



Standards of Ministerial Behavior in Dealing with Children & Young People

We the clergy, women and men religious, seminarians, staff and volunteers of the Diocese of Grand Rapids who have regular contact with children and young people pledge that we will maintain an open and trustworthy relationship with them free of behavior which is sexual in nature.

General Guidelines

- 1.1 Children and young people deserve the Church's highest standard of care. Since adults hold positions of power, we will set appropriate boundaries to assure a safe place for our children and young people in all Church ministries and programs.
- 1.2 We will witness in these and all our relationships the chastity appropriate to our state in life, whether celibate, single or married.
- 1.3 We recognize that needs for affection and intimacy must be addressed outside our work with children and young people.
- 1.4 Recognizing that physical contact with a minor may on occasion be appropriate and in some instances unavoidable, we acknowledge that it can also be misconstrued. It should occur in our work with minors (a) only when completely nonsexual and (b) never in private. In addition, we will not engage in speech, gesture or other behavior which may be construed as seductive or sexually suggestive to a minor.
- 1.5 When working with minors, we know that a team approach is best. We will, to the extent possible, avoid being alone with a minor, including transportation.
- 1.6 We will be accountable to a spiritual director, superior, colleague, spouse or peer to ensure we maintain proper boundaries in our relationships with minors and openly discuss threats perceived to those boundaries by ourselves, a minor or others.
- 1.7 We will educate ourselves concerning the signs of abuse and neglect of minors and take appropriate and requisite action when such signs are recognized. We acknowledge the State of Michigan's *Child Protection Law* in that regard, as well as the Diocese's *Policy on the Sexual Abuse of Minors*, and pledge our support of them.

follow them.

2.9 We will not provide pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, psychological or other mental health services to a minor or young person unless we are qualified to do so. If we do, we will maintain a log showing the time and place of each session and include minimal information of the content. We will not audiotape or videotape such sessions, and will use the information obtained from them only in educational, homiletic or other professional settings, and only after taking effective means to safeguard the minor's identity and confidential disclosures.

These guidelines, both general and particular, do not address or govern the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Under no circumstances shall there be disclosure, directly or indirectly, of information received in the confessional except as provided by Canon Law.

In implementing these guidelines, we are mindful that they provide a basic structure which seeks to protect children and youth from neglect and sexual abuse, but that no framework can address all the situations which may arise in our work. We believe that human sexuality, our own as well as that of the young people we seek to serve, is a gift inherent in our creation in the image and likeness of our God. We pledge to honor both the spirit and the letter of these standards in light of this belief.

By signing below, I acknowledge I have read the above information along with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People and Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons.

Name _____

Organization _____

Pastor/Supervisor _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Clergy, Religious, Seminarian, Staff or Volunteer