

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF METUCHEN



CODE OF PASTORAL CONDUCT

I. Preamble

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff and volunteers in our parishes, institutions and religious communities must uphold Christian values and conduct. The *Diocese of Metuchen Code of Pastoral Conduct* provides a set of standards in certain pastoral situations.

II. Responsibility

The public and private conduct of clergy, staff and volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine people's faith. Clergy, staff and volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry.

Responsibility for adherence to the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* rests with the individual. Clergy, staff and volunteers who disregard the Code of Pastoral Conduct will be subject to remedial action. Corrective action may take various forms, from verbal reproach to removal from ministry, depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

III. Pastoral Standards

1. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors, i.e. clergy, staff and volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual and/or

Information disclosed to a pastoral counselor or spiritual director during the course of the counseling, advising or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest of confidence possible.

- 2.1 Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
 - 2.1.1 If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or others, the pastoral counselor or spiritual director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
 - 2.1.2 Before disclosure is made, if feasible the pastoral counselor or spiritual director should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
- 2.2 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.
- 2.3 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should keep minimal records of the content of sessions.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 While counseling a minor, if a pastoral counselor or spiritual director discovers 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 counselor or spiritual director 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 Diocese's Director Office of Child and Youth Protection is required before disclosure.
- 2.6 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.

- relationships with minors, other staff or parishioners. Staff and volunteers must behave in a professional manner at all times.
- 4.3 No clergy, staff or volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
 - 4.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the Diocese's Office of Child and Youth Protection 732-562-2413. The Office of Child and Youth Protection will report the allegation to civil authorities. The *Policy of the Diocese of Metuchen in Response to Complaints of Sexual Abuse* will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.
 - 4.5 Clergy, staff and volunteers should review and know the child abuse reporting requirements under New Jersey statutes and regulations and should follow those mandates.

5. Harassment

Clergy, staff and volunteers must not engage in physical, psychological, written or verbal harassment of others, and must not tolerate such harassment by clergy, staff or volunteers.

- 5.1 Clergy, staff and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- 5.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written or verbal behavior, including, but not limited to, 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported to the pastor, principal or head of the institution. Such reports can also be made to the Chancery.

6. Records and Information

7.2.3 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.
- Obtain from all parties written consent to continue services.

7.3 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.
 - Becoming an advocate for one (person) against another.
- In these circumstances, the pastoral counselor or spiritual director shall advise the parties that he/she can no longer provide services and refer them to another pastoral counselor or spiritual director.

8. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

Clergy, staff and volunteers have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

8.1 Clergy, staff and volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by clergy, staff or volunteers, you should notify the proper civil authorities immediately, as well as the pastor or head of the institution and, if desirable, the Chancery.

8.2 When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* or other religious, moral or ethical principles, consult with:

- Peers.
- Others knowledgeable about ethical issues.
- The Chancery.

8.3 When it appears that a member of the clergy, a staff member or a volunteer has violated the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* or other religious, moral or ethical principles:

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT AND REVIEW

I have received and reviewed *The Roman Catholic Diocese of Metuchen Code of Pastoral Conduct*. By means of my signature, I express my understanding and acceptance of its terms. I also understand that this form will be maintained in my secure personnel file.

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____