

# Diocese of Rapid City

## Keeping God's Children Safe

*A Safe Environment Newsletter*

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### Code of Conduct of the Diocese of Rapid City

Last fall we reviewed the sections of the preamble, responsibility pastoral standards and confidentiality found in the Code of Conduct. This code gives clear standards of behavior as guidelines for adults that work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. These guidelines help us determine if a behavior is appropriate. This time we continue to review our conduct with minors, sexual misconduct, harassment, and maintaining confidentiality in all aspects of various organization records and information within the diocese.

#### 3.2 CONDUCT WITH MINORS

*"We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person."*<sup>1</sup>

Priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers who supervise minors need to maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between themselves and the minors. Each must be aware of their own and the others' vulnerability and limitations, especially when alone with minors. A team approach must be used as the standard when conducting activities and events for minors, minimizing the opportunities for an adult to be alone with a minor. Physical contact with minors (e.g., hugging, tickling, "rough-housing", etc.) can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate and (b) never in private.

All adults must always refrain from (a) the possession or use of illegal drugs, and (b) the possession (on any device or link) or the distribution of child pornography; (c) they must also refrain from the use of alcohol and drugs when working with minors.

Priests and deacons are not permitted to allow minors to stay overnight in their private accommodations or residence. Priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers should not share private overnight accommodations with minors, unless written permission from the parent or legal guardian of the minor has been granted before the event. This includes, but is not limited to, accommodations in any church facility, private residence, hotel room or any other place where there is no other adult supervision present.

In rare emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of a minor, extraordinary care is to be taken to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm. A team approach should be used when managing such emergency situations, if at all possible.

#### 3.3 SEXUAL CONDUCT

*"Through scripture and Catholic teachings we are all called to protect the life and dignity of all human persons. Preventing child abuse is a necessary response to what we are called to do as Church, God's Church."*<sup>2</sup>

Priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

Priests, deacons, religious, lay employees, and volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times. Those adults who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid inappropriate intimate relationships with other individuals, behaving in a professional manner at all times. Priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers must not exploit other persons for sexual purposes.

All safe environment trained adults should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the State of South Dakota (reference:

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**USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection**  
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/index.cfm>

**Diocese of Rapid City Safe Environment**  
[www.rapidcitydiocese.org/WP/safe-environment home](http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/WP/safe-environment-home)

***"Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs to the Kingdom of heaven."***

**- Matthew 19:14**

[http://sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified\\_Laws/DisplayStatute.aspx?Type=Statute&Statute=26-8A](http://sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/DisplayStatute.aspx?Type=Statute&Statute=26-8A)) and should follow those mandates. With regard to reporting sexual misconduct, in addition to any requirements in the law, the policies of the Diocese of Rapid City must be followed to protect the rights of all involved (see *Other Resources* below).

### 3.4 HARRASSMENT

Priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers must not engage in or tolerate the physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of other persons. The policies of the Diocese of Rapid City shall be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

Priests, deacons, lay employees or volunteers shall provide a professional work environment free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, psychological, written or verbal behaviors, including without limitation the following:

- Physical or mental abuse,
- Racial comments,
- Derogatory ethnic comments,
- 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 including pornography

#### Keep your focus on the purpose of your interactions with youth

- Witnessing the faith
- Fostering their spiritual growth
- Serving their needs

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 environment. Allegations of harassment shall be taken seriously and must be reported immediately to the appropriate person in the diocese, parish, religious community/institute, school or other organization. Refer to *Section 3.7 Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct* in the Code of Conduct for more reporting information.

### 3.5 DIOCESAN, PARISH, RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY/INSTITUTE, SCHOOL AND OTHER ORGANIZATION RECORDS AND INFORMATION

Confidentiality will be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of diocese, parish, religious community/institute, school or other organization records.

Sacramental records will be regarded as confidential. When compiling and publishing diocese, parish, religious community/institute, school or other organization statistical information from these records, great care will be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals. The Pastoral Handbook includes a copy of a USCCB document regarding the sacramental records of adopted children.

Most sacramental records older than 70 years are open to the public. Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age. Only staff members who are authorized to access the records and supervise their use may handle requests for more recent records.

Diocese, parish, religious community/institute, school or other organization financial records are confidential, unless review is required by the diocese or an appropriate government agency. The bishop must be contacted upon receipt of any request for release of financial records by anyone other than the financial officer of the diocese.

Individual contribution records of the diocese, parish, religious community/institute, school or other organization shall be regarded as private and will be maintained in strictest confidence.

*“Living up to the Charter (Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People) is a response to our faith’s call to protect life in all its stages and fulfills the demands of Catholic moral theology. The Church’s belief in the life and dignity of the human person underscores the Charter... The Church must not stop addressing this issue until every person abused by a member of our clergy is heard and to continue this work as long as child sexual abuse occurs in any area of our society.”*<sup>3</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions; USCCB. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/sharing-catholic-social-teaching-challenges-and-directions.cfm>

<sup>2</sup>Magisterial Teachings on the Protection of God’s Children; Martin, C. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/resources/upload/magisterial-teachings-child-sexual-abuse.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>A Ten Year Progress Report on the Charter; National Review Board. June 2012. pg. 10.

#### OTHER RESOURCES

Code of Conduct of the Diocese of Rapid City. <http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/safe-environment/policy-documents/>