

Code of Conduct for
Clergy, Staff, Religious
Brothers/Sisters, and Volunteers

2003, Revised 2005, 2008, 2011

DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD, MA

Diocese of Springfield
Code of Conduct
For Clergy, Religious Brothers/Sisters, Staff and Volunteers

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Introduction

The Diocese of Springfield is committed to keeping children and youth safe. To that end, we have adopted a number of policies and procedures. These policies are spelled out in the ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth***.

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors constitutes a positive part of Church life and ministry. Nonetheless, any touching can be misunderstood and must be considered with great discretion. Unfortunately, some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors.

This Code of Conduct was developed so that we can maintain the safest possible environment for our minors. The last page contains the form that all clergy, religious brothers and sisters, staff, and volunteers are required to sign.

Guidelines

1. Conduct with Children and Youth

Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers working with children and youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between child/youth and adult.

- 1.1 Physical contact with children/youth can be misconstrued and should occur only when completely non-sexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private.
- 1.2 Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers must refrain from the illegal possession and/or use of drugs and/or alcohol when with children/youth.
- 1.3 Clergy and religious brothers/sisters must not allow individual non-related children/young people to stay overnight in their private accommodations or residence.
- 1.4 Staff and volunteers must not provide shared, private, overnight accommodations 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**.
- 1.5 Communication with minors (e.g. notes, letters, e-mail, Internet exchanges, telephone calls) must be for professional/ministry-related reasons only.

2. Sexual Conduct

Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

- 2.1 Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers are called to be an example of chastity in all relationships at all times.

- 2.2 Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriately intimate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners.
- 2.3 No clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, or volunteer will exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 2.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously. Procedures outlined in the Diocese of Springfield's *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth* will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.
- 2.5 Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and will follow those mandates.

3. Harassment

Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, 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.

- 3.1 Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- 3.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following: physical or mental abuse, racial or ethnic slurs, unwelcome sexual advances or touching, sexual comments or jokes, requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment or to affect personnel decisions such as promotion or compensation, or display of offensive materials.
- 3.3 Harassment can be a single incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose of the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.

4. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

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

- 4.1 Clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, and volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by clergy, religious brothers/sisters, staff, or volunteers, the proper civil authorities (law enforcement and/or the Department of Social Services) and the Diocese of Springfield must be notified immediately.

Code of Conduct

As a cleric, religious brother/sister, staff or volunteer of the Diocese of Springfield, I promise to follow the rules and guidelines in the Code of Conduct **when I am ministering to the children and youth of the Diocese:**

I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Avoid smoking and/or using tobacco products in the presence of children/youth.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept from -- and refrain from giving – gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspected child abuse to the Department of Social Services. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is a misdemeanor according to the law. Consultation with the pastor, administrator, or supervisor is recommended but not required.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

I will not:

- Touch any child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Provide tobacco or alcohol to minors.
- Use, possess, provide, or be under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol when ministering to children/youth.
- Use, possess or allow access to a firearm when in the presence of children/youth.
- Strike, spank, shake or slap children and/or youth.
- Use any discipline that verbally abuses and/or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

I understand that as a cleric, staff, or volunteer of the Diocese of Springfield, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. 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 disciplinary action.

Printed Name

Position

Signature

Date

Parish

City/Town