



# Archdiocese of Boston

## CODE OF MINISTERIAL BEHAVIOR

### **On Ministerial Behavior**

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, employees and volunteers in our parishes, religious communities, institutes, and organizations must uphold Christian values and conduct. The following Code of Pastoral Conduct provides a set of standards for conduct in pastoral situations.

#### **1. Responsibility**

The public and private conduct of clergy, staff, and volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine people's faith. Clergy, staff, and volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace support them in their ministry.

We have a responsibility to witness in all relationships the chastity appropriate to our state in life, whether celibate, married or single. We must avoid any covert or overt sexual behaviors with those for whom we have a professional or pastoral responsibility. This includes seductive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that sexually abuses, exploits or harasses another person. We are to provide safe environments in parishes, schools and institutions where children and others can be assured that their boundaries will not be violated.

We should be aware of our own and other persons' vulnerability, especially when working alone with another, and be particularly aware that we bear the greater responsibility for maintaining sexual boundaries in a pastoral relationship, for we hold the greater power. We must not initiate sexual behavior, and must refuse it when another invites or consents to it.

We must give preference to the perspective and judgment of those who are vulnerable and dependent on us in order to determine whether touching would be an appropriate expression of pastoral care.

We must show prudent discretion before touching another person, since we cannot control how physical touch will be received. We strive for greater self-awareness in order to recognize the sexual dynamics at work for us in pastoral relationships and to heed the warning signs in our lives that indicate when we are approaching boundary violations. We assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all our relationships with others.

We should satisfy our needs for affection, intimacy, attraction, and affirmation outside the pastoral relationship. We should seek supervision, spiritual direction or other professional help to remain focused on our professional responsibilities and to hold firm to the sexual boundaries of the pastoral relationship.

We must intervene when there is evidence of or have reasonable cause to suspect that children are being abused in any way.

We must report any suspected abuse or other violations of sexual conduct to the appropriate civil and ecclesial authorities, and then do what we can to see that justice is done for the victim, the offender, and the community from which the victim and minister come.

Responsibility for adherence to the Code of Pastoral Conduct rests with the individual. Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers who disregard this Code of Pastoral Conduct will be subject to remedial action by the Archdiocese. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry/employment—depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

## **2. Code of Pastoral Conduct For Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff, Employees and Volunteers**

### **Conduct With Children and Youth**

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers working with children and youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between them and their adult supervisors. All must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with children. Always consider a team approach when working with children.

Physical contact with children can be misconstrued and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private. One-on-one meetings with a young person are best held in a public area, or if that is not appropriate, then the door to the room is left open, and someone on the parish staff is notified about the meeting.

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers should refrain from the a) the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, and b) the use of alcohol when working with youth. Adults should never buy alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, videos, or reading material that is inappropriate and give it to young people.

Clergy should not allow any young people to stay overnight in the cleric's private accommodations or residence. Youth ministers and all adults should always meet with young people in areas that are visible and accessible. It is always a safe practice to have two adults in the area where youth are present or when driving children home.

Parish staff, employees and volunteers should not provide shared, private, or overnight accommodation for individual young people including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place where there is no other adult supervision present.

In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and wellbeing of the youth, the clergy, staff, or volunteer should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm. Use a team approach to managing emergency situations.

### **Sexual Conduct**

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community. Clergy, religious, staff, and volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.

Those who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners. Staff and volunteers must behave in a professionally

supportive manner at all times. No clergy, employee, staff, or volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.

Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the appropriate civil and ecclesial authorities according to the policies and procedures of the Archdiocese of Boston. Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and should follow those mandates.

### **Harassment**

Clergy, staff, and volunteers must not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by other Church staff or volunteers (reference the current Sexual Harassment Policy of the Archdiocese of Boston).

Clergy, staff, and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior including, but not limited to: physical or mental abuse, racial insults, derogatory ethnic slurs, unwelcome sexual advances or touching, sexual comments or sexual jokes, requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment, or to affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation, and the display of offensive materials.

Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment. Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the Secretary for Ministerial Personnel. The policies and procedures of the Archdiocese of Boston will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

### **Conduct for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors**

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors are any clergy, staff, or volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups. Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must respect the rights and protect the welfare of each person.

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors shall not step beyond their competence in Counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate, and should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship).

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments. Nor should Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are close to the client—such as relatives or friends of the client.

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling related relationships. Physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding) between Pastoral Counselors or Spiritual Directors and the persons they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided.

Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at all times. Sessions should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.

### **Confidentiality**

Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law. If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm. Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling. Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies, or other public presentations only when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.

While counseling a minor, if a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director discovers a reasonable cause to believe that there is a serious threat to the minor's health or welfare, including sexual abuse or neglect, or a disclosure is made indicating that the minor child is being abused in any way, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director should contact the appropriate civil and ecclesial authorities and make a report according to these Policies and Procedures.

These obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the Sacrament of Confession. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure of information received solely through the Sacrament of Confession.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question. Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the persons involved in these relationships. No clergy, staff, or volunteer should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests. Pastoral counselors should not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have a business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The counselor must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.

When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director must clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship, anticipate any conflict of interest, take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict, and obtain from all parties written consent to continue services.

Conflicts of interest may also arise when a Pastoral Counselor's or Spiritual Director's independent judgment is impaired by prior dealings, becoming personally involved, or becoming an advocate for one (person) against another. In these circumstances, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director shall advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services and refer them to another Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director.

## **Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct**

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

The Archdiocese requires that clergy, staff, employees and volunteers contact the Department of Social Services when they have knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect that a person under 18 years of age is being or has been abused or neglected, and to follow that oral report with a written report within forty-eight hours.

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of any illegal action by clergy, staff, or volunteers, the proper civil authorities should be notified immediately. Also notify the Secretary for Ministerial Personnel.

When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with your supervisor, peers, others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or the appropriate Chancery office as listed above.

## **Administration**

Employers and supervisors shall treat clergy, staff, and volunteers justly in the day-to-day administrative operations of their ministries. Personnel and other administrative decisions made by clergy, staff, and volunteers shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect Catholic social teachings and this Code of Pastoral Conduct.

No clergy, staff, or volunteer shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.

Each volunteer providing services to children and youth must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct before providing services.

## **Clergy, Staff or Volunteer Well-being**

Clergy, staff, employees and volunteers have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health. They should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health, and seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.

Clergy, staff, and volunteers must address their own spiritual needs. Support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended.

**Code of Conduct: Statement of Agreement**

I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth of the Archdiocese of Boston.

**I will:**

Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.

Never be alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.

Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.

Maintain confidentiality in all matters related to normal parish business.

Comply with the mandatory reporting regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and with the Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures to report suspected child abuse. I understand that failure to report suspected child abuse to civil authorities is against the law.

Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

**I will not:**

Touch or speak to a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.

Inflict any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading children and/or youth.

Smoke or use tobacco products while engaging in activities with children and/or youth.

Accept or give gifts to children or youth without the knowledge of their parents or guardians.

Possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while working with children and/or youth.

Possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.

Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth at any time.

I understand that I am subject to a criminal history background check. My signature confirms that I have read this Code of Conduct and I agree to follow these standards. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct, or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct, may result in my removal from ministry.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_