



# Diocese of Fort Worth Code of Conduct & Behavior Standards for All Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers

Article 6 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, mandates: "There are to be clear and well-publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other paid personnel and volunteers of the Church in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people." This document is the Diocese of Fort Worth's response to this mandate and is one of the cornerstones of our Safe Environment Program. All clergy, religious, and lay ministers (employees and volunteers) indicate their agreement with and adherence to the Code of Conduct by signing and dating it.

## **Professional Ethical Obligations**

Priests are accountable to His Excellency, Bishop Michael F. Olson, or the person(s) he designates; all other ministers are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative under the authority of the Bishop.

Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers must be aware of and comply with all applicable parish/school, organizational and/or diocesan policies and guidelines with special attention to ministerial competency, sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, parental permission, social media, and medical emergency policies.

## **Additional Obligations Include:**

### **Ministerial Role**

- Work collaboratively with all those engaged in ministry.
- Faithfully represent the teachings of the Catholic Church, with integrity in word and action.
- Be competent and receive ongoing education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities (§§ 231 and 279, Code of Canon Law).

### **Inclusion**

- Recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from actions or words that are disrespectful of anyone.
- Serve all people in accordance with the Church's teaching on Faith and Morals.
- Ensure that all persons have reasonable access to the resources, services, and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.

### **Accountability**

- Serve the Faithful, carrying out their ministerial functions "...conscientiously, zealously, and diligently" (§231, Code of Canon Law).
- Exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding the fiscal matters placed in their trust.
- Be responsible for supporting each other toward being effective leaders. This support must include discussing concerns about inappropriate behavior with their supervisor.

### **Confidentiality**

- Respect confidentiality.
- Adhere to civil and ecclesial law concerning the reporting of neglect or abuse or whenever physical harm could come to the person or to a third party.
- Support the rights and roles of parents, guardians and caretakers, as prescribed by the Church in the Code of Canon Law, while ministering to the needs and concerns of those receiving ministry.

### **Conduct**

- Sustain respectful relationships with all those they serve, avoiding manipulation, sexual harassment and other abuses of the authority that comes with a ministerial position.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with colleagues. Romantic or sexual relationships between a minister and those he/she ministers to are inappropriate and unethical, regardless of who initiates the conduct.
- Model healthy and positive behaviors with all those encountered through ministry.
- Procuring, providing, or using alcohol for persons under 21 years of age and procuring, providing, or using controlled substances for anyone is illegal, inappropriate and unethical.

## **Referrals and Intervention**

- Be aware of the signs of sexual abuse and physical neglect.
- Be aware of personal and professional limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- Adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policies and procedures for reporting abuse, suspected abuse or neglect.

## **UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS**

- Engaging in actions which are disruptive to the ministry and public worship
- Speaking graphically about sexual activities (including your own) and/or allowing others to do so (this includes telling sexually suggestive jokes)
- Hosting parish or school events for children or youth in your home without at least one other Safe Environment trained adult present
- Showing pornographic materials (photos, films, cartoons, stories, and drawings) to others
- Acquiring, possessing or distributing sexual and/or pornographic images of children or adults
- Allowing anyone to become sexual with you or with another
- Assaultive behavior with another, specifically including spanking, shaking, slapping, wrestling, tickling or physically punishing children or youth
- Giving, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol
- Giving, possessing or being under the influence of illegal drugs
- Giving persons tobacco products
- Shaming, degrading, ridiculing, threatening, belittling, or humiliating another person
- Using foul or abusive language
- Showing favoritism
- Going out/Dating a child or young person
- Having physical contact with another that can be misinterpreted
- Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- Being nude in front of others
- Being in bed with children or youth
- Keeping "secrets" about relationships
- Showing affection when no one else is around or in bedrooms, closets, restricted areas and other private rooms
- Staring while others are dressing
- Commenting on others' bodies
- Taking pictures or video/digital recording while others are dressing or showering
- Failing to adhere to uniform or accepted standards of affection

## **WARNING SIGNS**

- Wearing special clothes when you know you're going to see a certain person
- Spending extra time grooming yourself when you know you are going to see a certain person
- Finding ways or reasons to be alone with a certain person
- Keeping aspects of your relationship with a person secret from others (such as how often you talk on the phone or see each other alone)
- Giving and receiving special gifts from a certain person
- Neglecting ministry to others in order to spend more time with a certain person
- Sharing personal information about others with a certain person
- Sharing personal information or seeking help with personal problems from a certain person
- Discussing adult issues with children and/or youth
- Excessively looking forward to seeing a certain person
- Fantasizing or daydreaming about a certain person
- Spending disproportionate time or devoting more time with a certain person than with others

## DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

### Appropriate

Asking permission before touching  
Side hugs (with adults)  
Brief shoulder to shoulder hugs  
Pats on the shoulder or back  
Handshakes  
"High-fives" and hand slapping  
Verbal praise  
Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms  
Arms around shoulders  
Holding hands during prayer or when a person is upset  
Holding hands while walking with small children  
Sitting close to small children  
Kneeling or bending down for hugs with a small child

### Inappropriate

Any form of unwanted affection  
Full frontal hugs or "bear hugs"  
Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas  
Massages  
Patting others on the thigh, knee or leg  
Tickling or wrestling  
Touching or hugging from behind  
Games involving inappropriate touching  
Kisses on the mouth  
Special gift giving to/from a certain person

**Violations of the Code of Conduct & Behavior Standards for All Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.** All Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers of the Diocese of Fort Worth are to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form. Failure to agree in writing with this Code of Conduct is also grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

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## **BEHAVIOR STANDARDS \*required**

**PLEASE CHECK** each box signifying that you have read, understand and will adhere to each Behavioral Standard

- Clergy, seminarians, deacon aspirants or candidates, paid personnel and volunteers are to act as role models of proper Catholic values and must not engage in unethical or immoral conduct (or that which gives the appearance of such).
- Any interpersonal conduct that is prohibited by civil law is likewise forbidden under diocesan policy. As a prime example, any verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior between a minister and a child or young person is inappropriate and forbidden. Further, illicit use of electronic media, whether via internet, email, chat rooms, social networks, phone conversations, text messaging, photos, videos or any other access, is prohibited.
- Any suspicion of sexual abuse must be reported as required by state law and diocesan policy. Any knowledge or reasonable suspicion of any minister having an inappropriate relationship with a child or young person must be reported promptly to that person's supervisor, who must then discuss this concern with the ministerial role.
- Two Safe Environment trained adults or one Safe Environment trained adult and two trained teens must be present at all children's and/or youth religious education programs, classes and activities, and must remain until all children/youth have left the premises. This requirement includes all juvenes (Spanish youth) ministries that include adolescents. All planning meetings/ interactions with a teen assistant/helper must take place in public or in the presence of another adult or teen. All Catholic school events and activities outside of a regular classroom setting require the presence of two adults or one adult and at least two teens. Going out/Dating between a minister and a child or young person is not allowed.
- When initiating physical contact, discretion must be used. Any display of affection should be made in a public setting in front of other group members and should respect the wishes of the other person.
- One-to-one counseling between a minister and those he/she ministers to should always occur in a public place where they can be observed by others—never alone in a car or a private place.
- Driving alone with a child and/or youth is to be avoided at all times unless extraordinary circumstances require immediate and prudent action. In such situations, special care should be taken, including all of the following:
  - Contact parents and document the outcome of the call.
  - Do not sit close to one another in the car.
  - Do not come into physical contact with each other.
  - Do not stop the car to talk.
  - If you must stop, turn on the inside light of the car.
  - Avoid physical contact (hugs and kisses) when saying goodbye.
  - Be aware of the time you depart and arrive and make a record of those times.
- If a minister experiences a recurring romantic or sexual attraction for someone they are ministering to, the minister is required to discuss the situation with their supervisor or spiritual director for guidance.
- Any sexual gestures or overtures made to a minister, from those he/she ministers to, should be reported to his/her supervisor who will then meet with those involved to discuss the incident.
- All observed Code of Conduct violations must be reported to the supervisor and documented.

***Any Clergy, Religious or Lay Minister who cannot maintain these Behavior Standards cannot serve in the Diocese.***

## Code of Conduct Acknowledgement

I understand that violations of the Code of Conduct & Behavior Standards for All Clergy, Religious and Lay Ministers ("Code of Conduct") as outlined, are grounds for disciplinary action, up to, and including dismissal. I further understand that I am required to sign this Acknowledgement if I wish to serve in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Therefore, having read and understood the Code of Conduct, I hereby agree to uphold those requirements and standards in all ministries in which I serve.

First Name:  Last Name:

Home Phone:  Cell Phone:

Address:

City:  State:

Zip:  Email:

City where your church is located:

Church where you are registered:

Ministries you are involved in:

Date:

By checking this box and typing your name in the form above, you have agreed that this is your electronic signature.

EMAIL TO THERESA GAITAN

**Or PRINT THIS DOCUMENT AND DELIVER THE LAST TWO PAGES TO  
THERESA GAITAN, 817 927 5383, [tgaitan@standrewcc.org](mailto:tgaitan@standrewcc.org).**