



■ POLICY

□ GUIDELINE

YOUTH MINISTRY PERSONNEL

HARASSMENT POLICY FOR YOUTH AND ADOLESCENT VOLUNTEERS

1. **Harassment** is defined as verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses cuts down, or shows hostility toward a person because of his or her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability (and other characteristics protected by law).

Harassment can take many forms and can occur at any parish activity. It can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at youth programs off-site.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a safe environment free from all forms of harassment and intimidation. No one (youth or adult) should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct of any kind.

2. **Sexual harassment** is unwelcome attention of a sexual nature. It may take different forms, including:

- Inappropriate touching (brushing up against, grabbing, patting, or pinching in a sexual manner.)
- Making comments about a person's body, clothing, or sexual behavior
- Spreading sexual rumors about someone
- Continually asking someone out when they have communicated a lack of interest
- Making sexual jokes, gestures, or remarks (in person or in "cyberspace" – instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms, etc)
- Intimidation (blocking or cornering someone in a sexual way)
- Assault (pulling clothing off or down, forcing someone to do something sexual such as kissing)
- Fondling oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others

3. **Gender Harassment.** Sex harassment is not limited to conduct that is sexual in nature; it also includes harassment that is based on a person's gender. An example would be referring to a girl by a female body part or a demeaning sex-based term. This behavior is prohibited. Treating people differently because of their gender is prohibited.



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4. **Hostile environment harassment** occurs when unwelcome sexual conduct is so severe and pervasive (repeated) that it limits a person's ability to benefit from or enjoy the parish program or activity. A sexually hostile environment can be created by anyone: a parish employee, adult volunteer, youth volunteer, youth participant or a visitor to the parish activity.

5. If a youth sees harassment of any kind occurring (no matter who the harasser is—student, visitor, catechist, etc.,) they should immediately tell a trusted adult staff member or volunteer so that they can intervene and begin the appropriate reporting steps as outlined in diocesan policy.

6. If a youth believes he/she is a victim of sexual harassment, he should tell a trusted adult (youth minister, pastor, director of religious education or a parent) to file a formal complaint.

Symptoms of a victim of sexual harassment may include:

- ❖ Feel angry, embarrassed, frustrated, scared or depressed
- ❖ Feel hopeless to stop the harassment
- ❖ Not feel good about yourself
- ❖ Fear that your reputation will be destroyed
- ❖ Go out of your way to avoid the harasser(s)
- ❖ Experience headaches, stomach aches, or sleeping or eating problems because of the stress caused by the harassment

7. Where it is determined that harassment has occurred, the appropriate authority will take immediate disciplinary action as outlined in diocesan policy.

8. Retaliation against or “getting even” with anyone who reports harassment will not be tolerated. The diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.



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PARISH RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Periodically each parish shall give staff and volunteers a copy of the Harassment Policy. It is recommended that a Harassment Policy Verification Form be signed and returned.
2. Each parish program shall follow diocesan procedures for timely investigation and response to complaints.
3. Each parish shall periodically train program administrators, staff and volunteers to ensure that they understand which types of behavior constitute harassment, the prevention of harassment, and how they should respond in the event of experiencing such behavior. Records are to be kept of training dates and names of those in attendance.
4. Each parish program shall include the Harassment Policy in materials distributed to the program's staff/volunteers.



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Harassment Policy for Youth and Adolescent Volunteers Verification Form

I, _____ a youth participant or volunteer with _____
please print your name name of parish/school
have received and read the diocesan Harassment Policy for Youth and Adolescent Volunteers.

I understand that:

- Harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, cuts down, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability.
- Sexual harassment is unwelcome attention of a sexual nature.
- Gender harassment is based on a person's gender. An example would be referring to a girl by a female body part.
- Hostile environment is when unwelcome sexual conduct is so severe and pervasive that it limits a person's ability to benefit from a parish activity
- Sexual harassment is against the law and against diocesan policy.
- Retaliation (getting even with) someone who reports harassment is against the law and against diocesan policy.

If I am a victim of harassment, I can tell a trusted adult without fear of retaliation or getting into trouble.

I agree to not participate in any form of harassment while I volunteer or participate in parish/school activities.

I agree to immediately report any harassment I may witness to a trusted adult leader in my parish program so that they may take the appropriate actions.

Signature

Date

name of parish activity