

**Code of Pastoral Conduct
for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Employees & Volunteers
engaged in ministries and services in the
Roman Catholic Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie**

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1 Preamble

Priests, deacons, seminarians, employees and volunteers in our parishes and other institutions must uphold Christian values and conduct as they minister to, or work with, the People of God. Imitating Christ, the servant-leader, we will employ practices that meet the needs of God’s people and promote the highest respect for the dignity of the individuals especially those most vulnerable members of our community.

All who accept a responsibility within our Church family must be aware that their public and private conduct can inspire others but may unfortunately also lead to scandal and, therefore, undermine the People’s faith. With constant reliance on the help of the Holy Spirit, they must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work.

This document will provide clear directives in order to protect our clergy, staff and volunteers and those individuals with whom they interact.

2 General Directives

a. Living Arrangements

- Residence in rectories¹ is limited to priests, deacons and seminarians.
- With the Bishop's written permission, immediate family members may live for a time with the pastor.²
- Subject to the provisions of this Code, pastors may welcome priests and close relatives as guests in rectories for a brief period of time, not to exceed two weeks.

b. Work Environment and Boundaries

- Clergy, staff, and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, sexual, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- Clergy, staff, and volunteers assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all pastoral relationships, including counselling and counselling-related ministerial relationships.
- One on one private meetings must be held in an area with glass openings offering unobstructed vision or in a room with the door open.
- Illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs at all times are prohibited.
- Use of aggressive, profane, humiliating, threatening, intimidating, sexist or racist language and conduct is to be avoided.

c. Proximity

- Physical contact of any kind can be misconstrued. It is to occur only when it is clearly nonsexual and otherwise appropriate and never in private. Physical discipline such as spanking, shaking or slapping is prohibited.
- Discussions of a sexual nature must occur only to respond if necessary to a specific question. Any such discussion must use appropriate and professional language.

¹ The term "rectory" includes residences operated or supported by the Church to accommodate a priest.

² The term "pastor" includes parochial administrator.

- Should one discover an inappropriate attraction or attention being shown to him or her in a pastoral relationship, one must make every effort to defuse the situation. One must cease the relationship if the attraction or attention continues.

d. *Counselling and Spiritual Direction*

- In counselling and spiritual direction, one shall not step beyond one's competence. One must refer individuals to other professionals when necessary or appropriate. It is never appropriate that a pastoral counselling relationship be considered a psychological clinical relationship, or psychotherapy.
- No interview, session or other conversation of a personal nature should ever be recorded (digitally, audiotape or videotape).
- In order to avoid confusion about the nature of the relationship, sessions (e.g., interviews, formal or informal conversations, counselling) must be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times that create accountability. One must also be concerned about the number and frequency of such sessions to avoid possible inappropriate attachments.

e. *Financial Directives*

- Ministry is part of pastoral service and one must not ask for, or expect, financial compensation other than that outlined in other diocesan policies and protocols.
- It is forbidden for anyone to solicit, in any way, directly or indirectly, by word or action, any personal gift, bequest or endowment from a person with whom he or she has, or had, a pastoral relationship.
- It is forbidden for anyone to request or obtain a personal loan, or other financial benefit or consideration, from a person with whom he or she has, or had, a pastoral relationship.
- Clergy, staff, and volunteers who are involved in the financial administration of a parish must review and know the contents of the diocesan *Parish Financial Administration Manual* which is available on the diocesan web site.

3 Additional Directives when dealing with Children, Youth and Other Vulnerable Persons

Clergy, staff, and volunteers are encouraged to develop transparent and trustworthy relationships with children, youth and other vulnerable persons while maintaining clear professional boundaries.

Particular care and attention must be taken in dealing with vulnerable persons.

A vulnerable person is anyone of any age or gender who might easily be exploited by another. Children, youth and some adults fall into this category of individuals. Some may be physically or mentally challenged or emotionally susceptible. Others may be socially isolated, in need socially or materially, or unable to communicate adequately, or even unable to understand or speak the languages of our area. Others may live in fear, real or imagined, or in awe of authority figures. Others, such as immigrants and refugees, may be disadvantaged in a variety of ways.

a. Work Environment and Boundaries

- Meetings, rehearsals, liturgical training and other such activities must take place in groups and be supervised by at least two adults who are not related, in a public setting such as the church or parish hall.
- Interaction with children, youth and other vulnerable persons must never take place in the residential part of the church property, or in any private residence owned by members of the clergy.
- One must never provide shared overnight accommodation for children, youth and other vulnerable persons where there is not another, unrelated adult present actively engaged in supervision. Under no circumstances shall such accommodation be provided in the residential part of church property.
- Where an adult chaperone occupies a sleeping facility with a group of children, youth or vulnerable persons, the chaperone must always sleep in a separate bed. Accordingly, one must not sleep in the same bed as a child or youth or other vulnerable person.
- Family members of priests who are still minors can be guests in a church residence on the condition that they are accompanied by one of their parents.
- While in the presence of children, youth or other vulnerable persons, one shall refrain from the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco products.
- One must never purchase or provide access to alcohol, drugs, tobacco products, inappropriate videos, media or reading material for children, youth or other vulnerable persons.

- One must never transport children, youth or other vulnerable persons in his personal vehicle without the presence of another unrelated adult. Everyone should be aware of the exclusion clauses in his or her personal insurance policy which may affect coverage in such cases. Every consideration should be given to the use of public transportation or rented vehicles especially when dealing with groups.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation with minors and other vulnerable persons must be celebrated in an open space which allows both priest and penitent to be in full view of others, or in a confessional in which there is a physical barrier between the confessor and the penitent.

b. Proximity

- One must never be alone with children, youth and other vulnerable persons. A parent or other adult must always be present or in close vicinity. Use a team approach to managing activities.
- One must not accept gifts from individual children, youth or other vulnerable persons. Similarly, one must not buy gifts for individual children, youth or other vulnerable persons
- One shall not take overnight trips alone with children, youth or another vulnerable person. An appropriate number of adult chaperones is to accompany participants in such activities organized through the parish or diocese.
- Topics of a sexual nature that could not be comfortably discussed with parents or other adults must not be discussed with children.

c. Financial Directives

- One must not act as a financial advisor or take on the responsibility for power of attorney for any vulnerable person. Drawing a will, or serving as a witness for a will, for these individuals is also forbidden.

4 Implementation

- Responsibility for compliance with this Code rests with the individual engaged in pastoral ministry or service.
- Clergy, staff, and volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards.
- Clergy, staff, and volunteers must review and know the contents of the diocesan *Protocol*

Regarding Abuse of Any Kind by Anyone which is available on the diocesan web site.

- Allegations of sexual misconduct must be taken seriously and reported immediately to the pastor, or to the Bishop or his delegate.
- When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation violates this Code of Pastoral Conduct, refer the matter to the Pastor, or to the Bishop or his delegate.
- When it appears that a member of the clergy, a staff member or a volunteer has violated this Code of Pastoral Conduct, report the issue immediately to the Pastor, or to the Bishop or his delegate.
- Any request for derogation from the provisions of this Code must be submitted in writing to the Bishop or his delegate.

5 Acknowledgement

I have read the Code of Pastoral Conduct and agree to be bound by its provisions:

Name (please print):

Date

For lay employees and volunteers, the original of this document should be kept in the files of the parish, or diocesan office, and a copy given to the signatory.

For priests, deacons and seminarians, the original of this document is to be sent to the Chancery. A copy should be kept in the parish where the priest, deacon or seminarian is appointed, and a copy given to the signatory.