



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Office of Child and Youth Protection

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Code of Conduct for Diocesan Personnel

Appropriate Boundaries and Interactions

All personnel will follow a code of conduct to guide their interactions with youth and vulnerable persons. For the purposes of this policy, the term “personnel” shall mean clergy and members of religious orders, any diocesan, parish or school employee, volunteer or contractor.

Key points:

- Applies to all diocesan personnel
- Addresses ministerial counseling and confession involving youth and vulnerable persons
- Some activities require consent of a parent or guardian
- Consequences for violating these requirements

General: All diocesan personnel shall conduct themselves with propriety, morality and ethics in any activity or situation and for as long as they are employed by or in service to the diocese. All personnel shall read and acknowledge these requirements prior to commencing employment or service. The diocese shall maintain a permanent record of all such acknowledgments. For the purposes of this policy, the term “personnel” shall mean all clergy, members of religious orders, diocesan, parish or school employees, volunteers or contractors.

All diocesan personnel shall:

- a. Conduct any interactions with youth or vulnerable persons, only in approved ways, times and places.
- b. Maintain objectivity in all interactions with youth or vulnerable persons showing no favoritism.
- c. Avoid situations or interactions with youth and vulnerable persons that would cause confusion about the nature of the relationship.
- d. Share any concerns about the behavior of personnel, an adult, youth or vulnerable person with a supervisor.
- e. Hold themselves and others accountable to protect youth and vulnerable persons from harm.

Consequences for Violating of the Code of Conduct: All diocesan personnel are required to report any violation of these requirements to their direct supervisor or if the violation involves their direct supervisor, another supervisor. The diocese shall investigate and take disciplinary action against any personnel who are found to have violated these requirements.

Prohibited Forms of Interaction

Diocesan personnel are prohibited from:

- a. Touching youth or vulnerable persons in a sexual or inappropriate way.
- b. Sharing pornography, sexually explicit topics or materials with youth or vulnerable persons.
- c. Providing a youth or vulnerable person with alcohol, drugs or tobacco.
- d. Being alone or secluded with a youth or vulnerable person in a vehicle, an office, classroom, residence, dormitory, restroom, kitchen, storage room or any other closed setting.
- e. Sharing a bedroom with or taking an unsupervised overnight trip with a youth or vulnerable person.
- f. Being under the influence of alcohol or medication when interacting with youth or vulnerable persons
- g. Possessing or using illegal drugs at any time.
- h. Engaging in the physical discipline of youth or vulnerable persons.

- i. Conducting telephone or internet communications with a youth using an unauthorized telephone account, email account or website.
- j. Engaging in after-hours, off-site or isolated meetings without the express permission a diocesan supervisor and the person's legal caregiver.
- k. Comments about a youth's or vulnerable person's physique or body development
- l. Lengthy or romantic embraces.
- m. Kissing.
- n. Touching a youth's or vulnerable person's thighs, buttocks, groin or breasts.
- o. Wrestling, tickling, rough housing or piggyback rides with a youth or vulnerable person.
- p. Massaging a youth or vulnerable person.
- q. Allowing youth to sit on the lap.
- r. Any display of unwanted affection.

Acceptable Forms of Interactions

The following are acceptable form of interaction between diocesan personnel and youth or vulnerable persons:

- a. Interaction is Public, Appropriate and Non-Sexual in nature and Non-Threatening
- b. Verbal praise
- c. Handshakes, high-fives and hand slaps
- d. Pats on the shoulder, back or head
- e. Side hugs and bending down for hugs with small children
- f. Holding hands during prayer, while walking, kneeling or sitting beside a youth or vulnerable person
- g. Respect an individual's preference if they do not want to touched in an appropriate way

In accord with my role as Church personnel, and in witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I will conduct myself with integrity, acting in a manner that is consistent with the discipline and teachings of the Catholic Church.

I will guide my behavior by civil and canon law, by the policies of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown and by the Code of Conduct by...

1. Respecting the rights of each person and advancing his or her welfare during the course of counseling, advising or spiritual direction.
2. Holding in the strictest confidence information disclosed during the course of counseling, advising or spiritual direction with respect to Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law and Mandated Reporting Requirements.
3. Maintaining an open and trustworthy relationship when working with youth, free from inappropriate behavior that would put them at risk.
4. Honoring the trust placed in Church personnel by not exploiting others for sexual gain or intimacy.
5. Providing a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment.
6. Maintaining confidentiality in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of Church records.
7. Avoiding situations that might present a conflict of interest.
8. Reporting to proper authorities my own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.
9. Treating Church personnel justly in the day-to-day operations of work and ministry.
10. Being responsible for my own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ, UNDERSTAND, AND HEREBY COMMIT TO CONDUCTING MYSELF IN ACCORD WITH THE DIOCESE OF ALTOONA-JOHNSTOWN CODE OF CONDUCT.

(PRINT Name)

(Signature)

(Date)

(Position)

(Name of Parish/School/Diocesan Office)