

# **SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM**

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CODE OF CONDUCT

TRAINING INFORMATION

## ***THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON***

### **Mission Statement**

As Christian adults, we have a moral and legal responsibility and are entrusted by God with the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of minors and vulnerable adults. As they participate in activities within or sponsored by our Diocese or Parish, it is our responsibility and commitment to provide an environment, which is safe and nurturing.

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Because of the gravely serious nature of allegations of abuse and sexual misconduct by Church personnel, it is important that all diocesan personnel be informed about diocesan policy on the prevention of abuse and about the procedures that are followed when reports of abuse or sexual misconduct by Church personnel are received. In addition this booklet provides information on other procedures to promote a safe environment for diocesan entities.

## **PURPOSE:**

The Catholic Community of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton has a program to reduce the risk of abuse in order to:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for everyone in our faith community and within our Diocese.
- To reduce the possibility of false accusations against clergy, employees and volunteers.
- To assist the Parish in evaluating a person's suitability to work with minors or vulnerable adults.
- To satisfy the concerns of the parish community.
- To provide a system to respond to the victims and their families, as well as the accused.
- To reduce the risk exposure of the parishes and the Catholic Diocese of Dallas.

## **DEFINITIONS**

(For the purposes of this statement only)

- **Child abuse** means any form of intentional or malicious infliction of injury to the detriment of a child's physical, moral, or mental well being.
- **Elder abuse** means the emotional or physical exploitation or deprivation of services which are necessary to maintain mental and physic health of a person 65 years of age or older (18 to 65 if disabled) by a relative or caregiver.
- **Sexual misconduct/abuse** means any form of sexual conduct that is unlawful; that is contrary to the moral instructions, doctrines, and canon law of the Catholic Church; and causes injury to another. It may constitute sexual abuse, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation.
- **Diocese/Diocesan Entities** means the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas, including but are not limited to parishes, schools, agencies, and institutions with direct accountability to the Bishop of Dallas.
- **Church Personnel** means priests, deacons, lay Diocesan and Parochial employees, volunteers, independent contractors, women religious (sisters or nuns), religious brothers, seminarians and those enrolled in the Permanent Deacon Formation Program.
- **Minor** means all persons under the age of eighteen.
- **Volunteer** means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in a Diocesan activity, and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors, and/or persons engaged or involved in ministry who have regular individual contact with vulnerable adults.
- **Safety Officer** means the individual who oversees the Safe Environment Program.
- **Safety Committee** means the committee responsible for establishing policy and procedures for the Safe Environment Program.
- **Vulnerable Adult** is any adult who is physically disabled, mentally or emotionally impaired, whether temporary or long term

## **WHO WILL BE SCREENED?**

Screening will include (but may not be limited to) the following people at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton:

- All Clergy,
- Pastoral Advisory Council and Finance Administration Council
- All paid staff members,
- All volunteers who work with minors or vulnerable adults, including, but not limited to, volunteers in programs such as Religious Education, Youth Ministry, Scouts, Seton's Ark, Altar Server Ministry, Children's Choirs, Teen Liturgies, Mothers and Others, Baby-sitters, Extraordinary Ministers, Meals & Rides, Stephen Ministry, Home/Hospital Visitation, and Love Truck.

All ministers / volunteers must be at least 18 years old. However, teen aides (youth 13 -17 yr. of age) will be permitted to assist in-group activities. These teen aides do not satisfy the two (2) adult rule and the teens will be supervised at all times, by a CLEARED minister / volunteer. Therefore, teen aides may not supervise a child or children alone.

## **PROCESS OF SCREENING**

### **Application**

A screening form will be given to any prospective staff member or minister/ volunteer. In order to be considered for staff or a minister/ volunteer position, the screening form must be completed in its entirety and returned to the Safety Officer. **Ministers/volunteers who are interested in serving are encouraged to complete the screening form as soon as they have registered in the parish.**

### **Interview**

All individuals will be interviewed by a director, coordinator, or other authorized interviewer.

### **References**

An agent independent of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will verify references included in the screening form.

### **Criminal Background Check**

All staff members and minister/volunteers must have a criminal background check performed by an agent independent of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. The result of the criminal background check shall be reported by the independent agent as: CLEAR or NOT CLEAR, as opposed to reporting such results in terms of delineated disqualifying offenses. However, we are requesting the screening agency to report any suspicious behavioral patterns to the Safety Officer and/or Pastor.

### **Possible Exceptions to screening procedures:**

The following persons need not be members of the parish for the last six (6) months: priests, seminarians in formation class, deacons, ordered sisters and any paid staff. **However, a criminal background check must be completed for everyone.**

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Like all personal records, information obtained through the Screening Form, Employment Application, Reference Information, Interviews, Criminal Background Check, etc. will be kept confidential. All material will be kept in a locked file cabinet and access to it is restricted to those who have "need to know". These records must **not be** destroyed but can be archived.

## **FOLLOW-UP SCREENING**

Follow-up background screening will be done on all priests, deacons, staff, and volunteers every two (2) years, as required by the diocese.

## DISQUALIFYING OFFENSES

No person may serve with minors and vulnerable adults if he or she has ever been convicted of any disqualifying offense, been on probation or received deferred adjudication for any disqualifying offense, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any disqualifying offense until a determination of guilt or innocence is made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication.

Disqualifying offenses are:

1. A felony or misdemeanor classified as an Offense against the Person or Family or involves an offense against the person or family.

Examples: Offenses against a person include, but are not limited to, murder, assault, sexual assault, and abandoning or endangering a child or vulnerable adult. Offenses against the family include, but are not limited to bigamy, incest, and interference with child custody, enticing a child, and harboring a runaway child.

2. A felony or misdemeanor classified as an Offense against Public Order, Safety, or Decency.

Examples: Offenses against public order or decency include, but are not limited to prostitution, obscenity, sexual performance by a child, possession or promotion of child pornography, and disorderly conduct.

3. A felony violation of any law intended to control the possession or distribution of any substance included as a controlled substance in the Texas Controlled Substance Act.

4. A felony or misdemeanor classified as an Offense against Property, to the extent that those offenses are related to threats or risk of harm or violence.

Examples: Offenses against property include Robbery, Burglary of a Habitation, and Arson. Other offenses, such as theft by check, or fraud would not ordinarily be considered Disqualifying Offenses.

5. A felony Computer Crime of online solicitation of a minor.
6. A felony or misdemeanor Offence Against Public Health, Safety and Morals, involving illegal possession or use of weapons.

Examples: Disqualifying Offenses would include unlawful weapons charges, including illegal weapons, bombs and illegal carrying of weapons.

The foregoing lists of offences describe categories from the Texas Penal Code. The categories of offenses may be slightly different in other states. **In summary, any offense which in the discretion of the Diocese would impact health and safety would be a disqualifying offense.**

Refer to page 10 for the Appeal Process.

A Credit Check is **NOT** a part of the screening process.

Driving while intoxicated is **NOT** a disqualifying offense for volunteering but does disqualify someone from driving any church vehicle or any other vehicle on church sponsored activities or events.



## **REQUIREMENTS FOR MINISTER/VOLUNTEER**

In order to be considered for a minister/volunteer position, a person must complete the following requirements:

1. A minister/volunteer must be a registered member of the parish for at least six (6) months prior to serving with our minors or vulnerable adults or must have been a registered member of the previous parish for at least a year and provide a letter from that pastor or other staff member.
2. Complete a minister/volunteer screening form including a signed acknowledgment that the Code of Conduct and the Policies and Procedures, which are both adherent to this program, have been read, understood, and accepted
3. Have references checked.
4. Complete the interview process
5. Complete a Diocesan approved Safe Environment Training.
6. Receive a CLEAR on the criminal background check as reported by our outside screening agency.

## **VOLUNTEERS FROM OTHER FAITH COMMUNITIES**

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will strongly encourage other faith communities (Catholic and Non-Catholic) with which it conducts or participates in activities and/or events to adopt a Safe Environment Program or at least provide a background check for all personnel who interact with minors or vulnerable adults.

## **ACCEPTANCE OF A MINISTER/ VOLUNTEER**

The decision as to whether a minister/volunteer is accepted or not accepted shall be based on information from the application, interview, references and the criminal background check. If a questionable response is returned from the interview process, the Safety Officer and the appropriate director will determine if the applicant is permitted to serve.

## **RELEASE AS A MINISTER/ VOLUNTEER**

Anyone who has been accepted to work with minors or vulnerable adults must adhere to the Code of Conduct as well as the Policies and Procedures of this program. Failure to do so shall result in the individual's immediate release as an approved minister / volunteer.

## **THE APPEAL PROCESS**

Any person who applies and is not accepted or is released as a member of the clergy, an employee or a minister / volunteer for any reason will have a right of appeal as set forth in the Appeal Process.

If non - acceptance is based on the criminal background check.

The applicant shall be given the name and address of the agency reporting the criminal history of such applicant, so that he or she will have the opportunity to obtain a similar report from such agency. In the event that such report is obtained by the applicant and he or she reasonably believes that an error has been made by the reporting agency or independent agent, then, upon written request, a second criminal background check shall be obtained and the application reconsidered.

OR

The Pastor, where the applicant is applying may make a written appeal on behalf of the applicant to the Diocesan Risk Manager. The appeal will be reviewed by the Chancellor, Risk Manager and three (3) members of the Diocesan Safe Environment Committee. The review by this group will be final and a written answer will be sent to the Pastor making the appeal. A written record of the appeal and the final decision will be maintained by the appealing location and the Risk Management office.

If non - acceptance is based upon the interview process:

The applicant, upon written request shall have the right to have a second interview and have his or her application reconsidered by an Appeals Committee within 12 months after the date of the non-acceptance. The Appeals Committee will be composed of five (5) persons who have been authorized to interview minister / volunteer applicants.

If an individual is released for failure to follow the Code of Conduct or these Policies and Procedures:

The applicant, upon written request will have the right to be reconsidered as a minister / volunteer by an Appeals Committee after 12 months from the date of release. The Appeals Committee will be composed of five (5) persons who have been authorized to interview minister / volunteer applicants.

All reconsideration decisions shall be made by a majority vote of the Appeals Committee and are FINAL.

## **TWO CLEARED ADULT RULE FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH**

It is the policy of Children's and Youth Ministries that for all regularly scheduled events there will be a minimum of two cleared adults present with children and youth at all times. These adults are ministers/volunteers who have been screened through the procedure outlined in the Safe Environment Program. If, for reasons due to absence, illness, the two cleared adults are not present at the beginning of the event, backup measures must be implemented.

For Religious Education (Children's and Youth Ministries), the office aides will be trained and cleared to be emergency backup adults for the classes and small groups. Other available staff members may be called in case of emergency. As a last resort, parents may be on call for each class or small group who are willing to come into the classroom. In some instances, two groups may be combined to make the minimum of two cleared adults available. If the adult is not cleared, the **DOCUMENTATION OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE TWO CLEARED ADULT RULE** must be completed.

An event may be canceled at the discretion of the Director of Children's/Youth Ministry.

## **DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE TWO CLEARED ADULT RULE**

Attendance sheets should indicate the presence of the two cleared adults or the names of the substitutes for the group along with the date. Events will have the names of children/youth in attendance along with the names and signatures of adults supervising and attending the event.

## **DOCUMENTATION OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE TWO CLEARED ADULT RULE**

The minister/volunteer who is with a group of children or youth must notify the coordinator or director in charge of supervision of the event as soon as non-compliance is known. Anytime that two cleared adults are not in attendance with a group for a regularly scheduled event, written records must indicate the event, date, time, and the circumstances leading up to non-compliance and explain the measure taken for the event. The **DOCUMENTATION OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH TWO CLEARED ADULT RULE FORM** will be available in meeting rooms and in the ministry offices. The minister/volunteer may initiate the completion of the form. Final responsibility for documenting non-compliance rests with the director or coordinator of the event. The minister/volunteer and the director or coordinator supervising the event must sign this report. The report is turned in immediately to the appropriate office for the director of the ministry. The form is filed in the Safe Environment Office.

**DOCUMENTATION OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH TWO CLEARED ADULT RULE**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Ministry \_\_\_\_\_

Event \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Room \_\_\_\_\_

Minister/Volunteer in attendance at the event \_\_\_\_\_

Director or Coordinator in charge of event \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for Non-compliance with the Two-Cleared Adult Rule**

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**What Measures Were Taken**

(i.e. Office aide was sent into the class or small group, staff person was recruited to cover, event went on with a volunteer parent, and only one adult remained with the group)

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**Signature of Minister/Volunteer in attendance at the event**

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**Signature of Ministry Director/Coordinator**

\* Original filed with Safe Environment Coordinator

**TURN FORM IN TO THE MINISTRY OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.**

Can attach to attendance sheet.

## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

### **Mandate to report under state law:**

The Texas law is very specific on reporting suspected child abuse:

§ **261.101. Persons required to report; time to report**, the Texas Family Code, states:

- a) A person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report.
  
- b) If a professional has cause to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected, the professional shall make a report not later than the 48<sup>th</sup> hour after the professional first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected. A professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report. In this subsection "professional" means an individual who is licensed or certified by the state or who is an employee of a facility licensed, certified, or operated by the state and who, in the normal course of official duties or duties for which a license or certification is required, has direct contact with children. The term includes teachers, nurses, doctors, and day-care employees.
  
- c) The requirement to report under this section applies without exception to an individual whose personal communications may otherwise be privileged, including an attorney, **a member of the clergy**, a medical practitioner, a social worker, or a mental health professional.
  
- d) The identity of an individual making a report under this chapter is confidential and may be disclosed only on the order of a court or to a law enforcement officer for purposes of conducting a criminal investigation of the report.

### **§261.106. Immunities, states:**

- a) A person acting in good faith who reports or assists in the investigation of a report of alleged child abuse or neglect or who testifies or otherwise participates in a judicial proceeding arising from a report petition or investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect is immune from civil or criminal liability.

## WHO REPORTS/WHAT IS REPORTED

A Church member, volunteer, staff member, or any person engaged in a non-Church activity conducted on church premises, having cause to believe that a someone's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall make a non-accusatory report reflecting that person's belief that someone has been or will be abused to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Such report must contain the name and address of the person, name and address of person responsible for a child, if available, and any other pertinent information.

## **REPORTING ABUSE DISCOVERED WITHIN OR ARISING FROM THE CHURCH COMMUNITY**

Suspected abuse or neglect arising from or discovered within the church community must be reported as outlined below. This includes incidents related to:

1. Church activities, church related activities, church sponsored activities, and non-church activities conducted on church premises. (By way of example, religious education, youth retreats, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, basketball practice, Love Truck working with youth); and
2. Any contact of a church member, volunteer, staff member or clergy with a minor or vulnerable adult who is or has been a participant in any church activity, church related activity or church sponsored activity notwithstanding the location where the suspected abuse occurred.

### **HOW REPORTS ARE MADE**

Volunteers shall report to the lay staff person or the lay director of the ministry in charge of the activity, and persons in charge of non-church activities shall report to the lay staff contact person for that activity. In the event that this individual is unknown to the volunteer or person in charge, the report is to be made to one of the following persons: Director of Children's Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, or the Parish Business Manager. The lay staff person in charge or lay staff contact person, if not the director, shall report to the director of the ministry. The director or business manager is mandated to submit an oral report on learning of the abuse or likelihood of abuse not later than 48 hours after the director or business manager first suspects that a child has or may be abused and further, to make and submit a written report within 5 days.

The oral and written reports shall be submitted to these three entities:

1. Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.
2. The pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton; and
3. The Vicar General, Chancellor or Risk Manager of the Catholic Diocese of Dallas.

The oral and written reports shall specifically include:

1. The name of any person or persons from whom information was obtained;
2. How the reporter obtained the information;
3. Details of conversations with parents, students, coordinators and others;
4. Name and address of the child or youth;
5. Name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child; and
6. Any other pertinent information detailing the suspected abuse.

Oral reports of suspected child or elder abuse should be made to the Texas Department of

Family and Protective Services.

**1-800-252-5400**

or

911

Written reports shall be addressed to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2005 S. Los Rios Boulevard, Plano, TX (972-633-6600)

Individuals with knowledge about violations of Diocesan policy should call the Vicar General, the Chancellor, or the Risk Manager of the Diocese at **214-528-2240**, or they may write to them at the Diocese of Dallas, P.O. Box 190507, Dallas, Texas, 75219.

A report to the Diocese **does not** relieve the individual from reporting child abuse as required by the Texas State Law.

## **RESPONDING PROCEDURES**

### **Responding to a Personal Accusation of Misconduct**

If you are accused of engaging in inappropriate conduct, immediately notify the Diocese (Chancellor, Vicar General or Risk Manager).

### **Responding to a Legal Investigation**

If you are accused of engaging in a crime with respect to your church duties, obtain proper legal assistance before making any comments to any investigator. Notify the Diocese of any investigation so that appropriate action can be taken.

### **Responding to the Media**

Any news media inquiries regarding allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct by Church personnel should be directed to the Vicar General or Chancellor of the Diocese. In keeping with the above stated policies, the Diocese is committed to dealing with alleged incidents of child abuse and/or other forms of sexual misconduct in an open and responsible manner. At the same time, in light of the permanent harm that can result from such allegations, even if they ultimately prove to be unfounded, the Diocese respects the strict confidentiality and privacy of all persons who are involved in such incidents.

## **SEXUAL HARRASMENT STATEMENT FOR PARISHES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DALLAS**

Sexual harassment violates the mission and policies of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas and its parishes and institutions. Unlawful harassment has been defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as:

"unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment."

The Diocese of Dallas and its member organizations will not tolerate sexual harassment by or toward, its religious personnel, employees, or volunteers.

The procedure for addressing claims of sexual harassment will be:

1. The charging party has the option to confront privately and in a peaceful manner the person whom he or she believes has engaged in harassing conduct. Anyone exercising this option has the support of the Diocese and can be assured of freedom from retaliation of any sort.
2. If a charging party prefers not to confront the person or attempts to do so unsuccessfully, he or she may report the conduct to the Pastor, Principal, or the head of the organization, or if that official is involved in the allegation(s), then to the Vicar General of the Diocese.
3. The charging party must give a brief, written statement about the alleged harassing conduct.
4. This written statement and the official's report must be sent to the Vicar General. The Vicar General will consult the diocese's legal counsel immediately, as well as investigate the complaint.
5. All Complaints will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately.
6. Prompt and effective remedial action will be taken where justified by the investigation's results.
7. There will be no retaliation from privately and peacefully confronting an alleged harasser or for reporting harassing conduct.
8. Everyone involved, including the charging party, the alleged harasser, and the person to whom the complaints are reported, must keep all information regarding the complaint and investigation confidential, except to the extent reasonably necessary to conduct the investigation and act on the results.
9. Harassment in the work place will be dealt with seriously.
10. Any violations of confidentiality will be dealt with seriously.
11. Any retaliation against a charging party will be dealt with seriously.



## **POLICY ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT ON THE PART OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN AND BROTHERS AND LAY EMPLOYEES OF THE DIOCESE OF DALLAS**

January 1, 1997

The opening pages of the Sacred Scripture tell us of God's wondrous creation of a universe that was good. The culmination of the whole of creation is when God breathed the divine spirit into the clay of the earth and brought forth humankind in His own image and likeness, male and female.

Our sexual identity is an intimate part of God's plan for creating and therefore for each of us. The mystery of what it means to be a human being-body and soul, spiritual and incarnate, male and female-is bound up in the very mystery of God, the author of life and the font of love. Human sexuality is God's creation, and we approach any discussion of it with a deep sense of appreciation, wonder, and respect. It must, however, be integrated with the other gifts we have received. Sexuality fully integrated in the human personality fosters human communication, and encourages and enriches all human relationships. The moral and spiritual health of the Church and human society depends on morally and spiritually healthy men and women who have learned to integrate the gift of sexuality with all the other gifts God gives them for the building up of the kingdom.

Following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church is deeply concerned for the well-being of all people and has a special concern for those who are most vulnerable. Sexual misconduct is always a tragedy, and calls for the Church to respond with compassion toward all persons involved.

Therefore, the development and implementation of this policy for members of religious institutes working in the Diocese and employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Dallas and its institutions and agencies, has as its end the protection of the vulnerable, pastoral care for those wounded by misconduct, the protection of the rights of the accused, appropriate action towards those responsible for sexual misconduct, and respect for the church as a faith community.

### **TRAINING PROCEDURES**

- Each new worker (paid or volunteer) will be provided a copy of the Safe Environment Program Manual for the Catholic Community of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Each worker is required to read the manual and sign the acknowledgment form.
- Annual training will be provided to staff and volunteer workers on safety issues.
- Education and counseling opportunities will be made available to church personnel as part of the Diocese's continuing education and training of church personnel.

### **SUPERVISION PROCEDURES**

- Supervision is considered to extend to periods before and after an event, including when children or youth are waiting for transportation outside the approved church entrance.
- An adequate number of adults will be present at events involving children and youth.
- One adult is never enough.
- Facilities should be monitored during church services and all school or other parish activities.
- Please refer to departmental policies and/or handbook with regard to the drop off or pick up of children under the age of eighteen (18).
- Parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form, will be obtained before taking children or youth on trips.
- Qualified drivers, who have passed all State requirements to drive the vehicle used and who have a safe driving record, will be the only ones who may drive any church or school vehicle or any other vehicle that has been chartered, rented or leased on behalf of the parish.
- Parental approval must be obtained before permitting any minor to participate in athletic events or any activity that involves potential physical risk.
- Children will be encouraged to use a "buddy system" whenever they go on trips away from church property.
- All Adult leadership and sponsors must be screened and trained and must be approved in advance by the appropriate chief administrator for any overnight activities.
- Private counseling by ministers or certified persons of the parish must be done with a door open or behind a door with a window.

### **BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH**

All clergy, staff and volunteers of the parish will observe the following guidelines for dealing with minors:

- First and foremost, the “Two Adult Rule” **must** be followed.
- No minor child may reside in any church rectory or other living quarters of priests other than a son or daughter of the resident priest.
- Only priests, seminarians or their immediate family members may be overnight guests in rectories.
- Do not provide minors with alcoholic beverage, tobacco, drugs or anything that is prohibited by law.
- Do not serve as chaperone for activities that conflict with curfew laws pertaining to minors.
- Touching should be age appropriate and based on the need of the minor and not on the need of the adult. Avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. If a minor initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper.
- Do not engage in the physical discipline of a minor. Discipline problems should be handled in coordination with your supervisor and/or the parents of the minor. Corporal punishment is **never** permissible.
- Do not be alone with a minor in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
- Do not take an overnight trip alone with a minor who is not a member of your immediate family.
- Do not sleep in the same bed with a minor. If adult supervisors stay in a hotel or other sleeping room with a group of minors, the supervisors should sleep in his or her own bed using a roll away or cot if necessary.
- Topics, vocabulary, recordings, films, games or the use of computer software or any other form or personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents should not be employed with minors. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.
- Do not administer medication of any kind without written parental permission.

- If you recognize inappropriate personal or physical attraction developing between yourself and a minor, maintain clear professional boundaries between yourself and the minor or refer the minor to another adult supervisor.
- If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments. Schedule meetings at times and use locations that create accountability. Limit both the length and number of sessions, and make appropriate referrals.
- Do not give minors keys to church facilities.
- Do not drive a church or school vehicle unless you have received prior authorization and have the appropriate license and/or certification.
- Do not permit minors to cross a road by themselves while they are in your custodial care.
- Do not take photographs of minors while they are unclothed or dressing (e.g., in a locker room or bathing facility).
- If you observe anyone (adult or minor) abusing a minor, take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and to provide a safe environment for the minor. Immediately report the misconduct (see Reporting Procedures).
- No staff member may sign out or remove a child from the campus other than their own.
- No staff member should be a babysitter or caregiver outside of normal working hours for any child or vulnerable adult.
- No staff member may recommend or refer anyone as a caregiver, babysitter, nanny etc.

# Code of Pastoral Conduct

*For Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers,  
Administrators, Employees, and Volunteers*

## **Preamble**

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, employees, and volunteers in our parishes, religious orders, and institutions must uphold Christian values and conduct. The *Code of Pastoral Conduct for Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Employees, and Volunteers* provides a set of standards for conduct in certain pastoral situations.

## **Responsibility**

The public and private conduct of clergy, employees, and volunteers can inspire and motivate people or it can scandalize and undermine the faith of the people. Clergy, employees, and volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry.

Responsibility for adherence to the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* rests with the individual. Clergy, employees, and volunteers who disregard this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* will be subject to remedial action by *The Diocese and/or St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry—depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

## **Pastoral Standards**

### **1. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors<sup>1</sup>**

*Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.*

- 1.1 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer to other professionals when appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors: Clergy, employees, and volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups.

- 1.2 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship). *[See Section 7.2.2]*
- 1.3 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should not audiotape or videotape sessions.
- 1.4 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual contact, forced physical contact, and conversation.
- 1.5 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors shall not engage in sexual intimacies with relatives, friends, or other individuals who are close to the client, when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should presume that a potential exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships.
- 1.6 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- 1.7 Physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding) between Pastoral Counselors or Spiritual Directors and the persons they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided.
- 1.8 Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times.
  - 1.8.1 No sessions should be conducted in private living quarters.
  - 1.8.2 Sessions should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.
- 1.9 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors shall maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.

## **2. Confidentiality**

*Information disclosed to a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible.*

2.1 Information obtained in the course of 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 Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties involved and to prevent harm.

2.1.2 Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.

2.2 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.

2.3 The employee or volunteer providing pastoral counseling services or spiritual direction should keep minimal records 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 have been taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.

2.5 If a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director discovers, while counseling a minor, that there is a serious threat to the welfare of the minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is essential to the child's health and well-being, the employee or volunteer should:

- Attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure.
- If consent is not given, disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.

Consultation with the appropriate Church supervisory personnel is recommended before disclosure.

**2.6 These obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any**

**disclosure, even indirect, of information received through the confessional.**

### **3. Conduct With Youth**

*Clergy, employees, and volunteers working with youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between youth and adult supervisors.*

- 3.1 Clergy, employees, and volunteers must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to youth activities.
- 3.2 Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should only occur under appropriate public circumstances.
- 3.3 Clergy, employees, and volunteers should refrain from the possession and use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs when working with youth.
- 3.4 Clergy should not provide shared and private accommodation for individual young people.
- 3.5 Employees and volunteers should not provide shared and 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 where there is no other adult supervision present.
  - 3.5.1 In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, the clergy, employee, or volunteer should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all harm.
  - 3.5.2 Use a team approach to emergency situations.

### **4. Sexual Conduct**

*Clergy, employees, and volunteers must not exploit the trust placed in them by the parish community for sexual gain or intimacy.*

- 4.1 Priests, religious, employees, and volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of this promise in all relationships at all times.
- 4.2 Employees and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services should use discretion in developing intimate relationships with minors, employees, or parishioners.



- 4.3 No clergy, employee, or volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 4.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the parish *or diocese*. Diocesan procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.
- 4.5 Clergy, employees, and volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the State of *Texas* and should follow those requirements.

## **5. Harassment**

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

- 5.1 Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- 5.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - physical or mental abuse;
  - racial insults;
  - derogatory ethnic slurs;
  - unwelcome sexual advances or touching;
  - sexual comments or sexual jokes;
  - requests for sexual favors used as
  - a condition of employment, or
  - to affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation; and
  - display of offensive materials.
- 5.3 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 environment.
- 5.4 Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the *parish or diocese*. Diocesan procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

## **6. Parish Records and Information**

*Confidentiality will be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of parish, religious order, or institutional records.*

- 6.1 Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. When compiling and publishing parish, religious order, or institution statistical information from these records, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.
- 6.2 Most sacramental records older than 70 years are open to the public.
  - 6.2.1 Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age.
  - 6.2.2 Requests for more recent records shall be handled only by staff who are authorized to locate the records and supervise their use.
- 6.3 Parish financial records are confidential unless review is required by *the diocese* or an appropriate government agency. Contact the *diocese* upon receipt of any request for release of financial records.
- 6.4 Individual contribution records of the parish, religious order, or institution shall be regarded as private and shall be maintained in strictest confidence.

## **7. Conflicts of Interest**

*Clergy, employees, 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.*

- 7.1 Clergy, employees, and volunteers should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.
- 7.2 Clergy, employees, 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.
  - 7.2.1 No clergy, employee, or volunteer should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
  - 7.2.2 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.
  - 7.2.3 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:
    - Clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship,
    - Anticipate any conflict of interest,

- Take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict, and
- Obtain from all parties written consent to continue services.

7.3 Conflicts of interest may also arise when a Pastoral Counselor's or Spiritual Director's independent judgment is impaired:

- By prior dealings,
- By becoming personally involved, or
- By 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.

## **8. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct**

*Clergy, employees, and volunteers have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.*

8.1 Clergy, employees, and volunteers cannot minister to others unless they minister first to themselves. When there is an indication of illegal actions by clergy, employees, or volunteers, notify the proper civil authorities immediately. Also notify the parish or diocese.

8.2 When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with:

- Peers,
- Others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or
- The Chancery office.

8.3 When a member of clergy, an employee, or a volunteer may have violated this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles:

- Report the issue to a supervisor or next higher authority, or
- Refer the matter directly to the Chancery office.

8.4 The obligation of Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors to report client misconduct is subject to the duty of confidentiality. Any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality must yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, health, or well-being of the persons involved.

## **9. Administration**

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

- 9.1 Personnel and other administrative decisions made by clergy, employees, and volunteers shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect Catholic social teachings and this *Code of Pastoral Conduct*.
- 9.2 No clergy, employee, or volunteer shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.

## **10. Employee or Volunteer Well-being**

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

- 10.1 Clergy, employees, and volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own mental, physical, and/or spiritual health.
- 10.2 Clergy, employees, and volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their professional and/or personal lives.
- 10.3 Clergy, employees, and volunteers must address their own spiritual needs. Support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended.

Inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs is prohibited.

## INFORMATION

### DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

For purposes of this written policy, "child abuse" shall be defined to include the following acts or omissions by any person:

- (1) Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment to the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning;
- (2) Causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning;
- (3) Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given.
- (4) Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child;
- (5) Any of the following acts which are inflicted on, shown to, or intentionally practiced in the presence of the child if the child is present only to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any person;
  - (a) Contact between the genitals of one person and the mouth or anus of another person;
  - (b) Touching of the anus, breast, or any part of the genitals of another person with intent to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of any person;
  - (c) Sexual contact with any person;
  - (d) Penetration of the female sex organ by the male sex organ;
  - (e) Sexual penetration with a foreign object;
  - (f) Incest;
  - (g) Sexual assault;
  - (h) Sodomy.

- (6) Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent the occurrence of any of the acts set out in paragraph 5 hereinabove from being inflicted on or shown to a child by another person, or intentionally practiced in the presence of a child by another person if the child is present only to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any person;
- (7) Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in any contact between the genitals of one person and the mouth or anus of another person, penetration of the female sex organ by the male sex organ, or any other kind of sexual contact;
- (8) Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene or pornographic;
- (9) Placing the child in or failing to remove the child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that result in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child;
- (10) The failure to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for the child, with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child;
- (11) The failure to provide the child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child;
- (12) The failure by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to return to the child's home without arranging for the necessary care for the child after the child has been absent from the home for any reason, including having been in a residential placement or having run away.

## **TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE**

There are four types of child abuse. They are defined as:

- Physical:** An injury or pattern of injuries that happen to a child that are not accidental. These injuries may include beatings, burns, bruises, bites, welts, strangulation, broken bones or death.
- Neglect:** Neglect occurs when adults responsible for the well being of a child fail to provide for the child. Neglect may include not giving food, clothing, shelter, failure to keep children clean, lack of supervision and withholding medical care.
- Emotional:** Any chronic and persistent act by an adult that endangers the mental health or emotional development of a child including rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant criticism, mean remarks, insults, and giving little or no love, guidance and support.
- Sexual:** Sexual abuse is the sexual assault or sexual exploitation of children. Sexual abuse may consist of numerous acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Children can be victimized from infancy through adolescence. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest, sodomy, fondling, exposing oneself, oral copulation, penetration of the genital or anal openings, as well as forcing children to view or appear in pornography. The perpetrator keeps the child from disclosing through intimidation, threats and rewards.

In the United States between 1:3 and 1:4 females are sexually abused as children. At least 1:7 to 1:10 males have been sexually assaulted before they reach the age of 18.

In 80% of the sexual abuse cases the child knows the offender and 50% of all cases, the offender is a member of the child's household.

Abuse crosses all socioeconomic backgrounds.

In cases reported in Massachusetts and California the greatest number of cases are those of neglect, followed by cases of physical abuse, with sexual abuse cases ranking third and finally emotional abuse. Two million cases of child abuse are reported each year and of these reported cases, two thousand children die.

## **PROFILE OF A CHILD ABUSER**

### **SEXUAL ABUSE**

#### **MALE 18-38**

- \* Low self esteem
- \* Need for power and control
- \* Poor family relationships
- \* Difficulty in interpersonal relationships-relates to others immaturely both socially and emotionally-may not be involved with peers or engage in adult group recreational activities
- \* Difficulty with impulse control
- \* History of past physical/sexual victimization...80-95% of child molesters were themselves molested as children
- \* Primary interests are in children
- \* May be involved in youth activities such as group leaders or coaches
- \* May be married or single...if married they are often experiencing marital difficulties...they have difficulty in developing satisfying, supportive, intimate relationships with adults
- \* May have a specific age of children they prefer to work with
- \* May be of any sexual orientation or preference
- \* Tend not to have substance abuse problems
- \* May have been insecure in childhood, with frequent moves, early physical illness, and marital difficulties between parents
- \* Less of a team player
- \* Difficult time asking for help with his/her problems
- \* Don't admit to stress or recognize a need to have a plan to deal with it \* Use children to fulfill their needs or validate their sense of competence and well being \* Highly skilled at gaining the trust and confidence of children
- \* Sensitive to children's needs and have a way of putting children at ease \* Moves frequently and unexpectedly
- \* Seeks opportunities to be alone with children
- \* Has an idealistic perspective of children...may refer to them as objects

#### **ADOLESCENT**

- \* Lack of contact with peers
- \* Few or no extracurricular activities
- \* Generally feels powerless and inadequate
- \* May feel more comfortable with children younger than themselves
- \* Males, in particular, may be frequently chosen to baby-sit because they make themselves available and relate well to young children
- \* May come from a family where there has been physical or sexual abuse
- \* May seem socially immature for their age
- \* May lack a close relationship with a father figure



## **FEMALE**

- \* Married young
- \* Reared in a very strict home
- \* Her family was/is very religious
- \* Her husband is gone frequently and is not very supportive
- \* Is sexually naive and immature
- \* Frequently the victim of physical abuse
- \* Has low self-esteem
- \* The husband exaggerates his masculinity in dress, work, and with peers and usually has drug or alcohol problems that affect his sexual performance
- \* Is lonely
- \* Does not have much tenderness in her life

## **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

- \* Negative attitude about life and people
- \* Labeled as having a "hot" temper
- \* Blames others "he made me", "it was her fault"
- \* History of abuse as a child
- \* Uses harsh, age inappropriate discipline
- \* Offers illogical or unconvincing excuses for what occurred
- \* Exhibits out of control behavior

## **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

- \* Blames and belittles children
- \* Cold and rejecting
- \* Withholds love

CAUTION: A profile list, such as this, can be misleading because many of the characteristics here can describe men/women who do not molest. Having more than one or even all of these items does not necessarily increase the odds of that person being a molester. Although this profile has some value in pointing out particular needs of people and risks associated with them, great caution should be used when assigning this profile to any one individual. Few molesters' ever self report the characteristics listed here. Neither is interviewers trained to properly elicit this information. Individuals with abusive personalities are often more subtle and skillfully manipulative in their approach to their employers, as well as their approach to children. This makes it essential for those responsible for hiring to gain information from collateral resources such as past employers, friends, families and criminal background checks.

## **POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE**

### **SEXUAL ABUSE BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS**

1. Is reluctant to change clothes in front of others
2. Is withdrawn.
3. Exhibits unusual sexual behavior and/or has venereal disease knowledge beyond that which is common for his/her development stage
4. Has poor peer relationships
5. Either avoids or seeks out adults
6. Is pseudo-mature
7. Is manipulative
8. Is self conscious
9. Has problems with authority and rules
10. Exhibits eating disorders.
11. Is self mutilating.
12. Is obsessively clean.
13. Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs.
14. Exhibits delinquent behavior such as running away from home.
15. Exhibits extreme compliance or defiance.
16. Is fearful or anxious.
17. Exhibits suicidal gestures and/or attempts suicide.
18. Is promiscuous.
19. Engages in fantasy or infantile behavior.
20. Is not willing to participate in sports activities.
21. Have school difficulties.

### **SEXUAL ABUSE PHYSICAL INDICATORS**

1. Has pain and/or itching in the genital area
2. Has bruises or bleeding in the genital area
3. Has venereal disease
4. Has swollen genital parts
5. Has difficulty walking or sitting
6. Has torn, bloody, and/or stained underclothing
7. Experiences pain when urinating.
8. Is pregnant.
9. Has vaginal or penile discharge
10. Wets the bed.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE**  
**BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS**

1. Is overly eager to please
2. Seeks out adult contact.
3. Views abuse as being warranted
4. Exhibits changes in behavior
5. Is excessively anxious
6. Is depressed
7. Is unwilling to discuss problems
8. Exhibits aggressive or bizarre behavior
9. Is withdrawn.
10. Is apathetic.
11. Is passive.
12. Has unprovoked fits of yelling or screaming.
13. Exhibits inconsistent behavior at home and school.
14. Feels responsible for the abuser.
15. Runs away from home.
16. Attempt suicide.
17. Has low self-esteem.
18. Exhibits a gradual impairment of health or personality.
19. Has difficulty sustaining relationships.
20. Has unrealistic goal setting.
21. Is impatient.
22. Is unable to communicate or express his/her feelings, needs, or desires.
23. Sabotages his/her chances of success.
24. Lacks self-confidence.
25. Is self depreciating and has a negative self image

Emotional abuse attacks a child's self-esteem, emotional development, and self-worth. A child's spirit can be crushed with threats, put-downs, or neglect. It can hurt as much as physical abuse.

Children look to their parents for love and approval. They need love and attention to

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE**  
**PHYSICAL INDICATORS**

1. Has a sleep disorder (nightmares or restlessness).
2. Wets the bed
3. Exhibited developmental lags (stunting his/her physical, emotional, and/or mental growth).
4. Is hyperactive.
5. Exhibits eating disorders.

feel good about themselves. An emotionally neglectful parent does not tell a child that he is loved; she does not give affection such as hugs or kisses, or praise the child when he or she is good. Emotionally abusive parents only put him down, or don't pay her any attention at all. (From *Stop It Now!* materials.)

**PHYSICAL ABUSE  
BEHAVIOR INDICATORS**

1. Is wary of adults
2. Is either extremely aggressive or withdrawn
3. Is dependent and indiscriminate in his/her attachments.
4. Is uncomfortable when other children cry
5. Generally controls his/her own crying
6. Exhibits a drastic behavior change when not with parents or caregivers
7. Is manipulative
8. Has poor self-concept
9. Exhibits delinquent behavior, such as running away from home.
10. Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs.
11. Is self mutilating.
12. Is frightened of parents, of going home.
13. Is overprotective of or responsible for parents.
14. Exhibits suicidal gestures and/or attempts suicide.
15. Has behavior problems at school.

**NEGLECT--BEHAVIOR INDICATORS**

1. Is truant or tardy to school often or arrives or early and stays late.
2. Begs or steals food
3. Attempts suicide
4. Uses or abuses alcohol and/or drugs
5. Is extremely dependent or detached
6. Engages in delinquent behavior, such as prostitution or stealing.

**PHYSICAL ABUSE  
PHYSICAL INDICATORS**

1. Has unexplained \* bruises or welts, often clustered or in a pattern.
2. Has unexplained \* and/or unusual burns (cigarettes, doughnut-shaped, immersion lines, object-patterned).
3. Has unexplained \* bite marks.
4. Has unexplained fractures or dislocations
5. Has unexplained abrasions or lacerations.
6. Wets the bed. (Or explanation is inconsistent or improbable.)

**NEGLECT--PHYSICAL INDICATORS**

1. Frequently is dirty, unwashed, hungry, inappropriately dressed.
2. Engages in dangerous activities possibly because he/she generally is unsupervised).
3. Is tired and listless.
4. Has unattended physical problems.
5. May appear to be over-worked and/or exploited.

## **FAMILY INDICATORS**

1. Extreme paternal dominance, restrictiveness, and/or over protectiveness.
2. Family isolated from community and support systems.
3. Marked role reversal between mother and child.
4. History of sexual abuse for either parent.
5. Substance abuse by either parent or by children.
6. Other types of violence in the home.
7. Absent spouse (through chronic illness, depression, divorce or separation)
8. Severe overcrowding.
9. Complaints about a "seductive" child.
10. Extreme objection to implementation of child sexual abuse curriculum.

Material taken from pages 191-193 have For Their Sake, Recognizing, Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse, Becca Cowan Johnson, American Camping Association, 1992.

Family Indicators from Committee For Children.

Note: These indicators can also be indicative of emotional dysfunctions that merit investigation for emotional problems and/or being the victims of abuse.

## DISCLOSURE

Children may disclose abuse in a variety of ways. They may come to you in private, and tell you directly and specifically what is going on: unfortunately, this is one of the less common ways for children to disclose. More common ways include:

\* INDIRECT HINTS e.g. "My brother wouldn't let me sleep last night," "Mr. Jones wears funny underwear," "Daddy doesn't like me," "My baby-sitter keeps bothering me," A child may talk in these terms because she/he hasn't learned more specific vocabulary, feels too ashamed or embarrassed to talk more directly, has promised not to tell, or for a combination of these reasons. Gently encourage the child to be more specific, within the limits of her/his vocabulary, but bear in mind that in order to make a report you do not need to know exactly what form the abuse has taken.

\* DISGUISED DISCLOSURE, "I know someone who is being touched in a bad way," "What would happen if a girl told her mother she was being molested but her mother doesn't believe her?" Here the child might be talking about a friend or sibling, but is just as likely to be talking about her/himself. Encourage the child to tell you what she knows about the "other child," it is probable that the child will eventually tell you whom they are talking about.

\* DISCLOSURE WITH STRINGS ATTACHED "I have a problem but if I tell you about it you have to promise not to tell anyone else." Most children are all too aware that some negative consequences will result if they break the secret of abuse; often the offender uses the threat of these consequences to a report, if the child discloses abuse; just as the abuse itself is against the law, so too it would be against the law for you. Assure the child you will respect her/his need for confidentiality by not discussing the abuse with anyone other than those directly involved with the legal process, who might include the school nurse or counselor, school principal, and/or the Child Protective Services investigator.

Some Suggestions for responding to Disclosure:

- \* Find a private place to talk with the child. \*
- \* Do not panic or express shock.
- \* Express your belief that the child is telling the truth.
- \* Use the child's vocabulary.
- \* Reassure the child that it is good to tell.
- \* Reassure the child that it is not her/his fault, that she/he is not bad.
- \* Determine the child's immediate need for safety.
- \* Let the child know that you will do your best to protect and support him/her.
- \* Let the child know what you will do.
- \* Report to the proper authorities.

If the child discloses during a lesson (activity where others children are involved), acknowledge the child's disclosure and continue the lesson/activity. Afterwards, find a place where you can talk with the child alone. \*

*Remember, your role is not to investigate the situation. It is your responsibility to report the abuse, set in motion the process of getting help for the child, and be supportive of the child*

*\* Although it recognizes how difficult it is for a child to disclose abuse, the Catholic Community of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church feels that staff or volunteers should not be alone with the child or where others cannot observe them during this time.*

## **A GUIDE TO RESPONDING TO THE ABUSED CHILD:**

Feelings of anger, guilt, denial, confusion are normal reactions to have. The way we respond to children will affect them. The best response is to go slowly, not to ask for too much information too quickly and to keep focus on the child's needs. This means that the adult responding should not focus on revenge toward the abuser or his/her own guilt. Such a response will only frighten the child.

### **Believe the Child**

Experience in treatment and reporting indicates that children seldom make up stories about abuse. Even if the story is false or exaggerated, there may still be serious family problems.

### **Be a Good Listener**

Allow the child an opportunity to talk freely with you if he/she is comfortable, but also remember to respect the child's right to silence.

### **Reassure the Child**

Let the child know that sharing this information with you was the right thing to do. Let the child know that you will try to keep him/her safe and to help the family. Be honest with the child regarding your responsibility to report the incident. **DO NOT PROMISE NOT TO TELL.** Be careful not to make any promises about what may or may not happen.

### **Help Relieve the Child of Guilt**

Children often believe they are to blame for the abuse. Explain that what happened was the responsibility of the adult, or the bigger child.

### **Be Available to the Child**

For some children, the abuse may not have been traumatic, but the subsequent intervention was. The child may need your support and understanding during this family crisis.

### **Protect the Child's Right to Privacy**

You may assume the special role of advocate for the child by reminding his/her peers or staff about the child's right to privacy.

### **Follow-up**

Mandated reporting sources usually wonder about the results of having made a report. They can call Protective Services and find out if the case has been opened, the name of the assigned worker and if the child has been placed in a foster home. They can also ask for a report on the child's progress. However, because the family's right to privacy is very important, there may be information that the Protective Service worker will not be able to give.

The ways in which adults respond to the abused child influences the level of anxiety felt by the child. Our goal is to lessen the trauma for the child. The decision to report may pose personal and family conflicts. Regardless of the situation, failing to report allows the problem to continue. By reporting suspected child abuse, we not only protect the child, but it may mean the difference between a lifetime of guilt and one of healthy family relationship.

Adapted from handout development by Child Abuse Prevention Services, Inc., Lansing, Michigan.

# **PRIORITIES**

**“A Hundred Years From Now  
It Will Not Matter What My Bank Account Was  
The Sort Of House I Lived In  
Or The Kind Of Car I Drove.....  
But The World May Be Different Because  
I Was Important In The Life Of A Child”**