

Office for the Protection of Children and Youth

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL WORKING WITH MINORS OR VULNERABLE ADULTS

Healthy relationships among people are a foundation of Christian ministry and are central to Catholic life. Church personnel in particular must be worthy of public trust and confidence. It is fundamental to the mission of the Archdiocese of Chicago that Church personnel conduct themselves in a moral and ethical manner consistent with Catholic principles.¹

Church personnel are expected to read, understand and comply with archdiocesan policies and procedures addressing the protection of children and youth including but not limited to those requiring the immediate reporting of all concerns about suspicious inappropriate behavior (whether physical, emotional, psychological or sexual) and boundary violations to their pastor, principal, the chancellor (312.534.8283) or the Vicar General (312.534.8271) and those mandated reporting laws pertaining to the abuse and/or neglect of minors. Clergy conduct applies to both on and off church grounds in both church and non-church sponsored activities.

Therefore, as someone who ministers to minors and/or vulnerable adults, I will maintain a professional role and be mindful of the trust and power I possess as a minister to young people and vulnerable adults. I will not engage in any form of inappropriate conduct with a minor or a vulnerable adult, regardless of who initiates such conduct. Any violation of this Code of Conduct will result in consequences up to and including dismissal or withdrawal from ministry.

For purposes of this Code of Conduct, “minor” is any person under the age of 18. “Vulnerable adult” is any adult in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offense.²

To achieve this, **I WILL NOT:**

- Have a personal relationship with any minor or vulnerable adult with whom I also have a professional relationship through my work/ministry/service, even if the minor or vulnerable adult initiates such personal relationship.
- Touch a minor or vulnerable adult in a sexual way or other inappropriate manner such as pinching, brushing the body, pushing, patting, feeling, tickling, rubbing, or massaging.
- Be alone with a minor or vulnerable adult in a residence, rectory, sleeping facility, or any closed room.
- Share any sleeping arrangements such as bed, sleeping bag or small tent with a minor or vulnerable adult.

¹This language is taken from Policy Book Two, § 605.1.

²These definitions come from Policy Book Two.

- Take an overnight trip alone with a minor or vulnerable adult.
- Acquire, possess or distribute any form of sexual material to a minor or vulnerable adult.
- Introduce sexually oriented topics, vocabulary, music, jokes, propositions, recordings, films, games, websites, computer software or entertainment to a minor or vulnerable adult unless it has been approved by the Office of Protection of Children and Youth and the agency or department responsible for developing the educational content.
- Provide alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana or controlled substances to a minor or vulnerable adult.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs, or be under the influence of prescription or over-the-counter medication due to misuse.
- Use alcohol when engaged in ministering to a minor or vulnerable adult.
- Engage in physical discipline for behavior management of minors or vulnerable adults.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, harass (verbally or physically), or degrade another person.
- Use profanity or vulgarities in the presence of minors or vulnerable adults.
- Be nude (partially or full) in the presence of minors or vulnerable adults.
- Photograph minors or vulnerable adults without a written consent in the form of a release from a parent or legal guardian.
- Communicate with a minor or vulnerable adult through the use of electronic means, except when delivering information regarding a program, event, or school function. Any such communications shall follow the Archdiocese Electronic Communications Guidelines Applicable to All Groups and the Special Rules for Use of Group Messaging Apps.

MEASURES TO AID OBSERVANCE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

To help me keep the promises in the Code, **I WILL:**

- Report any suspected child abuse or abuse of a vulnerable adult, including child pornography, to the proper authorities.
- Avoid gratuitous physical contact with a minor or vulnerable adult. Gratuitous physical contact with minors or vulnerable adults can be misconstrued, especially in private settings. See “Conduct that Is Not Permissible” for examples of prohibited gratuitous physical contact.
- Avoid overnight stays with a minor or vulnerable adult unless there is another adult present in a supervisory role.
- Avoid providing overnight accommodations for minors or vulnerable adults in private residences or rectories.
- Avoid driving alone in a vehicle with a minor or vulnerable adult.
- Have more than one child and at least one other adult present when using one’s own home for youth work.
- Assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries in all ministerial relationships.
- Refrain from giving gifts to a minor or vulnerable adult without advance knowledge and approval of the parent, guardian or caregiver.

- Avoid meeting privately with minors or vulnerable adults in rooms, offices, or similar areas where there is no window or where the door does not remain open. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor or vulnerable adult is needed (e.g. Sacrament of Reconciliation) avoid meeting in isolated locations or closed rooms.
- Adhere to the Archdiocese Electronic Communications Guidelines Applicable to All Groups and the Special Rules for Use of Group Messaging Apps when communicating with minors and/or vulnerable adults via email or other electronic means.
- Ensure that all activities involving minors or vulnerable adults (extra-curricular, catechetical, youth ministry, scouting, athletics etc.) for which I am responsible have been approved in advance by my supervisor or administrator.
- Have an adequate number of adults present at events. A minimum of two adults in supervisory roles must always be present during activities for minors and vulnerable adults.
- Ensure no minors or vulnerable adults are left unattended after program/activity concludes.
- Avoid taking minors and vulnerable adults away from the parish, school, or agency for field trips, etc. without another adult present in a supervisory role. Obtain written parental/guardian permission before such activities. Permission slips must include the type, locations, dates, and times of the activity, and emergency contact numbers of minor's or vulnerable adult's parent, guardian, or caregiver.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

These are some practical suggestions for identifying permissible and impermissible conduct.

Conduct that May Be Permissible

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors and vulnerable adults constitutes a positive part of Church life and ministry. Nonetheless, any touching can be misunderstood and must be considered with great discretion. Depending on the circumstances, the following forms of affection are customarily (but not always) regarded as appropriate and applicable when initiated by the minor or vulnerable adult:

- Verbal praise
- Handshakes
- “High-fives,” hand slapping and “fist bumps”
- Brief pats on the shoulder or back
- Hugs (brief)
- Holding hands while walking
- Sitting beside
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

Conduct that is Not Permissible

Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors and vulnerable adults, the following are examples of affection that are **NOT TO BE USED**:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses
- Holding minors over four years old on the lap
- Touching buttocks, chest, knees, legs or genital areas
- Being with minors or vulnerable adults in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private and closed rooms
- Inappropriate physical affection in all places, non-public as well as public
- Being reclined with a minor or vulnerable adult
- Wrestling or tickling minors or vulnerable adults
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by minor or vulnerable adult to adult, or by adult to minor or vulnerable adult
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development
- Gratuitous application of sunscreen or any other topical salves, ointments etc.

CODE OF CONDUCT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Parish/School/Agency Date

I have received a copy of the **Archdiocese of Chicago Code of Conduct for Church Personnel**. I have read and understand this Code of Conduct, and I agree to abide by it. I have also read and understand the “Measures to Aid Observance of the Code of Conduct” and the “Practical Suggestions” and will employ them to help me observe the Code of Conduct.

A violation of this code can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/volunteer service.

Signature

Print Name

Position

The signed Archdiocese of Chicago Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form shall be kept in employee personnel files at the agency/parish/school or in a general volunteer file at the agency/parish/school.

Please return the signed acknowledgement form to:

- If **employee** or **volunteer**: the site where you work or volunteer
- If **archdiocesan priest**: Office of the Chancellor, PO Box 1979, Chicago IL 60690
- If **extern priest**: Office of Extern/International, PO Box 1979, Chicago, IL 60690
- If **religious order**: Office for Religious, PO Box 1979, Chicago, IL 60690
- If **permanent deacon**: Office of the Diaconate, 816 Marengo Ave., Forest Park, IL, 60130
- If **aspirant** or **candidate for the diaconate**: Institute for Diaconal Studies (IDS) or Instituto de Liderazgo Pastoral (ILP), University of Saint Mary of the Lake, 1000 East Maple Ave., Mundelein, IL 60060
- If **seminarian**: Rector, University of Saint Mary of the Lake, 1000 East Maple Ave., Mundelein, IL 60060