



DIOCESAN CODE OF PASTORAL CONDUCT for EMPLOYEES

Pastoral Counseling Standards

Priests, deacons and others who provide pastoral counseling and spiritual direction must maintain appropriate boundaries and adhere to the following rules:

1. Never step beyond your competence in pastoral counseling situations; limit the number of pastoral counseling sessions to three or less. Refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.
2. Assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all situations involving pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. Sexual intimacies with persons being counseled or directed, including forced physical contact and inappropriate sexual comments, are absolutely forbidden and may result in the immediate loss of ministry or employment.
3. Avoid physical contact of any kind that could be misconstrued. Sessions must be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times, not in private living quarters and not in places or at times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship to the person(s) being counseled or directed.

Witness to Chastity

No priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister or employee shall, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

Priests and those deacons who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all their relationships at all times. Deacons and employees who are married are called to be examples of marital chastity at all times. Employees who are single or widowed are called to be examples of chastity in the single life.

No priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister or employee may exploit another person for sexual purposes including possession or use of pornography. Priests, deacons, seminarians, other ministers and employees are to review, be familiar with and committed to the contents of the diocesan sexual abuse policies – “*Our Promise to Protect*” Safe Environment Policy.

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For a complete set of the diocesan “Our Promise to Protect” policy, contact the Safe Environment Department, PO Box 23825, Green Bay, WI 54305-3825

The Diocese of Green Bay expects its priests, deacons, seminarians, other ministers and employees to conduct themselves appropriately in their relationships with the people they serve including individuals at risk and especially with minors.

The following Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct provides a set of standards for conduct in pastoral situations. This Code of Conduct has been developed in compliance with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the *Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II* and with the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*.

Responsibility for adherence to the Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct rests with the individual, but the support and observance of the Code is an important concern for all. Those who disregard this Code will be subject to remedial action by the Bishop, his representative or that person's supervisor. Corrective action may take various forms depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm done. For clerics this action may range from a verbal warning to removal from ministry. For lay employees this action may range from a verbal warning to discharge from employment depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm done.

Conduct With Youth

When working with minors, always maintain an open and trustworthy relationship. The following rules will apply.

1. Be aware of your own and others' vulnerability when working alone with minors. Use a team approach to managing youth activities.
2. Physical contact with minors can be misconstrued and is to be avoided unless completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate.
3. If inappropriate personal or physical attraction develops between an adult (a cleric or an employee) and a minor, the adult is responsible for maintaining clear professional boundaries.
4. Avoid being alone with a minor person in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area.

5. In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the minor, take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm. Use a team approach to manage emergency situations.
6. Minors unaccompanied by parents or legal guardians must never be allowed to stay overnight in the rectory or the priest's private residence.
7. The illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol is strictly prohibited. Never use alcohol when working with minors.
8. Minors must never be provided with alcohol, illegal drugs, sexually provocative materials or any illegal materials.
9. Taking photos of minors while they are unclothed or undressing is prohibited by law.

Conduct With Individuals at Risk

When working with individuals at risk, always maintain an open and trustworthy relationship. The following rules will apply.

1. Be aware of your own and others' vulnerability when working with individuals at risk.
2. Physical contact with individuals at risk can be misconstrued and is to be avoided unless completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate.
3. If inappropriate personal or physical attraction develops between a priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister or employee and an individual at risk, the priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister or employee is responsible for maintaining clear professional boundaries.
4. The illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol is strictly prohibited. Never use alcohol when working with individuals at risk.
5. Individuals at risk must never be provided with alcohol, illegal drugs, sexually provocative materials or any illegal materials.

Confidentiality

Trust is one of the cornerstones in all pastoral relations. It is important to emphasize that all employees understand they have an ethical duty not to disclose confidential information they may come upon during the course of employment.

People are also accustomed to speaking in confidence with a priest or deacon because of the trust they have in the clergy. To avoid breaking that trust, priests and deacons shall continue to respect the confidentiality entrusted to them

Under no circumstances whatsoever may a priest disclose, even indirectly, information received through the confessional in accord with Canons 983 and 984 of the *Code of Canon Law*. Information disclosed to a priest or deacon or other minister during the course of counseling or spiritual direction or in a pastoral conversation must be held in the strictest confidence and it is to be considered privileged information except as required to be reported to the appropriate governmental authorities under Wisconsin Statute §48.981.

Conflicts of Interest

Avoid all situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

For example, conflicts of interest may arise when the independent judgment of a priest, deacon, or other minister, while serving as a pastoral counselor or spiritual director, is impaired by: prior dealings; becoming personally involved; or becoming an advocate for one person against another. When this becomes evident, the pastoral counselor or spiritual director shall advise the parties that he/she can no longer provide pastoral services and shall refer them to another pastoral counselor or spiritual director.

Ethical or Professional Misconduct

Priests, deacons, seminarians, other ministers and employees have a responsibility for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. They also have a duty to report breaches of this Code of Pastoral Conduct whether by themselves or by others. When uncertainty exists regarding a situation or course of conduct that violates this Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with professionals who are knowledgeable about ethical issues.

When there is an indication of questionable action by a priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister and employee, immediately notify the Diocesan Assistance Coordinator or the person's immediate supervisor.