



Pastoral Code of Conduct For Clergy

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Code of Conduct for Clergy

I. Introduction

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, and administrators in our parishes must uphold Christian values and conduct. This *Code of Conduct for Clergy, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators*, provides a set of standards for conduct in certain pastoral situations.

II. Responsibility

The public and private conduct of clergy can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine the people's faith. Clergy 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 Conduct* rests with the individual. Those who disregard this *Code of Conduct* do so at their own risk and will be held responsible by the diocese, parish, and others. Corrective action may take various forms depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

III. Pastoral Standards

1. Sexual Conduct

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

- 1.1 Clergy and religious who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
- 1.2 No clergy may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 1.3 Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the appropriate person in the parish (pastor), diocese, (bishop), Victim Assistance Advocate, and to civil authorities if the situation involves a minor.
 - 1.3.1 Canon and civil law procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.
- 1.4 Clergy should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the state of Michigan and should follow those mandates.

2. Harassment

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

- 2.1 Clergy shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- 2.2 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.
 - 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate person in the parish (pastor) and the diocese.
- 2.4.1 Canon and civil law procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

3. Conduct with Youth

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

- 3.1 Clergy must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to manage youth activities.
- 3.2 Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.
- 3.3 Clergy should refrain from (a) the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, and (b) the use of alcohol when working with youth.
- 3.4 Clergy should not allow individual young people to stay during the day or night in the cleric's private accommodations or residence.
- 3.5 Clergy should not provide shared, private, overnight accommodations 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.
- 3.5.1 In rare, emergency situations when accommodations are necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, the clergy should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.
- 3.5.2 Use a team approach to manage emergency situations.

4. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors

Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person. (Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors are any clergy, staff, and volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups.)

- 4.1 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.

- 4.2 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship, such as an employee, a professional colleague or a friend.
- 4.3 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should not audiotape or videotape sessions.
- 4.4 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact and inappropriate sexual comments.
- 4.5 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors 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. Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships.
- 4.6 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- 4.7 Physical contact of any kind – touching, hugging, and holding – between pastoral counselors or spiritual directors and the persons they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided.
- 4.8 Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times.
 - 4.8.1 No sessions should be conducted in private living quarters.
 - 4.8.2 Sessions should not be held in places or at times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.

5. Confidentiality

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

- 5.1 Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
 - 5.1.1 If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the pastoral counselor or spiritual director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
 - 5.1.2 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.
- 5.2 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.
- 5.3 Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should keep minimal records of the content of sessions.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 While counseling a minor, if a pastoral counselor or spiritual director discovers 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 pastoral 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 appropriate Church supervisory personnel 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.