

Code of Conduct: Children & Youth

The first premise of this code is that children and youth function best when behaviors and expectations are clearly defined. It is accepted that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children in all aspects of their development. This experience aims at developing upright citizens and good Christians, following the new commandment Jesus gave His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

In Timothy 4:12 we read "Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity." Timothy is urged to rely on the gifts he has received from God. This code urges our children and youth to rely on God's gifts to them, especially charity, chastity and purity. This calls the young person to acknowledge and promote one's personal dignity and the rights that go with it.

It becomes important for children and youth to know the difference between "right" and "not right" relationships. "Right" relationships foster personal, spiritual, and emotional growth, e.g., the ability to communicate, to forgive, to show affection, to be honest, vulnerable, dependable, etc. "Not right" relationships become harmful and hurtful, and even abusive. Abuse occurs when someone does not respect another's boundaries, uses power, tricks, threats, or violence to cross or change another's boundaries, or inflicts hurtful or unwanted behavior (physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual) on another person.

This code is used in conjunction with existing local or diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and is not intended to supersede them.

When engaging in formal and informal activities, functions, and programs, children and youth are expected to behave appropriately at all times, respecting the rights of others.

1. Christian behavior is expected at all times.
2. Respect for individuals, the community and facilities being used is required.
3. Cooperation and self-control are necessary when participating in programs and activities.
4. Dress must be in accord with the activity and appropriate for a Christian environment.
5. Unacceptable behavior and lack of cooperation will not be tolerated, but will be addressed appropriately. Examples of unacceptable behavior are as follows, though not limited to:
 - a. disrespect for adults and peers
 - b. use of vulgar language or gesture, use of racial slurs
 - c. damaging of property
 - d. fighting or intent to injure others
 - e. constant disturbance of others at work or in an activity
 - f. cheating
6. Possession of weapons, possession, sale or use of alcohol or drugs are forbidden.
7. No child or youth has the right to treat another in any manner that will cause physical or emotional pain. Therefore, harassment of any kind is unchristian and unacceptable.
8. Coercion or threats to do something physically hurtful or for the purpose of exposing someone or something about another is unacceptable behavior.
9. Chastity is a virtue to be held in high esteem and promoted in practice. Sexual abuse of any sort, coercing a person to engage in sexual acts against her or his will, physically touching the sexual parts of another's body, treating a person like a sexual object are unacceptable and abusive behaviors. Consensual sex between students or initiated by minors to adults must never occur.

References:

- Diocese of Omaha, NE (2002). Sample Youth Code of Behavior.
- Diocese of Orlando, FL (2002). Code of Conduct, Bishop Moore Catholic High School.
- Code of Conduct, Annunciation Catholic Academy.
- Diocese of Orlando, FL (2002).
- McCarthy, Robert J. (2002). Protecting Young People, National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers, Washington, D.C.
- 23rd General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco (1990). Educating Young People to the Faith.