

**DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT
CODE OF CONDUCT
2004**

I. PREAMBLE.

Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Personnel, Pastoral Ministers, Spiritual Counselors, Administrators, Lay Employees, Lay Volunteers and Contract Employees in our parishes, schools, programs and organizations must uphold Christian values and conduct. Parents are also encouraged to take an active interest in any and all services and programs in which their children are involved in the Diocese. The Diocese of Bridgeport Code of Conduct provides a set of standards for conduct that apply to all Clergy, Lay employees, volunteers and contract employers within the Diocese. This document is subject to change. For the purpose of this document, Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Personnel, Pastoral Ministers, Spiritual Counselors, Administrators, Lay Employees, Lay Volunteers and Contract Employees will be referred to from this point forward as **Personnel**.

A **Minor** is defined as a person under the age of 18.

A **Young Adult** is defined as a person age 18-20. Both a **Minor** and a **Young Adult** are defined as **Youth**

An **Adult** is defined as a person age 21 or older.

A **Vulnerable Adult** is defined for the purpose of this document as an adult who experiences physical, emotional, intellectual, or psychological impairment.

II. RESPONSIBILITY.

The public and private conduct of Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport can inspire and motivate people, but it can also offend people and undermine their faith. Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace support them in their ministry. Responsibility for adherence to the Code of Conduct rests with the individual. Personnel who disregard this Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action which may take various forms up to and including dismissal from employment or volunteering depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

III. CONDUCT.

1. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors, Professional Counselors and Spiritual Directors.

Professional Counselors, Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person being counseled. Professional Counselors, Pastoral Counselors, Case Managers, Spiritual Directors and any other Personnel of The Diocese of Bridgeport providing counseling services will be referred to as Counselors from this point forward. Professional Counselors and case management staff of Catholic Charities are mandated by state licensure and/or their credentialing organizations to maintain the highest standards regarding client confidentiality, conduct/contact with minors, reporting requirements, conflict of interest and harassment. Additionally, Catholic Family Services clinical counseling staff adheres to the policies of the Catholic Charities Mental Health Clinic Manual, as well as the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. Counseling and case management staff of Catholic Charities must adhere to these professional regulations and they will supercede the Counseling Standards section of the Diocesan Code of Conduct

1.1 Counselors shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.

1.2 Counselors should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship.

1.3 Counselors should not audiotape or videotape sessions without proper authorization.

1.4 Counselors must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments.

1.5 Counselors must never 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. Counselors should presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships.

1.6 Counselors assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships. Counseling sessions should be conducted in professional settings at appropriate times except where particular circumstances warrant otherwise.

1.7 Counselors shall maintain a log of the times and places of scheduled sessions with each person being counseled.

2. Confidentiality.

Information disclosed to a Counselor during the course of counseling, advising or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. All legal requirements will be followed in any case where there is an allegation of abuse against a minor **except when the information is obtained under the Sacramental Seal of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Information obtained under the Sacramental Seal is absolutely prohibited from disclosure.**

2.1 Information obtained in the course of counseling 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 Counselor must disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.

2.1.1 Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Counselor should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.

2.2 While counseling a minor, if a counselor 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 and to the proper civil authorities is essential to the child's health and well-being, the Counselor should attempt to secure consent from the minor for the specific disclosure. If consent is not given, disclose the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor. Consultation with a supervisor and notification of appropriate church officials is required before disclosure. Counselors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.

2.3 Counselors should not discuss confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured. Confidential information should not be discussed in public or semi-public areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants.

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.

3. Conduct With Minors And Vulnerable Adults.

Personnel shall maintain open and trustworthy relationships with Minors, Youth, Vulnerable Adults and Adult Supervisors, observing the following rules and guidelines:

3.1 The Rule of Two. Personnel must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with minors and vulnerable adults. Use a team approach by ensuring that there are always two or more adults present when managing all activities where minors and vulnerable adults are present.

3.2 Use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited at all times.

3.3 Use of alcohol when working with minors or vulnerable adults is prohibited.

3.4 Sexually inappropriate conversations with minors and other adults are prohibited. All human sexuality lessons and discussions should be part of an approved Diocesan curriculum or part of normal counseling. These lessons or counseling sessions will conform to the Church's teachings on the topic.

3.5 Diocesan Personnel will not use vulgarity or profanity in the presence of minors.

3.6 Being nude in the presence of minors or other vulnerable adults is prohibited. Personnel must adhere to a proper dress code at all times. Personnel should consult with their supervisor regarding appropriate dress codes.

3.7 Taking sexually oriented or morally-inappropriate materials (magazines, calendars, cards, videos, films, website material, computer files, cell phone camera images, clothing or other items containing inappropriate materials) onto Diocesan property or showing them to minors is prohibited.

3.8 Diocesan Personnel are prohibited from creating a pattern of behavior or environment that a reasonable person would find shaming, threatening, frightening, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

3.9 All allegations of abuse of a minor should be taken seriously and immediately reported to the Victim Assistance Coordinator at The Diocese of Bridgeport and to civil authorities within (12) hours of suspecting abuse. **The Diocese of Bridgeport Policies and Procedures Relating to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors By Priests or Deacons or by Lay Employees or Volunteers will be followed to protect the rights of all involved. This Policy will be referred to from this point forward as the ([Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)).**

3.10 Clergy and Religious shall not invite or allow a minor, youth or vulnerable adult unaccompanied by one of their adult immediate family members to visit or stay overnight in any premises used as the residence for priests, religious, or other Personnel except for members of the Clergy or Religious Personnel's family. Clergy should not permit minors, youth or vulnerable adults to stay overnight nor allow them into a cleric's private accommodations at anytime.

3.11 Clergy as well as Lay Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport should not provide shared or private overnight accommodations for minors for church sponsored activities 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.

3.11.1 In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth or vulnerable adult, the clergy or Personnel of the Diocese should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.

4. Guidelines For Church Related Activities.

The following general guidelines are intended to prevent abuse of minors by preventing situations where abuse can occur:

4.1 When releasing minors from one's care to someone else's care, they are to be released only to the custodial parent(s), legal guardians(s), or others who have the written permission of the custodial parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s). If unsure, consult supervisors before releasing the child. (This does not apply to normal release of minors to buses or walkers at the end of the normal school day or at the end of normal religious education hours).

4.2 No minor or young adult (18-20) may have principal responsibility for supervising or carrying out a church-related activity without two adults (21 years of age or over) present.

4.3 Uncontrollable or unusual behavior of minors must be reported to parents or legal guardians and to supervisors.

4.4 Use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited at all times. Use or possession of alcohol is prohibited at all times when working with minors.

4.5 Supplying alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and/or tobacco products to minors is prohibited.

4.6 Supplying minors with medications of any kind, including over-the-counter drugs, without the written consent of the custodial parent(s) or guardian(s) is prohibited.

4.7 When transporting minors by motor vehicle, follow **The Diocese of Bridgeport Automotive Fleet Safety Program Policies**. When transporting minors, obtain written permission from parent or guardian. All drivers must be at least 21 years old and if the minor is alone, another adult should accompany them.

4.8 Sleeping in the same room, bed, sleeping bag, or tent with minors is prohibited.

4.9 All Personnel will treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration

4.10 Personnel will refrain from giving gifts over \$25.00 to minors and/or youth without prior approval from the parent or guardian of the youth. Personnel will refrain from giving gifts containing sexual material or age inappropriate content

4.11 All Personnel must cooperate within the requirements of the law in any investigation involving abuse of a minor.

4.12 Personnel will not strike, spank, shake, or slap minors or youth.

4.13 Personnel will not use any discipline that a reasonable person would find humiliating, degrading or excessive based on the age and maturity of the minor and the nature and extent of the minor's violation of a rule or policy.

5. Physical Contact With Minors And Vulnerable Adults.

The Diocese of Bridgeport desires to implement and maintain a positive and nurturing environment for our children and youth while at the same time preventing harm. The following rules address conduct expected of all Diocesan Personnel when dealing with minors, youth or vulnerable adults. Physical contact with minors, youth and vulnerable adults should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private:

5.1 Corporal punishment (spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any touching that a reasonable person would construe as punitive) is prohibited.

5.2 Pursuant to CT Law (CGS Sect. 53a-18 (6)), a teacher or other Personnel entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor, youth or other vulnerable person for school purposes may use reasonable physical force upon the minor, youth or other vulnerable person when and to the extent that a reasonable person would find it necessary to:

5.2.1 Remove the minor, youth or vulnerable person (adult) in order to maintain order

5.2.2 To protect him/herself or others from immediate physical injury

5.2.3 To obtain possession of a dangerous instrument or controlled substance

5.2.4 To protect property from physical damage

5.3 Pursuant to CT Law (CGS Sect. 53a-18 (1)), a parent, guardian, teacher or other Personnel entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor, youth or vulnerable adult for catechetical instruction and church related activities may use reasonable physical force upon the minor, youth or other vulnerable person when and to the extent that a reasonable person would find it reasonably necessary to maintain discipline or to promote the welfare of such minor, youth or vulnerable person.

5.3.1 Physical force should be used only as a last resort of discipline after all other measures have proved to be inadequate. Use only the level of physical discipline minimally necessary to maintain order.

5.4 Appropriate affection between Diocesan Personnel and minors is often important for a child's development and can be a positive part of church life and ministry. Some examples of **appropriate** forms of affection include, but are not limited to, the following:

5.4.1 Shoulder to shoulder hugs

5.4.2 Pats on the shoulder or back

5.4.3 Handshakes

5.4.4 "High-fives" and hand slapping

5.4.5 Verbal praise

5.4.6 Holding hands while walking with small children

5.4.7 Sitting beside small children

5.4.8 Holding hands during prayer

5.4.9 Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

5.5 Examples of **INAPPROPRIATE** contact not to be used, includes but is not limited to the following:

5.5.1 Kisses on the mouth and inappropriate or lengthy hugs or embraces

5.5.2 Holding minors, above the approximate age of 5 on one's lap

5.5.3 Touching buttocks, genital areas, or breasts and touching knees, thighs or legs as a show of affection.

5.5.4 Showing physical displays of affection in isolated areas of the premises such as bedrooms, closets, Employee Only areas, or other private-rooms.

5.5.5 Sleeping in bed with a minor, youth or vulnerable adult.

5.5.6 Wrestling with minors, youth or vulnerable adults except for legitimate sports coaching, in which case another adult should be present.

5.5.7 Tickling and piggyback rides

5.5.8 Any type of massage given by an adult to a minor, youth or vulnerable adult

5.5.9 Any display of unwanted affection towards a minor, youth or vulnerable adult

5.5.10 Actions that include compliments relating to sexual attractiveness or sexual development

5.6 Students who require assistance with correcting their attire (i.e. buttons, ties, shirts) should be physically assisted only if they are physically unable to correct their own attire and should be assisted in the presence of another adult.

6. Supervision Of Programs That Involve Minors.

The primary standard being implemented here is the presence of multiple adults (at least two) at all church-related programs and activities for minors. This standard does not apply to the Sacrament of Reconciliation or to situations where an individual is seeking unscheduled and immediate pastoral care or scheduled clinical counseling sessions. The goal of this standard is to lessen the chances of abuse occurring or going unnoticed. In this light:

6.1 The Rule of Two. Personnel must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach by ensuring that there are always two or more adults present when managing all youth activities.

6.2 Religious instruction outside the parish property: The Diocese of Bridgeport strongly recommends against religious instruction that takes place outside the parish property however if there is no alternative but to hold class off site, the following regulations must be in place:

6.2.1 A Home Assessment must be conducted by the DRE to insure that all persons over the age of 18 in the household or at the designated location have cleared the criminal background check and completed the VIRTUS training. Parents may always instruct their own children for religious education in their own homes

6.2.2 The D.R.E. must be sure that everyone over the age of 18 in the household or at the designated location has signed the **Sexual Misconduct Policy AND the Code of Conduct.**

6.2.3 TWO unrelated adults must be present during the full duration of the class.

6.2.4 The D.R.E. will be required to randomly audit the class.

6.2.5 The proper liability insurance must be maintained by the homeowner and the parish indemnifying the Diocese for all claims arising out of any and all injuries sustained at the location of the class.

6.3 Personnel under the age of 18 in the Diocese of Bridgeport must work under the direction of an adult supervisor, including classrooms, religious education, retreats and when babysitting on Diocesan premises.

6.4 Pastors, Principals and Supervisory Personnel must be aware of and approve all programs for minors that are sponsored by a parish, school, or institution and should do so only after the appropriate standards and safeguards are in place.

6.5 There should always be at least one adult present in each classroom and another adult supervisor or monitor must also be present in the same building when religious education classes, school classes or other youth group meetings are being held.

6.6 Outside group meetings and programs that regularly take place on Diocesan premises, must have a written agreement for the use of that meeting space which comply with Safe Environment regulations. The contact person or the Diocesan sponsor of the group using the premise must sign the **Sexual Misconduct Policy**, sign this **Code of Conduct**, clear a criminal background check and attend a designated awareness training session.

6.7 When Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport are working one-on-one with a minor, the door to the meeting space must be left open and a second adult must be present within the same building. Professional Counselors who work one-on-one with minors should follow professional licensing standards and agency protocol for regulating the supervision and use of appropriate counseling rooms and office space. Whenever possible, all classrooms and counseling rooms should have doors with a window. It is highly recommended that future construction of confessionals and confidential meeting spaces contain glass doors or windows where practicable.

6.8 Separate lavatories for adults and children should be used whenever possible. Lavatory use by minors should be monitored at all times. The supervising adult should ensure that the lavatory is not currently in use by other adults and should monitor from outside the doorway.

6.9 The Code of Conduct applies to all Diocesan sponsored parish, school or institutional overnight camping, overnight retreats, overnight trips or other scheduled and approved events of this nature. In these cases, male and female minors will be segregated as well as adult chaperones unless they are married. Under no circumstances will a lone minor stay by his or herself in a room or tent. Curfews will be imposed and pairs of adult male and female chaperones, females checking females and males checking males will perform curfew bed checks. There will always be two adults conducting the bed checks.

6.10 If adults must stay in the same facility, room or tent as any minors, then there must be two or more adults of the same gender in the facility, room or tent.

6.11 Buildings and meeting space should be monitored and inspected at all times by a supervisor to insure the safety of the meeting space, to address any safety concerns and to control access to the building. Report any safety concerns immediately to the pastor, lay supervisor or to a Diocesan official.

6.12 Anonymous Self-Help groups should be permitted to meet on Diocesan premises only during times when there are no minors present in the building.

7. Conflicts Of Interest.

A conflict of interest is a conflict between the private interests and the official or professional responsibilities of a person in a position of trust. Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport 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. The following rules apply:

7.1 Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest. Personnel should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. The resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving services.

7.2 No Personnel should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, financial or business interests.

7.3 Counselors should not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have a prior professional or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The Counselor must establish and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries at all times.

7.4 When counseling services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the Counselor 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

7.5 A conflict of interest may be present when a Counselor's independent judgment is impaired by prior dealings, becoming personally involved or becoming an advocate for one (person) against another. In these circumstances, the Counselor will advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services and refer them to another Counselor or Spiritual Director

8. Reporting Ethical Or Professional Misconduct.

Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

8.1 Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. If there is a violation of the **Sexual Misconduct Policy**, the notifications should be made pursuant to that policy.

8.2 Personnel may not harass, threaten, terminate, or otherwise jeopardize the employment or volunteer position of any Personnel for properly reporting a violation of this **Code of Conduct**, the **Sexual Misconduct Policy** or the **Sexual Harassment Policy**.

9. Harassment.

Personnel must not engage in physical, psychological, written, verbal, or any other form of harassment and must not tolerate such harassment by other Personnel. (See **Diocese of Bridgeport Sexual Harassment Policy**)

9.1 Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment from the perspective of a reasonable person.

9.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following examples:

- Physical or mental abuse
- comments about an individual's real or perceived disability and/or medical condition
- Racial insults
- Derogatory ethnic slurs
- Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
- Sexual comments or sexual jokes
- Requests for sexual favors used as a condition for employment or to affect other Personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation
- Display of materials that would be found offensive to a reasonable person

9.2.1 The above examples of harassment apply to any form of communication including electronic, email, fax etc.

9.3 Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior whereby the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.

9.4 Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the Human Resources Director in cases involving two adult employees and/or volunteers of the Diocese and to the Director of Clergy Personnel in cases involving a member of the clergy. The Diocese of Bridgeport Sexual Harassment Policy will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

10. Storage And Retention Standards For Safe Environments Records.

Confidentiality will be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of Safe Environments records. Only those employees who are authorized to manage confidential Personnel records may be assigned to manage Safe Environments records.

10.1 Safe Environment records will be maintained in a locked and secure location for each employee, volunteer and contract employee within the Diocese of Bridgeport for period of (30) years.

10.2 Safe Environment documentation includes:

10.2.1 The Signed Background Check Authorization Forms (See Background Check Policy)

10.2.2 The Acknowledgement of all Policy Receipts on Sexual Misconduct (current and past policy receipts)

10.2.3 Verification of attendance at Safe Environments child abuse prevention and awareness training

10.2.4 Verification of ongoing awareness training and mandated reporter training for designated Personnel

10.2.5 Proof of receipt of the Diocese of Bridgeport Code of Conduct

10.2.6 Copies of all future documentation related to Safe Environments Programs

10.3 All Clergy, Religious, School Principals and Supervisory Lay Personnel are responsible for ensuring that each of their employees, volunteers and contract employers under their supervision have completed the following Safe Environments regulations:

- 1) Pass a criminal background check
- 2) Sign the acknowledgement of policy receipt for the **Diocese of Bridgeport Policies and Procedures Relating to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors By Priests or Deacons or by Lay Employees or Volunteers**
- 3) Attend a designated Safe Environments awareness training. * Ongoing awareness training (VIRTUS Online) is required for Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, Supervisory Personnel, Administrative Personnel, School Principals, Teachers, D.R.E.'s, Youth Ministers, employees and volunteers who work directly with children.
- 4) Receive a copy of **The Diocese of Bridgeport Code of Conduct**. Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, School Principals, and Lay Supervisory Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport are required to **sign** the acknowledgement of receipt for the Code of Conduct and submit copies of this Code of Conduct to all of their employees, volunteers and contract employers.

All of the policies and documents referred to in this Code of Conduct will be placed online at the Diocese of Bridgeport's Website under Human Resources and Safe Environments. Please go to www.bridgeportdiocese.com

For questions or concerns relating to this Code of Conduct or Safe Environments, please contact The Diocese of Bridgeport Office of Safe Environments (203) 372-4301 Ext. 563

IV. THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT CODE OF CONDUCT.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT FOR SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL

(To be signed by all Priests, Deacons, Religious, Seminarians, School Principals, and all Lay Supervisory Personnel).

The Diocese of Bridgeport Code of Conduct is intended to provide a standard set of procedures, rules and guidelines for appropriate behavior as well as a level of accountability that we should expect of ourselves and our co-workers. The Code of Conduct is intended to protect the welfare of all Personnel of the Diocese as well as the youth and vulnerable populations that we serve.

The Code of Conduct does not presume to represent all situations that we may face as ministers, Counselors, employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Bridgeport and is subject to change.

I promise to follow the rules and guidelines set forth in the Code of Conduct **and** enforce the rules and guidelines of the Code of Conduct with all of my employees, volunteers and contract employers. I understand that I must provide a copy of the Code of Conduct to all Personnel (employees, volunteers and contract employers) that fall under my supervision.

I agree to report any suspected abuse of a minor, youth or vulnerable adult to my pastor, my supervisor, the Victim Assistance Coordinator and to the proper civil authorities within (12) hours of suspecting abuse. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities by a mandated reporter is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.

I understand that I am required to comply with the standards set forth in the **Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People** and the Diocese of Bridgeport Safe Environments regulations. I am aware that any Personnel who disregard this **Code of Conduct** will be subject to disciplinary action which may take various forms depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm up to and including dismissal from employment or volunteering.

Signature Date

Name

Location

Job Title

PLEASE RETURN A COPY OF THIS RECEIPT TO YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR AND THE ORIGINAL RECEIPT TO: **The Diocese of Bridgeport Office of Safe Environments, 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06606**