brief and on topic using language appropriate for communicating with the minor and his or her parent or guardian. Additionally, all communication must conform to the [agency's or organization's] *Code of Conduct* and Safe Environment policies, practices, and training. Communication that disregards or violates the *Code of Conduct* standards in any way will not be tolerated regardless of the medium used for conveyance.
- 5.3 Except in an emergency, all communication (including electronic) between professional staff and volunteers and any program services participant should take place between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. including posting to websites and social networking sites.
- 5.4 Appropriate boundaries that must be respected in face-to-face or verbal communication also apply to any electronic communications with minors or adults.
- 5.5 The following guidelines apply to specific forms of electronic communication:
  - 5.5.1 Cell phones, texts, Twitter, Instagram and other Messaging services:
    - i. Staff and volunteers will use office lines to conduct conversations with [agency or organization] services participants.
    - ii. Except in case of an emergency, staff and volunteers will not call minors directly (on the minor's cell phone), and will instead contact parents or call family phones.
    - iii. Staff and volunteers will not share personal cell phone numbers with minors unless approved by parents, guardians, and administrators.
    - iv. Staff and volunteers will not communicate with minors by text or other electronic messaging service (Exception: A one-one-one messaging option on a group page sponsored by the [parish, school, agency or organization]).
  - 5.5.2 Email
    - i. Staff and volunteers may not contact youth from personal email accounts, and may only use only official [agency or organization] accounts.
    - ii. Except in exceptional circumstances, staff and volunteers must copy parents or guardians on all email communications. If copying parents or guardians is not possible or not recommended, copy a supervisor or administrator. In the case of elementary and/or middle school children, only email parents.
    - iii. Staff and volunteers may not add any minor to personal email lists. When copying minors on approved communications, blind copy options must be used.
    - iv. If, at any time, staff and volunteers receive an inappropriate personal communication from anyone participating in or affiliated with the [agency or organization], the individual should maintain an electronic copy, print a hard copy, and notify a supervisor immediately.

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### 5.5.3 Social Networking Sites

- i. Staff and volunteers should not use personal social networking sites to contact minors. The individual parish or agency can create a group or agency page strictly for agency related communications. These accounts must be approved in advanced by the appropriate minister, registered with the parish or agency, and labeled to reflect their official nature. More than one individual must have oversight over the content and internal messaging, although passwords and administrative authority for such pages should be limited to the pastor or agency administrator or their designee.
- ii. No personal contact information should be provided in profiles or the accounts used on behalf of the representative of the [agency or organization].
- iii. Only official email addresses, office phone numbers, and job titles may be used.
- iv. All accounts should be set to maximize privacy. Parishes and agencies may publicize their presence on social media. However, no effort should be made to seek out minors as participants on the sites.
- v. Staff and volunteers should ignore “friend requests” from minors that are addressed to the adult’s personal social media account/application.
- vi. No pictures may be posted without written permission for all those appearing in the photo (for minors, this would be the parent or guardian), and persons may not be tagged or identified in a photo.
- vii. Staff and volunteers shall comment only on services or ministry-related threads from the ministry-related account.
- viii. Staff and volunteers may not use instant messaging programs on social networking sites to communicate with minors, unless the material is recorded and kept on file, and reviewed by a supervisor.
- ix. Supervisors and/or their designees should monitor sponsored sites. Inappropriate posts should be promptly removed/deleted.
- x. Monitoring responsibility also applies to any unofficial site created by third parties about the program or services. If inappropriate content is present, monitors should report the pages/groups/users to the hosting site and ask that the site be removed. This includes but is not limited to unauthorized use of logos, bullying, harassment, or defamatory language.

## 6. Monitoring Behavior

*All Staff and Volunteers must monitor their own behavior and the behavior of all others in the agency to prevent, recognize, and respond to risky, inappropriate, and harmful behaviors and to reinforce, acknowledge, and appreciate appropriate behavior.*

- 6.1 Staff and Volunteers should continuously observe interactions between adults and youth and youth and other youth in the agency and/or environment and react appropriately.
- 6.2 Staff and Volunteers shall participate in [Protecting God’s Children® for Adults] and learn the behavioral warning signs of potentially risky adults. It shall be the responsibility of all adults to maintain a “healthy suspicion” of all adults in the environment and to watch for the potentially risky grooming behaviors identified in child sexual abuse prevention training.

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- 6.3 Staff and Volunteers should be clear about the established boundaries for the [agency or organization] as set out in the applicable Codes of Conduct and be able to identify any actions in violation of those boundaries. Staff and Volunteers should pay particular attention to adults showing favoritism, giving gifts, setting up unsupervised or unscheduled time alone with a young person, or any other sign of possible grooming activity.
- 6.4 Staff and Volunteers should identify potentially risky situations and create proactive plans to address them in advance.
- 6.5 Staff and Volunteers should reward and reinforce appropriate actions as well as monitoring and addressing inappropriate behavior.
- 6.6 Staff and Volunteers must report concerns about possible inappropriate behavior or activities to the supervisor responsible for that program. If the incident involves the supervisor, a report must be made to the person to whom that potential offender is responsible.
- 6.7 Staff and Volunteers will document any reports of behaviors that raise concerns, violate boundaries, or are inconsistent with the program/agency's policies and procedures.
  - 6.7.1 Documentation should be written and include any supporting documentation.
  - 6.7.2 Reinforce positive supervisory behavior.

## 7. Records and Information

*Confidentiality will be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of [agency or organization] records.*

- 7.1 Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. When compiling and publishing parish, religious community/institute, or agency statistical information from these records, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.
- 7.2 Most sacramental records older than 70 years are open to the public.
  - 7.2.1 Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age.
  - 7.2.2 Only staff members who are authorized to access the records and supervise their use shall handle requests for more recent records.
- 7.3 Client records are confidential and must be stored in a secure (locked) location accessible only to those allowed by law to review the information.
- 7.4 Confidential information includes:
  - 7.4.1 Name, address, phone number and any other identifying contact information.

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- 7.4.2 Personal information regarding financial records, health conditions, diagnoses, and other medical information.
- 7.4.3 Information regarding treatment, services rendered, progress or other notes of individual participation in program services.
- 7.5 Management of confidential client records:
  - 7.5.1 Electronic storage security guidelines. Staff and Volunteers must:
    - i. Change computer passwords regularly
    - ii. Never post computer passwords on monitors, bulletin boards, walls or any other locations visible to others
    - iii. Never share any password with others (except as required by policy)
    - iv. Always log off the system before walking away from the computer or use a password protected screen saver
    - v. Only send or receive emails regarding protected client information to/from known, authorized sources after receiving written authorization to do so.
  - 7.5.2 Faxing confidential client information. Staff and Volunteers must:
    - i. Never leave confidential client information on a printer or copier
    - ii. Confirm and dial carefully any fax number used to transmit confidential client information
    - iii. Use a fax transmission sheet that includes a confidentiality statement when sending documents outside the diocese, parish, or agency.
    - iv. Send information only to known sources and only after receiving written permission from the client
    - v. Make sure the recipient is near the fax machine before sending and confirm receipt
    - vi. File or destroy faxed information before it is seen by unauthorized persons.
  - 7.5.3 Discussing confidential information with others. Staff and Volunteers must:
    - i. Never discuss confidential client information with any unauthorized person (authorized persons include the clients and supervisors and/or any person authorized in writing by the client to receive the information.).
    - ii. Do not talk about confidential client information with anyone, including the client, in public places including elevators, reception areas, hallways, stairwells, and other open areas.
    - iii. Never leave messages on cell phones or other answering machines regarding a client's confidential information or test results.
    - iv. Verify identify and the 'need to know' before disclosing any confidential client information to any person or agency.
    - v. In case of an emergency that requires disclosure of confidential information, inform the client and/or a legally responsible party as soon as possible. Counselors must know and follow professional legal guidelines regarding a DUTY TO WARN when a situation poses a clear and present danger to a client or another person. *[See Section IV.2.5]*

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- 7.6 Parish, religious community/institute, or agency financial records are confidential unless review is required by [the diocese, a supervising institution] or [an appropriate government agency]. Contact the [financial oversight department of the diocese or supervising institution] upon receipt of any request for release of financial records.
- 7.7 Individual contribution records of the parish, religious community/institute, or agency shall be regarded as private and shall be maintained in strictest confidence.

### 8. Conflicts of Interest

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.*

- 8.1 The agency should provide all clergy, staff, and volunteers with a written “Conflict of Interest” policy that defines the agency’s expectations including the relevant factors that could result in a conflict of interest.
- 8.2 Clergy, staff, and volunteers shall disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.
- 8.3 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.
  - 8.3.1 No clergy, staff, or volunteer should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
  - 8.3.2 Pastoral counselors should not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have a business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The counselor must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.
  - 8.3.3 When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director must:
    - i. Clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship,
    - ii. Anticipate any conflict of interest,
    - iii. Take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict, and
    - iv. Obtain from all parties written consent to continue services.
    - v. Provide documentation of these conversations to the program or agency supervisor.
- 8.4 Conflicts of interest may also arise when a Pastoral Counselor’s or Spiritual Director’s independent judgment is impaired by (a) prior dealings, (b) becoming personally involved, or (c) becoming an advocate for one (person) against another. In these circumstances, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director shall advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services and refer them to another Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director or to the agency’s supervisor for reassignment.



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### 9. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers have a responsibility to monitor their behavior and that of other staff and volunteers, and a duty to report ethical or professional misconduct, inappropriate or harmful behavior, potentially risky situations, and potential boundary violations by anyone.*

- 9.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by clergy, staff, or volunteers, you should notify the proper civil authorities immediately. Also notify the [diocese, parish, religious community/institute, agency or organization].
- 9.2 When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this Code of Conduct or other religious, moral or ethical principles, consult with:
  - 9.2.1 The supervisor of the agency of the person with concerning behavior,
  - 9.2.2 The supervisor of the person observing the questionable behavior, or
  - 9.2.3 The [chancery office or responsible administrative authority for the religious community/institute, agency or organization].
- 9.3 When it appears that a member of clergy, a staff member, or a volunteer has violated this *Code of Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles:
  - 9.3.1 Consider communicating directly to the person.
  - 9.3.2 In addition, communicate the issue to a supervisor or next higher authority, or
  - 9.3.3 Refer the matter directly to the [chancery office or responsible administrative authority for the religious community/institute, agency or organization].

The obligation of Pastors, Counselors, and Spiritual Directors to report client misconduct is subject to the duty of confidentiality. However, any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality must yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, health, or well-being of any of the persons involved except as provided for in Section 2.5.
- 9.4 The diocese, parish, and/or agency should develop a system to track credible allegations of the sexual abuse of minors by staff and volunteers.
  - 9.4.1 Include child sexual abuse as a category on general incident reporting forms for significant physical injuries. These forms should be completed by staff or volunteers who first notice the injuries or learn of the alleged abuse.
  - 9.4.2 All reports of suspected child abuse and child sexual abuse should be reviewed by a trained investigator (internal or external) for purposes of assessing the agency's policies and procedures. Reports should include the results of child abuse and child sexual abuse cases.
  - 9.4.3 The investigator should make recommendations for:
    - i. Policy modifications that could prevent future similar occurrences
    - ii. Training or re-training of staff to clarify procedures and correct any missteps in following proper procedures.

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- 9.5 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should not conduct investigations. However, in certain circumstances a few clarifying questions may be asked to determine whether a report is necessary and to adequately report a suspicion or allegation to the authorities.

9.5.1 The name of the parties involved is a relevant piece of information for reporting.

9.5.2 Basic information to clarify the nature of the interaction to assure that the report is necessary (i.e. to understand what a youth means by using certain words with several interpretations).

### 10. Administration

*Employers and supervisors shall treat clergy, staff, and volunteers justly in the day-to-day administrative operations of their ministries.*

- 10.1 Personnel and other administrative decisions made by clergy, staff, and volunteers shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect Catholic social teachings and this *Code of Conduct*.
- 10.2 No clergy, staff, or volunteer shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.
- 10.3 Each volunteer providing service to children and youth must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct before providing services.

### 11. Staff or Volunteer Well-being

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health.*

- 11.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health.
- 11.2 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.
- 11.3 Clergy, staff, and volunteers must address their own spiritual needs. Support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended.
- 11.4 Inappropriate or illegal use of alcohol and drugs is prohibited.

## VI. General Statement of Intent

### I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations of isolation or being alone with children and/or youth at [agency or organization] activities.
- Use positive reinforcement with young people rather than criticism, competition, or comparison.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the supervisor.

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- Refrain from giving gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the supervisor.
- Report suspected abuse to the proper contact within the [agency or organization, or supervisor] and [the local Child Protection Services agency]. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is a violation of state law.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.
- Comply with the behavioral standards in the Code of Conduct as they apply to electronic communications.

### **I will not:**

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while in my role for [agency or Church].
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations).
- Strike, spank, shake, humiliate, ridicule, threaten, degrade or use discipline that frightens or humiliates minors.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Connect with the children electronically, including social media, without advance approval from the supervisor.

# Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Receipt

For Clergy, Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers

## VII. Acknowledgement of Receipt

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to make clear to clergy, employees and volunteers that certain behaviors are unacceptable and to ensure proper monitoring of all youth. The following is the official receipt denoting that the individual whose signature appears below has read and understands the guidelines contained in the attached Code of Conduct document.

**Please complete, sign, detach this entire page from full packet, and submit:**

I have read and understand the guidelines contained in the attached Code of Conduct, and I intend to follow these guidelines and to monitor and protect children and young people in my service to the [Agency or Organization]. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in my removal as a volunteer or employee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full legal name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position / Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email or phone number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parish / School / Organization

*Please complete this page, sign it, detach it from the full packet and return it to [parish, school, agency or organization location]. This sheet will be kept on file at the [agency or organization] indefinitely.*

### Office Use Only

Date submitted / processed: \_\_\_\_\_ Received by (name): \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_