

**CODE OF PASTORAL CONDUCT**  
**For Church Employees within the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis**

**Preamble**

All pastoral activity carried on within the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis should reflect and uphold our Church's commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the spirit of the Gospel. That activity must always uphold Christian values and conduct, and should therefore be characterized by integrity, respect, and justice toward all.

In order to accomplish this goal, various policies have been mandated by this Archdiocese, including a sexual abuse policy, *Restoring Trust: With God All Things Are Possible*, and an employment policy, *Justice in Employment*. These policies remain in force, and provide a much more comprehensive treatment of those topics than is possible within this Code of Pastoral Conduct.

The document presented here, the *Code of Pastoral Conduct*, establishes a broad set of guidelines for our activity in various pastoral situations. This Code applies to all those who exercise pastoral ministry within the Archdiocese, that is, to all bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, administrators, teachers, staff and employees within the parishes, schools, organizations and agencies within this Archdiocese.

**Well-being of Church Employees**

Since church employees will be unable to minister to others unless they first minister to themselves, they should be attentive to their need to care for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health. Employees should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health, i.e., inappropriate use of alcohol or misuse of other drugs. They should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.

**Responsibility**

The public and private conduct of church employees can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine their faith. Church employees must, at all times, recognize and accept the responsibilities that accompany their ministry. At the same time they can draw strength from the knowledge that God's grace strengthens and supports them.

Responsibility for adherence to this Code of Pastoral Conduct rests with the individual. Church employees who disregard the Code will be subject to increased supervision as recommended by immediate supervisors or by the Committee on Pastoral Responsibility (cf Section 9 of this Code). Corrective action may take various forms, ranging from verbal reprimand to removal from ministry, depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

## **Pastoral Standards**

### **1. Conduct with Youth**

*All church employees working with youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between the young people and themselves.*

- Church employees should 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 only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private.
- If possible, one-on-one meetings with a young person should be held in a public area which is visible and accessible.
- Church employees should refrain from the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, and they should not use alcohol when working with youth.
- Church employees should never give young people alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, videos or reading material that is inappropriate.
- Apart from emergencies, providing overnight accommodations for minors in rectories, personal residences or hotel rooms is not to be done without other adults being present.
- In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, church employees 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 such situations.

## 2. Sexual Conduct

*Church employees must never exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.*

- All church employees are called to chastity according to their life vocation as a priest, religious, single or married person. All are called to witness this chastity in all relationships at all times.
- Church employees who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners. Ministers should avoid or withdraw from a relationship in which they or others feel uncomfortable. They must behave in a professional manner at all times.
- No church employee may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the appropriate civil and church authorities, according to the policies and procedures of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. (cf Section 9 of this Code, and also ***Restoring Trust: With God All Things Are Possible***)
- Church employees should know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the state of Minnesota; they are responsible for following those mandates.

## 3. Harassment

*Church employees must not engage in physical, psychological, or sexual harassment (written or verbal) of other staff, volunteers, or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by other church employees.*

- Church employees shall promote a professional work environment that is free from intimidation or harassment. (Cf ***Justice in Employment***)
- Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including but not limited to
  - 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 one's supervisor or next higher authority. The policies and procedures of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis must be followed, in order to protect the rights of all involved. (Cf Section 9 of this Code; ***Restoring Trust: With God All Things Are Possible; Justice in Employment***)

#### 4. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors

*When engaged in any form of counseling or spiritual direction, church employees must take great care to respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.*

- Church employees shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.
- Church employees shall 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, etc.)
- Church employees must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments. Nor should church employees engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are close to the client, such as their relatives or friends.
- Church employees 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 employees and the persons they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided.
- Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times. 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 employees must ordinarily keep confidential the information learned from counseling sessions. (cf also Section 5 of this Code.)
- Church employees who move to another parish or agency shall help make appropriate arrangements for the continued care of those whom they have been counseling.

#### 5. Confidentiality

*Information disclosed to a church employee during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. **Information received during sacramental confession may never be disclosed, under any circumstances.***

- 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, the church employee may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
  - If feasible, the church employee should inform the person being counseled about a potential disclosure and its consequences, before the disclosure is made.
  - Church employees should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.

- Church employees must also safeguard the confidentiality of any notes, files, or electronic records pertaining to professional contact with individuals. They should not audiotape or videotape the sessions.
- Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, and homilies or other public presentations only when effective measures have been taken to safeguard individual identity and confidentiality.
- If consultation with another professional becomes necessary, utmost care shall be taken to do so only by using non-identifying information. When this is not possible, the other professional must be bound to the same degree of confidentiality as ourselves. If the other professional is not so bound, the disclosure shall not be made.
- Except as provided above with respect to consultation, confidential information should be disclosed only with the written, informed consent of the individual. In legal proceedings in which the church employee is a defendant and the allegations stem from a professional contact, the disclosure of confidential information gained in that contact is permitted only to the extent necessary to achieve the purpose of defense.
- While counseling a minor, if a church employee 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, the church employee should attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure. If consent is not given, the church employee may disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.
- While counseling a minor, if a church employee discovers a reasonable cause to believe that the threat to the minor's health or welfare is due to sexual abuse or neglect, or a disclosure is made indicating that the minor is being abused in any way, the church employee must report this concern to the appropriate civil and church authorities. (cf Section 9 of this Code, and *Restoring Trust: With God All Things Are Possible*)

**The obligations described in the above section 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.**

## 6. Records and Information

*Confidentiality shall be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of parish or organizational records.*

- Only staff members who are authorized to access parish and organization records and supervise their use shall handle requests for these records.
- When compiling and publishing parish or organizational statistical information from parish records, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.
- Parish and organizational financial records are to be held as confidential unless review is required by the Archdiocese or by an appropriate governmental agency or office. If there is uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of a request for the release of financial records, consult with the Archdiocesan Director of Administration and Finance.
- The records of individual contributions to parishes or organizations should be regarded as private and therefore confidential.

## 7. Conflicts of Interest

*Church employees 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 question.*

- Church employees should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. In resolving the issues, primary attention must always be given to the protection of the person receiving ministry services.
- Church employees 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 church employee must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.
- When ministry services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the church employee 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 written consent to continue services.
- Conflicts of interest may also arise when a church employee's independent judgment is impaired by:
  - Prior dealings,
  - Becoming personally involved, or
  - Becoming an advocate for one person against another.

In these circumstances, the church employee shall advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services, and refer them to another person.
- No church employee may take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.

## 8. Administration

*Employers and supervisors, as well as all other church employees, shall treat colleagues and all those to whom they minister with justice, dignity, and respect.*

- Personnel and other administrative decisions made by church employees shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect Catholic social teachings, this *Code of Pastoral Conduct*, and the Archdiocesan *Justice in Employment* policy.
- Church employees shall work in collaboration
  - with other staff members,
  - with the staff and people of other parishes and agencies, and
  - with officials of the Archdiocese.
- Church employees who work in a parish setting shall strive to work in collaboration with parish lay organizations and groups, particularly the parish pastoral council.
- No church employee shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.
- Each volunteer providing services to children, youth and vulnerable adults must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct before providing such services.

## 9. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

*Church employees must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards.*

- When a church employee has knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect that a minor is being or has been abused or neglected, or that any other illegal action has occurred:
  - Those employees who are mandated reporters are required to notify the local welfare agency, police department or county sheriff immediately. They must also notify the immediate church supervisor, so that any necessary further action may be initiated in accordance with Archdiocesan policies and procedures. (cf ***Restoring Trust: With God All Things Are Possible***)
  - Church employees or volunteers who are not mandated reporters should notify the supervisor, in order to determine if further action is needed.
- When it appears that a church employee has violated other ethical or professional standards as articulated in this ***Code of Pastoral Conduct***:
  - The violation should ordinarily be reported to one's supervisor or next higher authority.
  - If the supervisor also believes that there has been a violation, he or she shall initiate corrective action.
  - If the matter involves a particularly serious or repeated offense, it may be referred to the Committee on Pastoral Responsibility, who will investigate the concern.
  - If the employee who observed the alleged violation does not believe that the matter has been taken seriously, he or she may take recourse to a higher authority, or may personally report the incident to the Committee on Pastoral Responsibility.
- When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this ***Code of Pastoral Conduct***, the Church employee who has observed the incident should consult with his or her supervisors, peers, others knowledgeable about ethical issues, the Moderator of the Curia or a Chancellor.
- The obligation of church employees to report misconduct is subject to the obligations 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, with the exception of information received through the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation or which is otherwise legally privileged.

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**For Church Employees**  
**Within**  
**The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis**

As a church employee within the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, I promise to observe the norms in this ***Code of Pastoral Conduct*** as a condition of my providing service to those to whom I minister, especially children, youth and vulnerable adults.

I understand that I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history.

My signature confirms that I have read this ***Code of Pastoral Conduct*** and that I agree to follow these standards. I understand that any action inconsistent with this ***Code of Pastoral Conduct*** or failure to take action mandated by this Code may result in remedial action as recommended by my immediate supervisors or by the Committee on Pastoral Responsibility.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date