



Code of Conduct for Church Personnel and Volunteers

Diocese of Rockville Centre

Preamble

All church personnel including, but not limited to: Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Personnel, Pastoral Ministers, Spiritual Counselors, Lay Employees, Volunteers and Contract Employees in our parishes, schools, programs and organizations must adhere to Catholic teachings and appropriate conduct. This Code of Conduct provides a set of standards for conduct either in providing or in supporting the pastoral care of the Church faithful and all others. The Code does not present an exhaustive list of expectations, standards, or requirements. Rather, this Code accompanies the Universal Law of the Church (the Code of Canon Law and the Catechism of the Catholic Church as interpreted by the Diocesan Bishop), civil law, and diocesan policies. For this document, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Personnel, Pastoral Ministers, Spiritual Counselors, Lay Employees, Volunteers and Contract Employees will be referred to from this point forward as “church personnel”.

Responsibility

The public and private conduct of clergy, staff, and volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine the people’s faith. Church personnel are, at all times, to be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They are to know also that God’s goodness and grace support them in their ministry. Responsibility for adherence to the Code of Conduct rests with the individual. Church personnel who disregard this Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action up to and possibly including dismissal. Corrective action may take various forms, from verbal reproach to removal from the ministry, depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

Pastoral Standards for Church Personnel

Conduct for Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction

Church personnel providing pastoral counseling or spiritual direction are to respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.

- Church personnel shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.
- Church personnel should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague, friend).
- Church personnel should not audiotape or videotape sessions.

- Church personnel must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments.
- Church personnel shall not engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are close to the client – such as relatives or friends of the client – when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Church personnel should presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships.
- Church personnel assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- Physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding) between church personnel and the persons they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided.
- Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times.
 - No sessions should be conducted in private living quarters. If counseling or pastoral care is offered to homebound individuals, every effort should be made to maintain appropriate boundaries, and prudent steps should be taken to protect all individuals involved.
 - Sessions should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.
- Church personnel should maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.

Confidentiality

Information disclosed to church personnel during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible.

- Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
 - If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, church personnel may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
 - Before disclosure is made, if feasible, church personnel should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
- Church personnel should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitation with each person in counseling.
- Church personnel should keep appropriate and concise records.
- Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies, or other public presentations only when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures. However, great prudence and caution should be exercised, as misunderstandings can easily occur.

- While counseling a minor, if church personnel discovers that there is a serious threat to the welfare of the minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is essential to the child's health and well-being, church personnel should:
 - Attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure.
 - If consent is not given, disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.
 - Consultation with the appropriate church authority such as one's immediate supervisor is required before disclosure.
- **These obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure – even indirect disclosure – of information received through the confessional.**

Conduct With Youth

Clergy, staff and volunteers working with youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between youth and adult supervisors.

- Church personnel must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to managing youth activities.
- Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.
- Church personnel should refrain from (a) the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, (b) smoking and (c) the use of alcohol when working with youth.
- Requests for overnight accommodations in any parish or Church institution for any individuals, clergy or laity, must be brought to the attention of the Chancellor in advance, in writing. Requests for accommodations for clergy must be accompanied by letters of good standing from the cleric's diocese or religious superior. In accordance with Diocesan policy regarding youth employment and rectory life published on November 29, 2020, no minor guests are permitted overnight accommodations in rectories, whether accompanied by an adult or not.
- Staff and volunteers should not provide shared, private, overnight accommodation 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.
 - In rare emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, church personnel should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.
 - Use a team approach to managing emergency situations.

Sexual Conduct

Church personnel must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

- Church personnel who are committed to a celibate life are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
- Staff and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriately intimate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners. Staff and volunteers must behave in a professional manner at all times.
- No church personnel may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the ***Diocesan Office for the Protection of Young People (516-678-5800 x573)*** and to civil authorities if the situation involves a minor or criminal behavior.
- Church personnel should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the state of New York and should follow those mandates.

Harassment

Church personnel must not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of church personnel or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by others.

- Church personnel shall provide a professional work or school environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following:
 - Physical or mental abuse.
 - Racial insults.
 - Derogatory ethnic slurs.
 - Unwelcome sexual advances or touching.
 - Sexual comments or sexual jokes.
 - Requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment or to affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation.
 - Display of offensive materials.
- Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.
- Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the Diocese's Office of Human Resources (516-678-5800 x282) or through the Diocese's Ethics Point portal at www.drvc.org/ethicspoint.

Organizational Records and Information

Confidentiality will be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of all church records in both paper and electronic form.

- Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. Great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals when compiling and publishing statistical information from these records.
- Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age.
- Only staff members who are authorized to access the records and supervise their use shall handle requests for records.
- Parish financial records are confidential unless review is required by the diocese or an appropriate government agency upon receipt of any request for release of financial records.
- Individual contribution records shall be regarded as private and shall be maintained in strictest confidence.

Conflicts of Interest

Church personnel should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into questions.

- Church personnel should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.
- Church personnel should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict or interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.
 - No church personnel should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political or business interests.
 - Pastoral counselors should not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have a business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The counselor must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.
 - When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director must:
 - Clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship,
 - Anticipate any conflict of interest,
 - Take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict, and
 - Obtain from all parties their written consent to continue services.
- Conflicts of interest may also arise when a Pastoral Counselor's or Spiritual Director's independent judgment is impaired by:
 - Prior dealings,
 - Becoming personally involved, or
 - Becoming an advocate for one (person) against another.

In these circumstances, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director shall advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services and refer them to another Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director.

- Church personnel shall make every effort to not hire relatives as parish employees. Only the Chief Human Resources Officer of the Diocese can make exceptions to this rule and should be contact at 516-678-5800 x282.

Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

Church personnel have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

- Church personnel must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by church personnel, you should notify the proper civil authorities immediately, your supervisor, and the Diocese Office for Human Resources.
- If you choose to remain anonymous, you can make notification through the Diocese's Ethics Point portal at www.drvc.org/ethicspoint.
- When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with:
 - Peers,
 - Others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or
 - Refer the matter directly to the Diocesan Office for Human Resources
- When it appears that a member of church personnel has violated this *Code of Conduct for Church Personnel* or other religious, moral or ethical principles:
 - Report the issue to a supervisor or next higher authority,
 - Report the issue via the Diocese's Ethics Point portal,
 - Refer the matter directly to the Diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Young People (516-678-5800 ext 573) in cases involving sexual misconduct or the Office of Human Resources (516-678-5800 ext 282).
- The obligation of Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors to report client misconduct is subject to the duty of confidentiality. However, any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality must yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, health, or well-being of any of the persons involved except for the confidentiality of the confessional.

Administration

Church personnel shall treat one another justly and with dignity in the day-to-day administrative operations of their work.

- Personnel and other administrative decisions made by church personnel shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect Catholic social teachings and this *Code of Conduct for Church Personnel*.
- No church personnel shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.
- Church personnel who threaten or inflict physical harm should be reported to the appropriate authority.
- Each volunteer providing services to children and youth must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct before providing services.

Well-being of Church Personnel

Church personnel have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as the well-being of others.

- Church personnel should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health.
- Church personnel should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.
- Church personnel must attend to their own spiritual needs appropriately and seek opportunities to grow in spiritual life.
- Church personnel should care for the well-being of each other.
- Inappropriate or illegal use of alcohol and drugs is prohibited.



Code of Conduct for Clerics, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators and Staff Diocese of Rockville Centre

Adults who work with young people or vulnerable adults through the Diocese of Rockville Centre (the “DRVC”) or any of its parishes or schools have the legal, moral, and religious responsibility to perform their duties in a way that educates and assists - and does not harm - the young people and vulnerable adults with whom they work. In keeping with that obligation, the DRVC has established the following Code of Conduct for all church personnel who minister to young people or vulnerable adults in the parishes of the Diocese, teach young people in the schools of the Diocese or in any other way work with young people or vulnerable adults through the DRVC. For purposes of this policy, the term “young people” or “young person” means anyone under the age of 18, and the term “vulnerable adult” means a person who “habitually lacks the use of reason” as outlined by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

As one of the clerics, pastoral ministers, administrators, and/or staff, who works with children and young adults in or through the DRVC, I solemnly pledge that:

- I will to the best of my ability, perform my work in a manner consistent with the mission of the Catholic Church and the DRVC.
- I will always remember that I am not a peer of the young people with whom I work, and I will perform my duties accordingly.
- I will maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries from the young people and vulnerable adults with whom I work.
- I will avoid situations where I am alone with a young person at Church activities.
- I will refrain from any and all physical conduct, conversations and other communications with young people or vulnerable adults that have a sexual purpose or result.
- I will not touch a young person and/or vulnerable adult in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- If I learn of an allegation of abuse or if I suspect abuse, I will report that allegation or suspicion to the Diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Young People (516-678-5800 ext. 573) and to civil authorities if the situation involves a young person or vulnerable adult.
- I will cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- I will treat everyone with Christian respect, charity, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- I will use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- I will neither accept expensive gifts from young people and/or vulnerable adults nor give expensive gifts to them without prior written approval from the parents or guardians and from the pastor or administrator.
- I will not smoke, use tobacco products, vape or use e-cigarettes in the presence of young people.
- I will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while working with young people.
- I will not use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal or legal drugs at any time.

- I will not pose any health risk to young people and/or vulnerable adults (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations).
- I will not strike, spank, shake, slap, or otherwise physically discipline young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- I will not humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- I will not use any discipline that frightens or humiliates young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- I will not use profanity in the presence of young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- I will not acquire, possess, or distribute a pornographic image of a young person, nor will I show a pornographic image of an adult to a young person.

I understand that this Code of Conduct is to be applied fairly and equitably, on a case-by-case basis.

I understand that whenever I am working with children and/or youth, in my role as church personnel, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history.

I further understand that this criminal background check will be conducted in connection with my initial employment/assignment within the DRVC and will be conducted at five-year intervals for the duration of my time in active ministry/employment, and at such times and frequencies as determined by the Diocese or the Diocesan office by which I am employed and/or to which I am assigned.

I understand that criminal background and character reference information may be requested from public and private sources.

I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct, or actions inconsistent with DRVC policies for the protection of children and young people, or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in removal from my position.

I also understand that this code of conduct does not abrogate or replace any other obligations that I have under any applicable law, guideline, policy or regulation.

I hereby authorize, without reservation, any law enforcement agency, institution, information service bureau, school, employer, reference, or insurance company contacted by the DRVC or its agent to furnish the information described herein. I hereby release the employer and agents and all persons, agencies, and entities providing information or reports about me from any liability arising out of the requests for or release of any of the information or reports herein.



Volunteer's Code of Conduct - Diocese of Rockville Centre

Our children are precious gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Volunteer's Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing service to the children and youth of our parish, school, facility, diocese, etc.

As a volunteer, I will:

- Treat everyone with Christian charity, respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspect abuse to the pastor, administrator, or appropriate supervisor and the New York State Child Registry (1-800-342-3720). I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

As a volunteer, I will not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of legal or illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations)
- Strike, spank, shake, slap or physically discipline children and/or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

I understand that as a volunteer working with children and/or youth, 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 my removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth.