

STANDARDS OF MINISTERIAL BEHAVIOR AND BOUNDARIES

For Priests, Deacons, Religious, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff and Volunteers



I. Introduction

The Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries (the “Standards of Ministerial Behavior” or “the Standards”) are applicable to all priests, deacons, religious, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff and volunteers in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. They are intended to provide clear standards of behavior and, in particular, a blueprint for the boundaries of appropriate behavior in all interactions with children and young people. The Standards are not intended to create any rights in any person, to obligate the Archdiocese to act at any time or in any manner, or to establish any responsibility or liability of the Archdiocese.

II. Definitions

For purposes of the Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries only, the following are definitions for terms used herein.

Child Abuse means any form of negligent, reckless, intentional or malicious infliction of injury to a child’s physical, moral or mental well-being.

Sexual Abuse means contacts or interactions between a child and an adult where the child is being exploited or used as an object of sexual gratification for the adult.

Sexual Harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other communication (oral or written, including electronic mail) or physical behavior of a sexual nature. There are three categories. One type occurs when submitting to this type of behavior or conduct is implicitly or explicitly made a term of employment. Another type is when submitting or refusing to submit to this conduct is used as a basis for any decision affecting an individual’s employment. The third type is behavior or conduct that creates a hostile environment.

Archdiocese means the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia, including parishes, schools, agencies and institutions which are directly accountable to the Ordinary of Philadelphia.

Church Personnel means any priest, religious, deacon, pastoral minister, administrator, employee or volunteer working on behalf of the Archdiocese, as defined above.

Child or Children means all persons under the age of eighteen or special education adults.

III. Responsibility

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

Responsibility for adherence to the Standards of Ministerial Behavior rests with the individual. Church Personnel who disregard the Standards will be subject to remedial action by the Archdiocese. Corrective action may take various forms, including but not limited to a verbal reproach, termination of employment, or removal from the ministry, depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

IV. Pastoral Standards

1. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors

As used in this section, Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors refers to clergy, religious, staff, and volunteers who provide formal and regular pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups.

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors:

- a. Shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer persons they counsel to other professionals when appropriate.
- b. Are to carefully consider the possible consequences of counseling before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague, friend, etc.).
- c. Are not to audiotape or videotape sessions.
- d. Are not to engage in any form of sexual conduct with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual sexual contact.
- e. Are not to engage in sexual conduct with any individual who is close to the persons they counsel such as a relative or friend of the person they counsel. Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships.

- f. Are responsible for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- g. Are to avoid physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding hands) between themselves and the persons they counsel. Such actions can be misconstrued and should be avoided. Church Personnel should be mindful that not all members of the congregation are comfortable with physical touching and that hand-shake conduct should ordinarily suffice.
- h. Are to conduct counseling sessions in appropriate settings at appropriate times.
 - i. Counseling sessions must take place in only the professional portion of the rectory or other Church facility. Sessions are never to be conducted in the private living quarters.
 - ii. Counseling sessions are not to be held in places or at times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled. Counseling sessions should be held in an appropriate professional setting and should be scheduled for normal business hours - ordinarily between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
- i. Are to maintain a written log solely of the times and places of each counseling session with each person being counseled.
- j. Counseling Children. Counseling children presents additional considerations for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors.
 - i. Counseling of a minor must take place in the public/professional areas of Church property. Counseling sessions are never to take place in private living areas or other non-public areas.
 - ii. The door to the room where the counseling session takes place should have a window or the door should be left open.
 - iii. If possible, another adult should be in close proximity during the counseling session.

- iv. Unless the subject matter precludes it, the child's parent(s) or legal guardian should be present or aware of the session.
- v. The relationship must always remain professional during the counseling sessions.
- vi. If counseling entails more than two sessions, an evaluation of the matter is to be made with the child's parent(s) or guardian.
- vii. The Pastoral Counselor and Spiritual Director need to assess regularly the relationship to determine whether the child is developing a personal/physical attraction to him or her. Such attractions need to be recognized and the child immediately referred to another Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director.
- k. Shall avoid scandal.

2. Confidentiality

Information disclosed to a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction is to be held in the strictest confidence possible.

These obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure—even indirect disclosure—of information received through the confessional.

- a. At the initial meeting, Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors are to discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.
- b. Information obtained in the course of sessions is to be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
 - i. If there is clear and imminent danger to the persons they counsel or to others, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
 - ii. 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.

- c. Pastoral Counselors should keep minimal records of the content of sessions.
- d. 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.
- e. While counseling a minor, if a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director discovers that there is a serious threat to the welfare of the minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is essential to the child's health and well-being, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director is to:
 - Attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure.
 - If consent is not given, disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.

Consultation with the appropriate Church supervisory personnel is required before disclosure.

3. Conduct with Children

Church Personnel working with children shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between the child and adult supervisors.

- Church Personnel can and should develop a good rapport with minors. They must also be vigilant to avoid the type of contact with children that could raise questions about the appropriateness of the contact, or which may lead to negative comments about the contact by reasonable people. Church Personnel must not only refrain from inappropriate/improper contact with children, but also refrain from engaging in any action that could give the appearance of inappropriate/improper contact.
- a. Church Personnel must always exercise the highest degree of care in all of their interactions with children.
 - i. Children are not independent. When Church Personnel are with children, their parent(s) or guardian must always be explicitly informed of the child's location and the purpose of the interaction.

- ii. Federal, state or local laws may limit or prohibit children from engaging in certain work activities. Church personnel must always ensure that any activities in which they engage with children are not prohibited by labor laws. All children are required to obtain working papers as a condition of employment.
- iii. Parishes may direct any inquiries regarding the employment of children to the Archdiocese's Office for Human Resources.
- b. Professional attitudes must always be observed in all interactions with minors.
- c. Church Personnel are to avoid any unnatural or emotional attachment that a minor may have for them. Such attachments need to be recognized, acknowledged and properly addressed. In some instances, it may be necessary to terminate further contact with the child.
- d. Church Personnel must always be aware of the "power" of their role/position.
- e. When meeting with a minor, Church personnel should, whenever possible, have another adult present or nearby.
- f. Discussions of a sexual nature should only occur, if necessary, to respond to a specific question. Any such discussion should use appropriate, professional language. Slang or street words or phrases should not be used.
- g. Topics that could not be comfortably discussed with parents or another adult should not be discussed with children. Church Personnel should not use foul, offensive, or rough language in talking to children.
- h. Meetings with children should occur on Church property if at all possible. Children should only be allowed in professional or public sections of Church property. Children should not be invited or taken into living quarters or private areas on Church property or private homes. Church Personnel should never have children in their rooms or spend their days off with children who are not related to them.
- i. Church Personnel should avoid being alone with children.
- j. Games or sporting activities should be engaged in only in the presence of at least two adults.
- k. Alcohol, tobacco, or controlled substances are never to be supplied to children by Church Personnel.

- l. Church Personnel are not to engage in physical discipline of children. Discipline problems should be handled in coordination with the parent(s) or legal guardian of the child.
- m. Church Personnel are not to be alone with a minor in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, restroom, dressing facility, or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate or inconsistent with a ministry relationship.
- n. Youth groups are to have at least two adult chaperones for any activity. While on youth group trips, Church Personnel are to maintain a professional stature and socialize along with other adult chaperones. During such youth group trips, individual Church Personnel are not to sleep alone in the same room with a child.
- o. Ordinarily, unsupervised children should not be given keys to Church facilities.
- p. Church Personnel are never to take photographs of children while they are unclothed or dressing (e.g., in locker rooms or bathing facilities).
- q. Church Personnel must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to managing youth activities.
- r. Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.

4. Sexual Conduct

Church Personnel must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

The Archdiocese strictly prohibits sexual misconduct by any Church Personnel. The Archdiocese strictly prohibits anyone from interacting with children on behalf of the Archdiocese who has a civil or criminal record of child sexual abuse, has admitted prior sexual abuse, or is known to have a diagnosis of pedophilia or ephebophilia as defined by the American Psychiatric Association. For the purpose of these Standards, sexual misconduct involving minors is defined as both sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of individuals both male and female under age 18 as defined by law.

- a. Church Personnel who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
- b. Church Personnel who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction must avoid developing intimate relationships with persons that they counsel, other staff, or parishioners. Staff and volunteers must behave in a professional manner at all times.
- c. Church Personnel may not exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- d. All allegations of sexual misconduct against a minor by Church Personnel must be taken seriously, and reported to appropriate civil authorities.
- e. Church Personnel shall review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and are to follow those mandates.

5. Harassment

Church Personnel must not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by other Church Personnel.

- a. Church Personnel are to provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- b. Some examples of behavior or environment that could be considered harassment:
 - i. any derogatory jokes, comments or slurs delivered in a manner that could be considered belligerent or threatening to another;
 - ii. any unwanted touching, assault, deliberate blocking or any intimidating action that interferes with free movement;
 - iii. any unwelcome touching and/or demands for sexual favors, and also any unwelcome sexually oriented behavior, comments or visually derogatory or demeaning posters, written words, drawings, novelties or gestures which create a hostile or offensive environment.

The Archdiocese prohibits all such conduct, whether committed by supervisory or non-supervisory personnel as well as by a third party (i.e., non-employee of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia) engaged in business with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

- c. 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.
- d. Possession of any pornographic pictures, or other sexually oriented material, on Church Property is strictly prohibited.
- e. Allegations of harassment are to be taken seriously and reported immediately to the individual's immediate supervisor, or other appropriate Church authorities.

5. Reporting Misconduct

Church Personnel have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

- a. Church Personnel must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of misconduct by Church Personnel, the person who obtains knowledge of the misconduct should notify his/her supervisor or other appropriate Church authorities.
- b. The obligation of Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors to report misconduct of the persons they counsel is subject to the duty of confidentiality. However, any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality must yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, health, or well-being of any of the persons involved.

These obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure—even indirect disclosure—of information received through the confessional.

If you or someone you know have experienced an incident of sexual abuse by clergy, employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, please contact the office of the **Victim Assistance Coordinators at 1-888-800-8780** philavac@adphila.org.

May 2003