

DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

For Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators,
Principals, Teachers, Staff, and Volunteers
Who Have Contact With Minors

PREAMBLE

This Code of Professional Conduct applies to all clergy, employees, and volunteers throughout the Diocese of Lafayette in church parishes, schools, religious communities, programs, charities, and organizations, and with regard to all other diocesan-related events and activities. This Code of Professional Conduct provides the general outline and spirit of the set of standards for conduct, that being of the highest moral and Christian values, to be exercised at all times.

DEFINITIONS:

1. Clergy, employees, and volunteers – includes all personnel within the Diocese of Lafayette and specifically all priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, spiritual directors, administrators, employees, principals, teachers, staff, and volunteers.
2. Counselor – includes all personnel who provide counseling of any kind, including but not limited to spiritual counseling, pastoral counseling, and school counseling relating to the counselor's employment and/or service to the Diocese of Lafayette.
3. Adult – an individual who has reached the legal age of majority (18 years of age.)
4. Youth – an individual who has not reached the legal age of majority (has not turned 18 years of age.)

GENERAL APPLICATION:

1. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall be responsible for adherence to this Code of Professional Conduct.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers who violate or disregard this Code of Professional Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
3. This Code of Professional Conduct is to be used in conjunction with the other employment-related rules, guidelines, and policies as applicable to each individual.
4. Each cleric, employee, and volunteer shall sign an acknowledgement of receipt of this Code of Professional Conduct, a copy of which shall be placed in the individual's permanent personnel file.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR COUNSELORS AND COUNSELING SESSIONS:

1. Counselors shall respect the rights, and seek to advance the welfare, of each person being counseled.
2. Counselors shall establish and maintain clear, appropriate, and professional boundaries in all counseling relationships.
3. Counselors shall carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with a person with whom the counselor has a pre-existing relationship, i.e., employee, colleague, friend.
4. Counselors shall conduct counseling sessions in appropriate settings and at appropriate times. This prohibits counseling in the private living quarters of the counselor.
5. Counselors shall not engage in any form of sexual intimacy with the person being counseled. This prohibition includes, without limitation, consensual, sexual contact and inappropriate sexual language or innuendo.
6. Counselors shall not engage in any form of sexual intimacy with any individual who is related by blood or marriage to or who is a close friend of the person being counseled. This prohibition includes, without limitation, consensual, sexual contact and inappropriate sexual language or innuendo.

7. Counselors shall not audiotape or videotape any counseling session without the written consent of both the adult being counseled or the parent or guardian of the youth being counseled, and the supervisor of the counselor. Any recording shall be subject to all applicable confidentiality standards.
8. Counselors shall not continue to provide counseling under circumstances or particular issues that exceed the limit of their competence and shall make appropriate referrals for the person being counseled.
9. Counselors should avoid even non-sexual physical contact such as touching, hugging, or holding the person being counseled.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF COUNSELING SESSIONS:

1. Counselors shall maintain all information disclosed during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction in the strictest confidence possible. This Code of Professional Conduct, as applied to counselors, is separate from, and independent of, the confidentiality involving a confession or information received by a priest in Sacramental Confession. Under no circumstances shall there be any disclosure of information received through Sacramental Confession, without the express permission of the Penitent.
2. Counselors may disclose certain information if there is clear and imminent danger to the person being counseled or to others. In such event, the person being counseled should be informed of the necessity of making the required disclosure and of the potential consequences. The disclosure should be limited to the information necessary to protect the affected person(s) from harm.
3. Counselors should discuss with each person being counseled, as a part of the initial counseling, the nature of the counseling relationship, and the issues of confidentiality, including the above-stated limitations.
4. Counselors may use the knowledge gained from prior and/or ongoing counseling sessions in teaching, writing, public speaking, and/or homilies, only after precautionary and effective measures have been exercised to safeguard the identity of any person or persons.
5. The confidentiality of counseling sessions is limited by the mandatory state law reporting requirements. In the event that otherwise confidential information is necessarily disclosed, counselors should advise the person being counseled that the disclosure will be made.

SPECIFIC CONDUCT WITH YOUTH:

1. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship with youth and strive to provide a safe place for youth.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall not use or possess alcohol and/or illicit drugs while working with youth.
3. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should be aware of the potential impropriety, and even the appearance of impropriety, when working alone with any youth. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should use a team approach in managing youth activities.
4. Clergy shall not share overnight accommodations with youth in any church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place.
5. Employees and volunteers, in conjunction with church-related activities, shall not share overnight accommodations alone with youth including, but not limited to, accommodations in any church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place. In an emergency situation, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of youth, and the above prohibition cannot be avoided, extraordinary care shall be taken to protect all parties from the risk of harm and even the appearance of impropriety.
6. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should exercise discretion in having any physical contact with any youth.

REPORTING STANDARDS:

1. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall hold one another accountable for maintaining the highest ethical, moral, and professional standards.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall take seriously every allegation or report of unethical behavior and/or professional misconduct.

3. In the event that the allegation or report involves any form of abuse, either mental, physical, or both, or the substantial risk of danger to the health or welfare of any youth, then clergy, employees, and volunteers shall report same to local law enforcement authorities immediately and thereafter report same to their immediate supervisor.

ADMINISTRATION:

1. Personnel and other administrative decisions made by clergy, employees, and volunteers shall meet civil and canon law obligations, reflect Catholic social teachings, and the standards of this Code of Professional Conduct.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall not use their positions to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority or take advantage of anyone to further their personal, religious, political, or business interest.
3. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should avoid any situation that might present a conflict of interest or even the appearance of a conflict of interest.
4. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should inform all affected parties including without limitation their supervisor, when a real or potential conflict of interest exists.

WELL-BEING OF CLERGY, EMPLOYEES, AND VOLUNTEERS:

1. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.
3. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should cooperate with and support one another.

HARASSMENT:

1. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall not engage in any form of physical, psychological, written and/or oral harassment of any individual and shall not tolerate any such conduct by any other Church personnel.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall maintain a professional work environment that is free from any and all forms of physical, psychological, written, and/or oral intimidation or harassment.
3. This prohibition against harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, psychological, written, and/or oral behavior including without limitation: physical or mental abuse; racial insults; derogatory ethnic slurs; unwelcome sexual advances or touching; sexual comments or sexual jokes; display of offensive materials; or requests for sexual activity or behavior of any kind for any reason.
4. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall take every report or allegation of harassment seriously and shall report same to their immediate supervisor.

COMMUNICATION STANDARDS:

1. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should be open to, and accessible to one another, and to all parishioners.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers should address and seek to resolve all matters promptly, efficiently, and fairly.
3. Clergy, employees, and volunteers shall not create, send, forward, or transmit any message containing hostile, intimidating and/or offensive material pertaining to race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or age, in any form or medium including, without limitation, verbal, handwritten, typewritten, electronic communication, using any equipment, computer, Church-owned telephone and/or cellular phone, palm pilot or other device used in connection with Church-related employment, ministry, and/or activities.