

DIOCESE OF SPOKANE

CODE OF CONDUCT and COMMITMENT

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WHOM WE SERVE

Ministering to and serving others can be an enriching experience for all involved. We as church persons (Bishops, clergy, seminarians, employees, volunteers, women and men religious, and independent contractors), act in the Church's name and have special influence in the lives of the people to whom we minister and serve. Because of the respect and even reverence with which many people regard church persons, an imbalance of power exists. Since those we serve may be vulnerable, we can harm them without intending to. Therefore, we are called upon to frequently self-assess and monitor our behaviors to protect minors, young adults 18-21, vulnerable adults, and adults who participate with us in church ministries or activities. We are at all times responsible to maintain healthy and professional emotional and sexual boundaries.

To fulfill this commitment, **I will:**

- Maintain healthy ministerial relationships that are service oriented, time limited, focused on the other's needs, use touch appropriately, and display a courteous and respectful attitude at all times. Some behaviors that build relationships are:
 - Know and speak the person's name
 - Maintain eye contact
 - Speak directly to the person
 - Smile
 - Shake hands
 - Give a high five
 - Hug briefly side-to-side
 - Pats on the shoulder or back
 - Hold hands while walking with small children
 - Sit beside small children
 - Hold hands during prayer

- Recognize that my behavior is judged by its impact upon those I serve, not by my intentions; therefore, I must act in ways that do not give the appearance of impropriety
- Stop and think about whether this relationship in any way interferes with my responsibilities as a church person
- Serve all equally

MEETING WITH MINORS, YOUNG ADULTS, OR LEGALLY VULNERABLE ADULTS

Since I cannot always avoid situations where I am alone with a minor, young adult, or legally vulnerable adult, **I will:**

- Meet in as public a place as possible; if a private meeting is necessary, avoid all physical contact
- Schedule meetings at times when others are around
- Limit meeting time
- Leave door ajar
- Choose a room with a window when available
- Make appropriate and timely referrals

TRUSTED COMMUNICATION WITH MINORS AND YOUNG ADULTS INVOLVING SENSITIVE PASTORAL SITUATIONS

As ministers to minors and young adults, we recognize that some situations require us to withhold notifying a parent/guardian about our direct communication with their child or young adult. For example, a minor or young adult may disclose alleged abuse in the home that must be kept temporarily confidential to protect the minor or young adult.

A minor or young adult may disclose a personal struggle that they don't want their parents/guardians to immediately know about. When a minor or young adult shares a sensitive pastoral situation with me either verbally or electronically, **I will:**

- Remain within my role as minister by using patient listening and pastoral care
- Serve as a bridge to professional resources and encourage the minor or young adult to seek help
- Fulfill my role as a mandated reporter by reporting suspected or disclosed sexual or physical abuse of a minor
- Report to 911 if a minor or young adult is an immediate safety risk to self or others

If a minor or young adult discloses sensitive "safety at risk" information (i.e. substance abuse, promiscuity, depression, suicidal ideation, sexual harassment or bullying) and requests confidentiality, **I will:**

- Reassure the minor or young adult that I will do my best to safeguard privacy and trust, communicating only with those who need to know
- Document details of communication with the minor or young adult, including nature of communication, date, time, and place
- Encourage and accompany the minor or young adult to seek assistance and share their situation with parent/guardian and help connect them with resources

TRANSPORTATION AND OUTINGS WITH MINORS AND YOUNG ADULTS

When taking minors or young adults on field trips, conferences, or tours, **I will:**

- Have another church person with me when transporting only one minor unless the child is my own
- Have two church persons present with minor children during all activities, events, and/or outings outside of parish, school or agency grounds, even when I have transported a group of minors to the location by myself
- Always have another VIRTUS-trained church person in the room when sleeping in a room, hotel room, or tent with minors or young adults
- Sleep in my bed or sleeping bag alone and ensure minors and young adults are each in their bed or sleeping bag alone
- When using my home for work with minors or young adults, always have more than one minor or young adult and at least two adults present
- Use appropriate physical contact and only when another adult is present

DIGITAL, ON-LINE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION WITH MINORS AND YOUNG ADULTS

I recognize the power of electronic media to instruct, coach and evangelize minors and young adults, therefore my social media interactions with minors and young adults are guided by transparency, prudence, and professionalism.

As a church person, **I will:**

- Use only my diocesan or parish/school email in the course of my work/ministry, if I am clergy or an employee
- Ensure that all electronic communication with minors and young adults is open and accessible to multiple parties
- Formally notify parents/guardians in writing of all media platforms used to communicate with minors and young adults for ministerial, educational, or extra-curricular activity purposes.
- Obtain written consent from parents/guardians to post photographs or video of minors.
- Use appropriate social media sites and/or apps to communicate with minors and young adults
- Ensure that parents/guardians are aware of all media I use to communicate with their minors so they have access to the same information their children receive; this information need not be shared through the same media (i.e., email sent to parents/guardians about an upcoming event versus a Twitter post to youth about the upcoming event).
- Register passwords and names of all sites/app/accounts in a central location at the parish or school and accessible to pastor, principal, or ministry administrator.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in all electronic communications with minors and young adults
- Conform to Catholic Church teachings and this Code of Conduct and Commitment in all electronic communications with minors and young adults
- Directly communicate with minors and young adults only between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.
- Use "scheduled sending" features if I compose communications outside of acceptable hours (i.e., compose an email or Facebook post at 9:30 p.m. and schedule it to go out to the group at 7am the next morning).

- Communication outside of these hours may be warranted to communicate important information during a ministry-related event whose hours extend beyond those hours (i.e., overnight retreat, mission trip, youth conference, etc.).
- Include parents/guardians and/or other chaperoning adults in all communication outside these hours

INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WHOM WE SERVE

As a church person, **I will not:**

- Share personal problems or aspects of my intimate life
- Keep secrets with those to whom I minister
- Speak poorly of coworkers or volunteers
- Share personal contact information with minors and young adults
- Spend free time with minors and young adults
- Engage in intimate or sexual relations with anyone to whom I am ministering
- As clergy, not provide overnight accommodation for individual minors or young adults, including but not limited to, accommodations in any church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any place where no other adult supervision is present, except for my family members
- Take young adults on personal trips or vacations without other adults or appropriate chaperones
- Appear in front of minors or young adults when not appropriately clothed, nor change clothes, bathe, or shower in view of a minor or young adult
- Inflict intentional emotional, psychological, or physical pain
- Seek to satisfy my own needs to the detriment of the person to whom I am ministering
- Single out minors, young adults or legally vulnerable adults, for special personal attention or gifts
- Play favorites or give the impression of favoritism
- Rely on friendships within the Church community to promote my needs in any way at the expense of the needs of those to whom I am ministering
- Aid, abet, ignore and/ or not report abusive behavior or Code of Conduct violations, since this facilitates abusive behavior
- Engage in on-going communication with a minor or young adult that is beyond pastoral listening and care, or as a substitute for referral to professional resources

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

At events where minors and/or young adults are present, and during school hours, **I will not:**

- Attend events while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Use, possess or distribute illegal drugs or marijuana
- Smoke, use smokeless tobacco, or e-cigarettes
- Drink alcoholic beverages

TOUCHING

As a church person, **I will not:**

- Engage in any touching behavior that is sexual or may reasonably be considered sexual in nature
- Use lengthy embraces
- Kiss (including head or hand)
- Touch bottoms, chests, legs or genital areas
- Spank or slap
- Show affection while in an isolated location
- Wrestle or tickle
- Give piggy-back rides
- Give massages

PORNOGRAPHY

As a church person, **I will not:**

- Acquire, possess or distribute any pornographic images while at work or when ministering. Acquiring, possessing or distributing pornographic images of minors under the age of 18 by whatever means or any form of technology is considered child sexual abuse.
- Use workplace computers or other means of communications inappropriately as outlined in the diocesan acceptable use policy

DIGITAL, ON-LINE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION WITH MINORS AND YOUNG ADULTS

As a church person, **I will not:**

- Engage in personal, private, one-on-one non-ministerial electronic communication with minors and young adults
- Collect email addresses, phone numbers, or any other media of communication from minors without parent/guardian written permission
- Use my personal electronic devices to communicate one-on-one with minors and young adults for non-ministerial purposes

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is *unwelcome* sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct based on gender that either 1) is made a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, living environment, or participation in a church or school community, OR 2) creates an intimidating or hostile environment.

As a church person, **I will not:**

- Comment about another's physique or body development
- Humiliate, ridicule, bully or degrade another person based on gender
- Engage in discussions, vocabulary, recordings, films, games, computer software, internet sites or any other form of personal interaction or entertainment that could be reasonably construed as sexually inappropriate
- View or circulate sexually explicit or pornographic material
- Engage in inappropriate touching or physical conduct of a sexual nature

CRIMINAL HISTORY

A church person may not serve with minors, young adults, or legally vulnerable adults if he or she: 1) has ever been convicted of any of the criminal offenses listed below, or 2) has ever received deferred adjudication for any of these criminal offenses, or 3) has a pending criminal charge for any offense until a determination of not guilty is made. These felonies are:

1. offenses against a person or family, including but not limited to murder, assault, sexual assault, abandoning or endangering a child, bigamy or incest
2. offenses against public order or indecency, including but not limited to, promoting prostitution possessing and/or promoting child pornography
3. violations within the last five years of any law intended to prevent possessing or distributing any controlled substance in the Washington State Uniform Controlled Substances Act

REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Reporting Abuse of a Minor or Legally Vulnerable Adult (including child pornography): If I suspect that any church person has sexual abused a minor or legally vulnerable adult, I will report this information first to local law enforcement and Child or Adult Protective Services (CPS or APS), then to the Victim Assistance Coordinator or Bishop and Vicars.

Reporting Code of Conduct violations: If I suspect or observe any other church person engaging in grooming behavior or violating the Code of Conduct and Commitment, I will communicate this information first to the offending church person's supervisor, principal, pastor or administrator then to the Victim Assistance Coordinator and/or the Bishop or Vicar General.

The person receiving the report documents the reporter's concerns, the accused's name and specific behaviors, the investigation outcome or follow up and the actions taken.

See diocesan policy 7.01.02: **Administrative Policies/Procedures: Prevention, Education, and Reporting of Abuse**

I have read this Code of Conduct and sign with full knowledge of its commitments:

FULL NAME SIGNATURE _____
PARISH/SCHOOL/MINISTRY _____
DATE ____/____/____
I am (check all that apply):
Bishop
Clergy
Seminarian
Employee
Volunteer
Woman or Man Religious
Independent contractor
(Referred to as "church person")

*COME HOLY SPIRIT, FILL THE HEARTS OF THY FAITHFUL AND KINDLE IN THEM THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE.
SEND FORTH YOUR SPIRIT AND THEY SHALL BE CREATED.
AND YOU SHALL RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
AMEN*

5.1.21