

# DIocese of Nashville Policy Statement: Code of Conduct for Church Personnel

## P R E F A C E

Article six of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Revised Edition (adopted by the USCCB November, 2002) states:

*““there will be clear and well-publicized diocesan standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other church personnel in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people.””*

Therefore, the Bishop of the Diocese of Nashville promulgates this Policy Statement: Code of Conduct for Church Personnel and makes it binding effective September 1, 2003, on all priests and deacons possessing or seeking Nashville diocesan faculties, all Nashville diocesan seminarians, all parish employees, and all diocesan school employees. This Policy also binds all volunteers and diocesan employees who have regular contact with minors. "Regular contact" means more than one opportunity for contact with minors. The term "minor" refers to anyone younger than eighteen (18) years of age.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to identify standards of appropriate ministerial behavior and boundaries. The Church must be exemplary. Church personnel will be held accountable for their ministerial behavior. In order to maintain the highest level of accountability, behavioral standards must be established. Although not exhaustive, this Code of Conduct provides a basic identification of limits.

## P R E A M B L E

Church personnel of the Diocese of Nashville must uphold Christian values and conduct. This Code of Conduct provides standards for pastoral conduct. Each individual covered by this Code of Conduct prior to providing pastoral service will complete a Profile Form, an Authorization Form, a criminal background screening, read a copy of this Code of Conduct as well as the two Nashville Diocesan Policies entitled Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor and Response to Allegations of Abuse of a Professional Relationship, and sign an Acknowledge statement.

## R E S P O N S I B I L I T Y

The public and private conduct of church personnel can inspire and motivate minors, but it can also scandalize and undermine their faith. Church personnel must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. Responsibility for adherence to this *Code of Conduct* rests with each individual. Individuals whose actions are not in conformity with this *Code of Conduct* will be subject to remedial action by their appropriate superior (i.e., pastor, religious superior, principal, director, bishop, etc.). 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.

## S T A N D A R D S

- 1 Church personnel assume full responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all ministry situations involving minors.
- 2 All physical contact between church personnel and minors must be completely nonsexual and based only on a minor's need. Physical contact when alone with a minor will be avoided.

- 3 Church personnel who learn of information indicating clear and imminent danger to a minor or to others must disclose the information necessary to protect the safety, health, or well-being of the parties affected and must communicate such disclosures to their ecclesiastical supervisor.
- 4 Church personnel will not engage in the corporal discipline of minors in their care. Discipline problems will be handled in coordination with one's supervisor and the parents of the minor.
- 5 A degree of vulnerability exists when church personnel minister alone with minors; therefore, a team approach to managing activities involving minors should ordinarily be used.
- 6 Church personnel will never 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 ministerial relationship; necessary one-on-one meetings with a minor must take place at times and at locations that create accountability and avoid inappropriate activity.
- 7 Church personnel will never take photographs of minors while they are unclothed or dressing.
- 8 Church personnel will never provide minors with alcohol, tobacco, drugs or anything prohibited by law, nor administer medication of any kind without written parental permission.
- 9 Church personnel will not allow a single minor who is not a legal relative to stay overnight in their private accommodations or residence when that adult and minor are the only two people present.
- 10 Church personnel will not participate in any overnight ministry event involving minors when no other adults are present.
- 11 On overnight ministry events when chaperoning groups involving minors church personnel will never sleep in a bed, cot, sleeping bag, etc. with a minor.
- 12 Church personnel will not employ with minors any topics, vocabulary, recordings, films, games, the use of computers, or any other form of interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents.
- 13 Church personnel will provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment including but not limited to the following:
  - Physical or mental abuse,
  - Racial insults,
  - Derogatory ethnic slurs,
  - Sexual advances, touching, comments, or jokes,
  - Requests for sexual favors
  - Bullying, and
  - Display of offensive materials.
- 14 Church personnel who know or suspect such intimidation or harassment or who have received an allegation of such must immediately report it to the Victim Assistance Coordinator (615-783-0765) or the diocesan attorney (615-390-5509) in accord with point 3 of the Nashville Diocesan Policy, *Response to Allegations of Abuse of a Professional Relationship*, and to their own supervisor. The procedures of this Diocesan Policy will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

- 15 Church personnel have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of other church personnel.
- 16 Church personnel who become aware of another individual's illegal or inappropriate action will immediately notify the proper civil authorities, their own supervisor, and, if different, the supervisor of the other individual (or next higher authority if required).
- 17 Church personnel who become aware of another individual's violation of this *Code of Conduct* will immediately notify their own supervisor and, if different, the supervisor of the other individual (or next higher authority if required).
- 18 Church personnel who are uncertain about whether a situation is illegal or in violation of this *Code of Conduct* will consult with their own supervisor (or next higher authority if required).
- 19 Church personnel who know or suspect another individual's sexual misconduct or who have received an allegation of such must immediately contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator (615-783-0765) or the diocesan attorney (615-390-5509) in accord with point 3 of the Nashville Diocesan Policy, *Response to Allegations of Abuse of a Professional Relationship* and must contact civil authorities if the situation involves a minor in accord with Tennessee law and points 1.3 and 1.4 of the Nashville Diocesan Policy, *Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor*. The procedures of these two diocesan policies will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.